


The changing role of business leaders in global governance:
An empirical study of the role of business leaders in shaping the UN
Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of companies lobbying for more activist government public policy intervention to advance sustainable development. While there is a degree of agreement that the world faces pressing sustainable development challenges, there is less agreement about how best to organise to tackle them. One area of ongoing debate has been how far to rely on markets versus government intervention. Proponents of more government intervention have argued that increased corporate power in global governance since the rise of economic globalization has made it harder for governments to intervene. In this context, the phenomenon of some companies lobbying for more government intervention holds the promise of being a potentially helpful development. The thesis therefore explores, firstly, whether such action can be understood as a helpful development, and, secondly, how the occurrence of such action might be accounted for. If such action can be judged helpful, understanding more about what accounts for its occurrence could help those who might be interested to try to encourage more of it. The thesis examines these questions in relation to the empirical case of corporate lobbying during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals over the period 2012-2015, using a critical hermeneutics research methodology. The study principally focuses on two distinct but interconnected lobbying processes over the period 2012-2015 – one coordinated by the UN Global Compact, and the other coordinated by Unilever in partnership with other organisations. The study examines a comprehensive dataset in relation to corporate lobbying for the SDGs, including 12 key public domain documents and a further 13 non-public domain documents communicating private sector views about the development of the SDGs to policymakers, observations of nine meetings between business leaders and policymakers and 13 meetings between business executives discussing their approach to coordinating their lobbying activities, 57 interviews with corporate representatives involved in the lobbying processes (including 13 CEOs or chairpersons) and a further 395 related documents.

The thesis builds on and offers a contribution by further developing the literatures on both Corporate Political Activity and Political CSR (and the latter's linked literatures on Deliberative Lobbying and Responsible Leadership). The thesis does so by employing and further developing Paul Ricoeur's theory of the self, motivated action and the ethical intention. On the basis of the analysis of texts undertaken, following critical hermeneutics principles, the thesis argues for a particular interpretation, but acknowledges that other interpretations could also be valid. The thesis firstly proposes that such lobbying action can be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, but with caveats. The thesis secondly proposes that the occurrence of such action might be accounted for by arguing for a narrative that links the existence of governance gaps arising from economic globalization, the level of personal exposure of senior executives to manifestations of these governance gaps, and the nature of the intersubjectively-shaped hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpret these manifestations they encounter. Lobbying governments to make public policy interventions to advance sustainable development appears a rational response to senior executives whose intersubjectively-shaped sense of the good aimed at in everyday action emphasises a responsibility to create long-term value for all stakeholders, rather than just shareholders, and that sometimes advancing social welfare requires exercising power-in-common through the state, rather than just the pursuit of self-interest and the limiting of state intervention to protect the autonomy of the individual. The thesis identifies a range of different kinds of encounters with others and otherness over a lifetime that can shape a senior executive's hermeneutical horizon and sense of the good aimed at in everyday action, further elaborating on the proposals made by Ricoeur in his theory of solicitude. The thesis concludes by summarising the contributions to theory it makes, as well as outlining a series of implications for practice and further research.

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1. Introduction

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of companies lobbying for more ambitious public policy intervention to address sustainable development challenges. It does this by examining the case of corporate involvement in the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an intergovernmental policy instrument which seeks to influence (among other things) public policy across all UN member states. The thesis seeks to interpret this phenomenon. Specifically, the thesis explores firstly whether such corporate action can be understood as helpful in the context of the need to address sustainable development challenges, and secondly how the occurrence of such action might be accounted for.

1.1. Statement of the problem

That the world faces a number of pressing interconnected global challenges is well documented. The 2018 annual report of the United Nations, for example, draws attention to a range of social and environmental challenges, including threats posed by the impacts of climate change, how to address inequality and help those who have not shared in the benefits of globalisation and remain in extreme poverty, how to tackle gender inequality, how to protect against unintended negative consequences of technological advances, how to protect the dignity and security of migrants in the context of rising xenophobia, and how to increase peace and security and advance human rights (United Nations, 2018). In 2015, the member states of the UN adopted the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a policy instrument outlining 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 (Kanie & Biermann, 2017). These include goals in areas such as poverty, hunger, health, education, gender, water, decent work, economic development, inequality, climate, ecosystems, peace, justice, and strong institutions (United Nations, 2015).

While there is a relatively strong (although far from comprehensive) degree of agreement that these challenges require action, there remain ongoing debates about how best to organise to tackle these challenges and achieve what some

have called 'sustainability transitions' (Burch et al., 2019; Delmas, Lyon, & Maxwell, 2019). One area of ongoing debate has been around how far to rely on markets versus government intervention. Some argue that markets and global business are the most effective route to generating wealth, eradicating poverty and tackling global challenges through market-based solutions: innovating to develop new industrial processes, new products, new services and new business models, supplemented by voluntary standards and private governance mechanisms to address any governance gaps. Such approaches, many argue, are more effective, more efficient and more flexible and responsive to changing needs than more conventional government intervention, often characterised as inefficient, wasteful, distorting, and prone to corruption (Banerjee, 2009; Bannock, Gamser, & Juhlin, 2003; Booth, 2008; Brainard, 2006; Broad, 2004; Williamson, 1990).

Others argue that faith in market-based approaches is misplaced, arguing that market-based approaches and voluntary standards cannot protect the least powerful, and tend to exacerbate poverty, lead to widening inequality, and do not effectively curb activity that results in injustice, human rights violations, and environmental degradation. Such commentators argue that in the past, business activities that contributed to social and environmental problems could be controlled through government regulation, but such interventionist approaches have been both harder to implement and enforce, and generally out of fashion, since the rise of neo-liberal economic orthodoxy and economic globalisation in the 1980s and 1990s. The growing power and influence of multinational companies (MNCs) in global governance since this time, such commentators argue, has been employed to lobby both national governments and intergovernmental organisations to prevent or weaken such regulatory interventions and fund think tanks promoting neo-liberal free-market economics principles such as deregulation and the minimal state, making it harder for governments to take action to address such social and environmental challenges (Banerjee, 2009; Delmas et al., 2019; Djelic, 2006; Fuchs, 2007; Giridharadas, 2019; Lennox & Chatterji, 2018; Ougaard, 2008; Rivera, 2010). Some argue that even apparently well-meaning voluntary corporate sustainability initiatives and standards, while maybe providing some minimal contribution to addressing these global challenges, simultaneously serve to

make it more difficult to challenge the underlying fundamentals of the neo-liberal order which stand in the way of the more substantive action required to meaningfully address the scale of contemporary challenges (Banerjee, 2009; Delmas et al., 2019; Giridharadas, 2019).

In the early 2000s, practitioners in the field of business and sustainable development began to voice concerns about MNCs championing voluntary action to advance sustainable development in public, while in private lobbying against the adoption of robust regulation and government action aimed at effectively addressing the kind of global challenges discussed above (AccountAbility and United Nations Global Compact, 2005; Cowe, Beloe, Fennell, & Peck, 2002; United Nations Global Compact, 2013c). Such practitioners called for: greater alignment and consistency between MNCs' public sustainable development commitments and their lobbying activities; the adoption of responsible and legitimate lobbying practices; and greater transparency and accountability regarding their lobbying activities.

Since the early 2010s, a limited number of empirical examples have begun to emerge of CEOs of MNCs engaging in lobbying activities to call for more ambitious public policy and government intervention to address global sustainable development challenges. For example, Kingfisher CEO Ian Cheshire chairing a body such as the UK Corporate Leaders Group on Climate Change, lobbying for stronger government policy on the low carbon economy (Corporate Leaders Group, 2015), companies forming the Australian Business Roundtable on Climate Change to lobby for government action to reduce GHG emissions (Nyberg, Spicer, & Wright, 2013), Unilever creating a 'Global Advocacy Team' within its public affairs function to proactively lobby for stronger public policy around sustainability challenges (Lingard, 2012), companies lobbying the UK government for stronger regulation on Modern Slavery (Ethical Trading Initiative, 2015), and clothing brands and retailers lobbying the Cambodian government for better enforcement of labour rights regulation (Economist, 2017).

Given the history of debates regarding, in general, how best to organise to advance sustainable development, and, in particular, regarding the need for

more ambitious public policy and powerful MNC covert lobbying being part of the reason such public policy was not being enacted, the emerging phenomenon of some MNCs lobbying in favour of more ambitious government intervention both appears counter-intuitive and a puzzle, and holds the promise of being potentially a helpful development. Hence the focus of this thesis on this phenomenon, and in particular on the questions of whether or not such action can be considered a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, and how to understand what might account for the occurrence of such action by some companies but not others. If such action can be judged helpful, understanding more about what accounts for its occurrence could help those who might be interested to try to encourage more of it.

The academic literature on the role of business in global governance is significant. However, this literature is chiefly focused on three aspects of this phenomenon: how businesses engage with public policymaking processes to further their commercial objectives – the literature on Corporate Political Activity (Baysinger, 1984; Lawton, McGuire, & Rajwani, 2013); how businesses have lobbied to weaken and prevent government action on sustainable development, and funded think tanks promoting neo-liberal economic policies such as deregulation and the minimal state (Barley, 2010; Coen, Grant, & Wilson, 2010; Djelic, 2006; Dunlap & McCright, 2011); and how businesses have partnered with others to develop voluntary standards and private governance or ‘soft law’ mechanisms (Brunsson, Rasche, Seidl, et al., 2012; Levi-Faur, 2005; Levi-Faur & Starobin, 2014; Moon, Crane, & Matten, 2011; Ougaard & Leander, 2010; Rasche, Bakker, & Moon, 2013; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer, Palazzo, & Baumann, 2006). The literature examining the emerging phenomenon of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy on sustainable development is much more limited by comparison.

Existing theory in the literature struggles to account for the occurrence of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy on sustainable development. Scholarly contributions from the field of Corporate Political Activity (CPA) on how businesses engage with public policymaking processes to further their commercial objectives tend to be conducted from within a research tradition founded on positivist, modernist and liberal paradigmatic assumptions.

As Scherer notes, this includes assumptions such as that firms are motivated exclusively by their economic interests and engage with the political system only in order to gain economic benefits and/or to further their competitive positions (Scherer, 2018). This literature tends to assume that regulation and government intervention increases costs and therefore firms would not lobby for it as it would not be in their economic interests. As such, it does not address the phenomenon of corporate lobbying for more ambitious government intervention for sustainable development and would struggle to account for the occurrence of such activity if it did.

Some of the literature on voluntary standards private governance and soft law is conducted from within a similar positivist and instrumentalist research tradition, but other parts of this literature are conducted from within a critical theory tradition, such as the literature on Political Corporate Social Responsibility (Scherer, 2018). This literature explicitly aims to explore how practices, structures and procedures on individual, corporate and institutional levels should be changed so that social welfare is enhanced, drawing on Habermasian critical theory (Scherer, 2018). This literature argues that corporate action to collaborate to develop collective rules through private governance mechanisms can be seen (under certain circumstances) as helpful in advancing social welfare and sustainable development. This literature seeks to account for the occurrence of corporate participation in processes to develop voluntary standards and private governance initiatives with arguments relating to shifts in global institutional configurations between government and MNCs as a result of globalization, and resulting shifts in the bases of corporate legitimacy (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2006). It argues that the question of why some organisations respond to this changed institutional context with 'bright side' activities engaging in the development of private governance mechanisms, while others respond with 'dark side' exploitative practices, is a question for further empirical research (Scherer, Palazzo, & Matten, 2009). One direction this literature has taken to explore this question has been to look at the role of the responsible leadership styles and value orientations of senior executives, drawing on Upper Echelons Theory (Maak, Pless, & Voegtlin, 2016; Patzer, Voegtlin, & Scherer, 2018). However, the Political CSR literature has focused primarily on the phenomenon of voluntary

initiatives, private governance and soft law, rather than corporate lobbying to influence conventional hard-law public policy. Leading authors in the Political CSR field have more recently argued that the question of the relationship between corporate action and more traditional 'hard law' public policy at the level of both national government and intergovernmental institutions has been neglected in this literature and requires more focus (Scherer, Rasche, Palazzo, & Spicer, 2016). Lock and Seele have responded by developing a framework based on Habermasian critical theory outlining what kind of characteristics corporate lobbying ought to have in order for it to help contribute to advancing social welfare, coining the phrase 'deliberative lobbying' (Lock & Seele, 2016). However, the question of how to account for the occurrence of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy at the national and intergovernmental level remains under-theorised.

1.2. Aim, significance and approach of the study

This study aims to address this apparent puzzle of corporate lobbying for more ambitious government intervention to advance sustainable development, and make a contribution to the literature that helps address this gap, the under-theorisation of how to account for this kind of corporate lobbying.

The thesis aims to do this by performing an empirical study of the case of corporate involvement in the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an intergovernmental policy instrument which seeks to influence (among other things) public policy across all UN member states.

The thesis will specifically address the following two research questions:

- Can the corporate lobbying that occurred during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals be seen as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development?
- How can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities?

The study principally focuses on two distinct but interconnected lobbying processes over the period 2012-2015 – one coordinated by the UN Global Compact, and one coordinated by Unilever in partnership with other organisations. The Unilever-related activities concern firstly Unilever CEO Paul Polman's participation in the UN High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Agenda and related Business Consultation from 2012-2013, and then secondly Unilever's work from 2013-2015 to convene and coordinate with other companies and business associations to contribute other direct inputs to the political process to develop the SDGs, including the 'Business Manifesto' document.

The study examines a comprehensive dataset in relation to corporate lobbying for the SDGs, including 12 key public domain documents and a further 13 non-public domain documents communicating private sector views about the development of the SDGs to policymakers, observations of nine meetings between business leaders and policymakers and 13 meetings between business executives discussing their approach to coordinating their lobbying activities, 57 interviews with corporate representatives involved in the lobbying processes (including 13 CEOs or chairpersons), and a further 395 related documents.

This research described in this thesis is located in the critical tradition. As Scherer argues, the assumptions of a research tradition influence choices about which research questions are worth asking (Scherer, 2018). In the critical tradition, he argues, among the kinds of questions that need answering are: What should be aimed at in order to improve social welfare? And how should such goals and priorities be achieved? The first kind of question can be advanced through normative research and the second through both interpretive hermeneutic and positivist explanatory research.

This guides the choice of research questions and methodology in this study. As discussed above, given the history of debates regarding how best to organise to advance sustainable development, corporate lobbying in favour of more ambitious government intervention holds the promise of being a potentially helpful development for advancing social welfare in the form of sustainable

development. This thesis therefore, in relation to a specific empirical case, focuses on the questions of whether or not such action can be considered a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, and how to understand what might account for the pursuit of such action by some organisations but not others. If such action can be judged helpful, understanding more about what accounts for its occurrence could help those who might be interested to try to encourage more of it in pursuit of improved social welfare.

Thus the value of this study is twofold: it makes a contribution to understanding an apparent puzzle which is an under-explored and under-theorised phenomenon in the literature, and in so doing, it hopes to provide insight to those seeking to advance sustainable development in practice regarding whether corporate lobbying for more ambitious government action on sustainable development could be regarded as helpful in that regard, and if so, how to understand what might account for the occurrence of such activity, with the hope that such insight might inform thinking about how more of such activity might be encouraged.

Given that the thesis is located in the critical and interpretive traditions, a critical hermeneutics research methodology is employed to explore these questions (Herda, 1999; Kaplan, 2003; Prasad, 2002; Ricoeur, 1992; Roberge, 2011). Such an approach enables a focus on meanings and socio-cultural context, in combination with a critical orientation. The thesis draws on a range of theoretical ideas from the literature as its point of departure for the empirical study, guiding both data collection and data analysis. These include a range of theoretical ideas from the literatures on Political CSR, Responsible Leadership and Deliberative Lobbying (Lock & Seele, 2016; Maak et al., 2016; Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Patzer et al., 2018; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2006), key concepts from the literature on liberal and republican notions of citizenship (Honohan, 2002, 2017), as well as insights from Paul Ricoeur's theory of meaning, the self, motivated action, ethical intention and participation in processes of communicative action to develop collective rules, all developed building on his theory of critical hermeneutics (Ricoeur, 1992). This guiding theoretical framework is discussed in the methodology chapter. The thesis uses

these 'initial categories' (Herda, 1999) to analyse the empirical data and identify further insights in relation to the research questions. From its critical hermeneutical examination of the case of corporate lobbying and the SDGs, the study aims to develop insights of value to the wider literature on corporate lobbying, Political CSR and the role of business in global governance, as well as practitioners seeking to advance sustainable development.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is set out as follows.

Chapter two summarises the most relevant points in the literature on the role of business in global governance, and in so doing, seeks to establish where the empirical study presented here fits with and contributes to this wider literature, clarifying where broad consensus already exists, where the need for further research is required, and how this thesis helps contribute to some of those areas requiring further research.

Chapter three provides an account of the methodology employed in the empirical study. The chapter is formed of three principle parts. The first part describes the research strategy pursued in this thesis, introducing the methodology of critical hermeneutics, tracing its development and key concepts, explaining what it is, why it is an appropriate methodological approach for this study, and how the key concepts will be operationalised in this case. The second part describes the theoretical framework informing the empirical study, summarising some key ideas already described in the literature review and introducing additional areas of theory that will be drawn on. The third part describes the approach taken to sampling strategy, discussing the rationale for choosing the case of corporate involvement in the process to develop the SDGs as a focus for this study, before going on to discuss further detail on the approach to data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

The empirical findings are then presented in two sections each formed of two chapters. The first empirical findings section, comprising chapters four and five, addresses the first research question: can such lobbying be judged a helpful

contribution to advancing sustainable development? Chapter four presents an analysis of the policy outcomes called for during the corporate lobbying. Chapter five presents an analysis of the lobbying process itself. These chapters both draw on an analysis of public and non-public documentation, as well as observations of meetings. Both chapters include a discussion regarding how these findings can be interpreted.

The second empirical findings section, comprising chapters six and seven, addresses the second research question: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? Both chapters draw on an analysis of narratives constructed in interview situations by individuals involved in the lobbying process – both senior executives, as well as others who worked closely with them. Chapter six presents an analysis of the narratives these individuals constructed to account for the occurrence of the action they were involved in. Chapter seven presents an analysis of the narratives these individuals constructed to account for what influenced what they were aiming at in this action. Both chapters include a discussion regarding how these findings can be interpreted.

The thesis concludes in chapter eight with a discussion of what meaning emerges when the findings of these two sections are considered alongside each other. This chapter also summarises the contribution this thesis makes to the wider literature and to practice, and outlines some implications for further research.

2. Literature review

This chapter seeks to summarise the most relevant points in the literature to date on the role of business in global governance and in so doing, establish the context for the account of the empirical study presented in this thesis. This chapter specifically seeks to establish where the current study fits and contributes to this wider literature, clarifying where broad consensus already exists, where the need for further research is required, and how this thesis helps contribute to some of those areas requiring further research.

2.1. Global governance and non-state actors

For much of the twentieth century, dominant schools of thought in the discipline of International Relations saw nation states as the dominant actor in the governance of global affairs, with other kinds of institution having limited influence. Nation states were sovereign over all internal affairs within a state's borders, and negotiated between themselves, often through inter-governmental institutions such as the United Nations, when decision-making on issues that transcended national borders was required, such as in the spheres of peace and security, and transnational trade, and more recently in areas such as human rights and environmental issues (Ruggie, 2004).

However, beginning in the 1990s, many International Relations scholars began to focus on the role of non-state actors in global affairs. Rosenau coined the phrase 'global governance' to capture the role of multiple different kinds of institution in steering and coordinating human affairs, above and beyond the nation state (Rosenau, 1995; Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992). The word 'governance' was introduced to deliberately extend the focus beyond government. Ruggie defined governance as follows:

“Governance, at whatever level of social organization it may take place, refers to conducting the public's business — to the constellation of authoritative rules, institutions, and practices by means of which any collectivity manages its affairs.” (Ruggie, 2004, p. 504)

Rosenau defined global governance thus:

“In this analysis global governance is conceived to include systems of rule at all levels of human activity—from the family to the international organization—in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions.” (Rosenau, 1995, p. 13)

Rosenau and others argued that the series of changes known as globalization – a rapid increase in cross-border movement of goods, services, technology and capital – enabled by both regulatory change and technological change in the 1980s and 1990s, coupled with the end of the Cold War and decline of the USSR, contributed to a significant rise in the number and influence of both Civil Society Organisations or Non-Governmental Organisations (CSOs/NGOs) and also multi-national corporations (MNCs) operating across national borders, which then came to play a more significant role as actors in global politics (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2006; Rosenau, 1995; Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992).

Ruggie contributed to this literature by providing a history of changing patterns of global governance. This work challenged the International Relations orthodoxy of an unchanging global system of dominant nation states and drew attention to the differing roles of non-state actors during different periods in history by studying the pre-modern medieval European pattern of overlapping jurisdictions of kingdoms, city states, city leagues, religious institutions and tradesmens' guilds; how this system was very gradually succeeded by the Westphalian model of sovereign nation states, first in Western Europe, later in Central and Eastern Europe, and then through the independence of former colonies; the role of imperialist institutions in the governance of a liberal system of global trade and dis-embedded markets in the 1900s; the collapse of international economic regimes between WW1 and WW2; the creation of the multi-lateral system in the aftermath of WW2 based on the principles of embedded liberalism and dominant nation states; and the transition to neo-liberal economic globalisation and a return to dis-embedded markets in the 1990s (Ruggie, 1982, 1983, 1993, 2001b, 2002, 2004).

Scholars such as Keck and Sikkink have studied the role of CSOs and NGOs in influencing global governance in relation to issues such as human rights (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) while the scholarly field of Earth System Governance has developed to focus on the multiple actors involved in the governance of global environmental issues (Biermann, 2007; Burch et al., 2019). Polycentric governance has emerged as a core concept in the field of global governance. According to this theory, polycentric governance systems are those in which political authority is dispersed amongst a range of bodies that operate in overlapping jurisdictions which are not in a hierarchical relationship to one another. Ostrom defined polycentric governance systems as those that “have multiple governing authorities at different scales rather than a monocentric unit. Each unit... exercises considerable independence to make norms and rules within a specific domain.” (Ostrom, 2010). Key characteristics of polycentric governance (in comparison with monocentric, state-centric governance) are emergence and self-organising, with ‘soft-law’ private governance initiatives common in addition to the conventional state-led ‘hard-law’ governance approaches associated with monocentric government. Polycentric governance theory, through principles of local action and mutual adjustment, acknowledges the possibility that multiple governance initiatives could emerge to address governance demands. This potential proliferation of governance initiatives is not necessarily seen as a problem, and could even have benefit if treated as experimentation leading to enhanced learning about which governance approaches work in particular settings (Jordan, Huitema, Van Asselt, & Forster, 2017; Ostrom, 2010). However, these same characteristics of emergence and self-organising also run the risk that ‘governance gaps’ can occur. Without the kind of overarching design associated with monocentric governance, self-organising emergent approaches run the risk that certain governance needs might not get addressed, which could be more of a problem (Oberthur et al., 2017).

2.2. The role of the private sector in global governance

Developing from this interest in the roles of multiple actors in global governance, research has proliferated in recent years in both International Relations and Management and Organization Studies on how multinational

companies in particular have been playing significantly increased roles in global governance. Much of this has been in three broad areas: how businesses engage with public policymaking processes through Corporate Political Activity (CPA) to further their commercial objectives (Baysinger, 1984; Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Lawton et al., 2013); how businesses have lobbied to weaken and prevent government action on sustainable development as they have become more economically influential in the global arena, and funded think tanks promoting neo-liberal economic policies such as deregulation and the minimal state (Barley, 2010; Coen et al., 2010; Djelic, 2006; Dunlap & McCright, 2011); and how businesses have partnered with others to develop voluntary standards and private governance or 'soft law' mechanisms which apply transnationally (Brunsson, Rasche, Seidl, et al., 2012; Levi-Faur, 2005; Levi-Faur & Starobin, 2014; Moon et al., 2011; Ougaard & Leander, 2010; Rasche et al., 2013; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Scherer et al., 2006). Each of these areas is considered in more detail below.

2.2.1. Corporate Political Activity

The literature on Corporate Political Activity (CPA) within Organisation Studies has focused on how corporations have sought to influence the regulatory environment within which they operate. CPA is defined as corporate attempts to shape government policy in ways favourable to the firm (Hillman & Hitt, 1999). This field takes as its point of departure the question of how corporations seek to shape government policy and achieve public policy outcomes that further corporate interests (Lawton et al., 2013). This usually means activity aimed at preventing additional regulation or weakening existing regulation because of the detrimental effect this may have on profit-related goals and competitive strategies. Baysinger outlines three kinds of outcome sought by organisations pursuing CPA, all of which are variations on shaping government policy in ways favourable to the firm (Baysinger, 1984). Baysinger labels these domain management, domain defence, and domain maintenance. In the cases of domain defence and domain maintenance, organisations generally seek to weaken existing regulation or to prevent or water down proposed regulation. In the case of domain defence, organisations seek to counteract public policy initiatives that might be directly at odds with the organisation's strategic goals.

For example, where the tobacco industry lobbies against public health measures that could restrict the commercial activities of the tobacco industry. In the case of domain maintenance, organisations seek to influence public policy initiatives that might threaten the *means* by which a firm achieves its goals. For example, where organisations lobby against regulation that attempts to shape how business operates, like equal opportunities, environmental protection, health & safety, product safety and so on. In the case of domain management, organisations seek to actively capture and employ government entities to further their own private organisational interests, seeking government intervention to manipulate and distort the marketplace in their favour. Corporations can seek, for example, favourable cash subsidies, market protection, or even, for example, to have competitors charged with anti-trust activities.

Corporate Political Activity encompasses a range of different activities, of which direct lobbying is just one. Others can include: political advertising, financial contributions to political parties and campaigns (and Political Action Committees in the United States), legal action, commissioning third party lobbyists, stakeholder management, political campaigning, and charitable contributions (Anastasiadis, Moon, & Humphreys, 2018; Lawton et al., 2013). Anastasiadis et al propose a definition of lobbying, as a subset of CPA, specifically as:

“The strategic communication of politically relevant information by officers of a corporation to those political actors who have the power to substantially influence public policy outcomes in that policy-making environment.” (Anastasiadis et al., 2018, p. 208)

Lawton et al note how much of the CPA literature has primarily been focused on how corporations interact with national governments in developed countries, and that there is a need to for the CPA literature to pay more attention to the characteristics of corporate engagement with developing country governments and the role of corporations in global governance as a whole as well as engagement at the national level (Lawton et al., 2013).

2.2.2. MNCs using increased economic influence to lobby to weaken regulation and promote neo-liberalism

There has been substantial growth in scholarly activity exploring how private sector organizations, as they have become more transnational, economically significant, and globally influential, have sought to more effectively influence government regulation and public policy at both the national and inter-governmental levels through activities such as lobbying, public relations campaigns and other forms of Corporate Political Activity. Within this literature, the chief theme that has dominated has been an exploration of how MNCs have mobilised to weaken and dilute these more traditional kinds of government activity (Coen et al., 2010).

Ougaard and Leander, for example, have summarised literature on the role and influence of business in shaping the global regulation enacted and enforced by national governments and intergovernmental bodies (Ougaard & Leander, 2010). Barley has described the processes by which the private sector in the US in the 1970s and 1980s constructed an 'institutional field' of organizations to influence government in favour of its interests, specifically: defeating public interest groups, creating a more business friendly climate, reining in new regulatory agencies, and electing a pro-business government (Barley, 2010). Dunlap and McCright's work exploring the dynamics of organized climate change denial traces the involvement of parts of the private sector (fossil fuels, energy, resource-based industries like steel, forestry, mining, and manufacturing companies) motivated to protect their interests in the face of the perceived threat posed by any government action to address climate change (Dunlap & McCright, 2011). This literature shares the assumption of the CPA literature that companies engaging in these activities are doing so because they are seeking to further their commercial interests (Baysinger, 1984; Lawton et al., 2013). Numerous examples continue to be reported in the press, for example fossil fuel companies spending millions of dollars covertly lobbying against climate regulation despite calling for it in public (Laville, 2019; McCarthey, 2019; Raval, 2019), or housebuilders lobbying to weaken low carbon building regulations (Cuff, 2019). Critics have argued that such lobbying to weaken or prevent regulation to address sustainable development challenges

creates governance gaps that make it harder to advance social welfare, and only serve the interests of privileged elite interests at the expense of others.

A number of scholars have traced how multinational companies, as they have become more economically influential during the 1980s and 1990s, have acted as influential cheerleaders for key tenets of neo-liberal economic thinking including deregulation, privatization and a minimal state, both through direct lobbying and also through other forms of CPA, such as financial sponsorship of think tanks promoting neo-liberal principles, a broad framework that is then invoked to justify the weakening or scrapping of specific existing regulations or proposed new ones (Banerjee, 2009; Djelic, 2006). Marking a radical break with the orthodoxy of 'embedded liberalism' that characterised the norms of national economic policy and international economic relations among nations in 'the West' during the period from the Second World War until the late 1970s (Ruggie, 1982), 'neo-liberal' economic thinking came into its ascendancy in the 1980s and 1990s. Associated with thinkers such as Hayek and Friedman and other academics in the Mont Pelerin Society active in the 1950s and 1960s, key policy prescriptions started to find fertile ground among national and global policymakers in the later 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Neo-liberal economics rejected regulation and state intervention in economic matters, and advocated market mechanisms in their place, championing deregulation, privatization, a minimal state, and removal of government policies that acted as brakes on the transnational trade of goods and services and movement of capital (Broad, 2004; Djelic, 2006; Harvey, 2005; Williamson, 1990). Neo-liberal thinkers likened state intervention in the economy to the kind of arbitrary rule and oppression by governments that political liberalism called for ordinary citizens to be protected from. Rather, it was markets—through maximising efficiency and individual freedom—that would best enable collective prosperity. These economic ideas were translated into policy proposals that involved replacing legal compulsion with increased use of the price mechanism as a guide to resource allocation, and also privatization – transferring publicly-owned production into the private sector. These kinds of policy reforms were initially led in Chile, the US and the UK in the 1970s and 1980s, and then through the late 1980s and 1990s spread much further, particularly as financial crises saw many states turn to institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World

Bank for support, which was only granted in return for neo-liberal policy reforms. As promoted by the international development banks based in Washington DC, this same combination of deregulation, privatization, a minimal state, and removal of barriers to free trade, became known as the 'Washington Consensus' (Broad, 2004; Djelic, 2006; Harvey, 2005; Williamson, 1990).

Despite the mantra of no state intervention and de-regulation, embracing neo-liberal economic principles actually required certain regulation. As Levi-Faur notes: "While at the ideological level neoliberalism promotes deregulation, at the practical level it promotes, or at least is accompanied by, regulation." (Levi-Faur, 2005, p. 14). Increased use of competition and the price mechanism to guide resource allocation actually required 'regulation-for-competition', regulation to enable, for example, privatisation, the liberalisation of foreign trade and the liberalisation of international capital flows (Levi-Faur, 1998). Harvey notes that neo-liberals call for a state that guarantees the quality and integrity of money, and that sets up the military, defence, police and legal structures and functions that can secure private property, and can guarantee, by force if necessary, the proper functioning of markets (Harvey, 2005). The 'Washington Consensus' argued that the state should focus its public policy efforts on a range of specific policy priorities, often referred to as the policies necessary for creating an 'enabling environment' for transnational business and enterprise to thrive. This list of public policy priorities includes: providing fiscal policy discipline, avoiding large fiscal deficits relative to GDP, keeping interest rates low, and broadening the tax base and adopting moderate marginal tax rates; minimising public spending and eliminating subsidies; promoting free trade by removing barriers to cross-border trade in goods and services, and cross-border movement of capital, enabling foreign direct investment; strengthening protections for property rights and intellectual property rights; privatising state-owned enterprises, but continuing to invest in health, education and infrastructure; deregulating on the basis of reducing costs of doing business (Altenburg & von Drachenfels, 2008; Bannock et al., 2003; Broad, 2004; Williamson, 1990).

As Banerjee notes, the private sector has been widely perceived as a champion and cheerleader for economic policy consistent with neo-liberal principles,

lobbying hard for deregulation and minimal state intervention, and opposing attempts by states to be more interventionist: “The Washington Consensus was no accident but was the culmination of years of efforts by business and their lobbyists in government to consolidate their power” (Banerjee, 2009, p. 133). Djelic’s work traces how multi-national companies have been one of the carriers or transmission channels in the transnational diffusion of the neo-liberal ideas of marketization (Djelic, 2006).

2.2.3. Private governance and ‘soft law’

Over the same period, there has been significant focus on the growth in different forms of governance of business conduct and new forms of self, private, intergovernmental or multistakeholder governance. As Levi-Faur and others have noted, despite the mantra of deregulation, the period of ‘neo-liberal globalisation’ since the 1980s has, in practice, been accompanied by an inflation of regulations, regulatory bodies and compliance actors, constituting an emerging new governance system much more transnational and polycentric in nature compared with what preceded it (Biermann, 2007; Djelic, 2006; Levi-Faur, 2005; Levi-Faur & Starobin, 2014; Ostrom, 2010; Rosenau & Czempiel, 1992).

A wealth of literature has argued that the last decades have seen a significant shift of regulatory authority over business conduct from governments towards multi-stakeholder arenas or the private sector alone (Brunsson, Rasche, & Seidl, 2012; Djelic, M., & Sahlin-Andersson, 2006; Moon et al., 2011; Rasche et al., 2013). Ougaard and Leander, for example, have summarised the growing literature examining the role of business as a partner in non-traditional governance mechanisms such as partnerships and multi-stakeholder voluntary standards and certification schemes, characterising such instruments as ‘soft law’ in comparison with conventional, government-backed ‘hard law’ with state-backed legal enforcement mechanisms (Ougaard & Leander, 2010). Ruggie describes the development of one of the most significant such multi-stakeholder voluntary standards: the UN Global Compact, a voluntary standard derived from international law and international agreements negotiated through the UN and International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the areas of human rights, labour

standards, environment and corruption (Ruggie, 2001b, 2001a, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004).

Many scholars have attempted to theorise these developments. Matten and Crane, for example, have proposed an extended theory of corporate citizenship, arguing that the nature of the way corporations become involved in political processes has changed with the advent of globalisation and the changing role of states (Matten & Crane, 2005). Matten and Crane argue that historically, the state was seen as the central actor in the political concept of citizenship, protecting civil rights, fulfilling social rights, and being the principle arena for the exercise of political rights. But neo-liberal globalisation has 'de-territorialised' much social, political and economic interaction, one outcome of which has been to see some corporations starting to take on more of a role in administering citizenship rights as some states have started to less of a role in administering these rights. Examples they identify include corporations starting to play a greater role in fulfilling social rights through a growing role in outsourced public service delivery and through community investment programmes, a greater role in fulfilling civil rights, particularly in the context of oppressive government regimes, and also through protecting property rights in international markets, and a greater role in the area of political rights, both through exercising political rights themselves as a participant in the political arena lobbying governments, but also as an alternative channel or conduit through which citizens can exercise their own political rights.

2.3. Political CSR

Within Organisation Studies, this phenomenon of private governance has been increasingly investigated through the prism of Political Corporate Social Responsibility (Political CSR, or PCSR) (Palazzo & Scherer, 2008; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer et al., 2006, 2009; Scherer, Palazzo, & Matten, 2014; Scherer et al., 2016), a concept that refers to both specific activities as well as the intent with which they are engaged in.

In their definition of Political CSR, Scherer *et al* note that the concept refers to activities that turn corporations into political actors, such as engaging

responsibly in public deliberations and collective decision-making, and also the provision of public goods and restriction of public bads in cases where public authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfil this role. For engagement in such activities to be deemed 'responsible', according to this definition, both intent and process matter – such action must (a) be directed at the effective resolution of public issues with the aim of contributing to society or enhancing social welfare, rather than being directed solely by economic motivations, and (b) such action must be performed in a legitimate manner (Scherer et al., 2016).

“PCSR entails those responsible business activities that turn corporations into political actors, by engaging in public deliberations, collective decisions, and the provision of public goods or the restriction of public bads in cases where public authorities are unable or unwilling to fulfil this role. This includes, but is not limited to, corporate contributions to different areas of governance, such as public health, education, public infrastructure, the enforcement of social and environmental standards along supply chains or the fight against global warming, corruption, discrimination or inequality. These corporate engagements are responsible because they are directed to the effective resolution of public issues in a legitimate manner, often with the (explicit) aim of contributing to society or enhancing social welfare, and are thus not limited to economic motivations.” (Scherer et al., 2016, p. 276)

Key scholars associated with the field are explicit that, in contrast to much of the scholarship on Corporate Social Responsibility, the Political CSR field is located within the critical theory tradition, and has an explicitly stated aim of advancing responsible corporate behaviour:

“We define political CSR as normative and descriptive scholarship, aimed at advancing responsible corporate engagement with collective issues and public goods, that facilitates positive and impedes negative business contributions to society.” (Scherer, 2018, p. 394)

This literature seeks to account for emergence of the phenomenon of PCSR action by referring to macro-level dynamics, specifically the rise of economic globalization and the resulting reconfiguration of institutional influence on the global level. Scherer et al argue that globalization created a governance gap. Economic activities require the existence of rules and their enforcement as preconditions that the market cannot generate itself. Prior to globalization, in the period of 'embedded liberalism' from the 1940s onwards, in the West, national firms largely operated within legal frameworks developed by nation states. The

state determined regulations and delineated the sphere of private freedom, within which private institutions are entitled to conclude contracts with one another, to which the system of property and contractual rights compels obedience (Scherer et al., 2006). But in the era of economic globalization, a ‘post-Westphalian’ era, or ‘post-national constellation’, this model broke down – Scherer and Palazzo argued that as companies increasingly became transnational in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of globalization, on the global playing field there were no broadly accepted standards, either in legal or in moral terms – that business could straightforwardly align with (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). This governance gap led to what they called the “dark” and “bright” side of global business (Scherer et al., 2009).

The “dark” side of global business saw some multinational companies responding to the regulatory vacuum – the ‘governance gaps’ created by economic globalisation – by abusing the gap, directly or indirectly violating human rights across global operations and supply chains, especially in those areas where state institutions, legal restrictions, and enforcement are weak or almost non-existent, and justifying this by referring to neo-liberal economic principles of deregulation and minimal state intervention in the economy (Scherer et al., 2009), engaging in political activities in ways that do not contribute to the common good (Banerjee, 2009).

At the same time, the “bright” side of global business saw some multinational companies responding to these same governance gaps by getting involved in self-regulatory activities and engaging in the production of public goods beyond their immediate business context, and industry-level or policy-specific multilateral self-regulation initiatives that aimed to standardize, enforce and control business practices at the industry or global level (Scherer et al., 2009). MNCs were increasingly participating in the formulation and implementation of rules in policy areas that were once the sole responsibility of the state or international governmental organizations, they were participating in processes of regulating their own behaviour, substituting for non-existent regulation and filling the governance gap, albeit with governance mechanisms based on voluntary action and weak enforcement mechanisms (Scherer et al., 2006, 2009). Scherer and Palazzo employ Habermasian theory to argue that such

“bright side” activities are based on communicative action – working communicatively, or deliberatively, transparently and inclusively with other actors to develop solutions and approaches acceptable to all, rather than working instrumentally or strategically to further their own interests at the expense of others (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). They argue that these “dark” and “bright” side responses to globalization amount to a ‘politicization of the corporation’:

“We have described the growing positive and negative impact of corporations on democratic institutions and their participation in global processes of governance with and without government as the *politicization of the corporation*.” (Palazzo & Scherer, 2008, p. 773)

The chief argument advanced by these scholars to explain why corporations engage in PCSR activities is based on the need of corporations operating transnationally to maintain legitimacy. Legitimacy, these scholars argue, is vital for organizational survival as it is a precondition for the continuous flow of resources and sustained support by the organization’s constituents. Institutions that lose legitimacy find it difficult to enter into processes of social exchange as their partners do not rely on their compliance with social rules (Palazzo and Scherer, 2006). Historically, when companies largely operated within one national jurisdiction where there were relatively settled and agreed ethical norms (broadly consistent with prevailing legal frameworks), the legitimacy of these companies derived from operating within the law and delivering products and services efficiently and profitably. National democratic processes set the regulatory framework for the operation of markets and the management of the potential negative impacts of private sector companies, so that the leadership teams of these companies could focus narrowly on profit maximisation, pursuing their own private interests without needing to consider broader societal outcomes. The democratic state set market rules such that the externalities of market coordination could be internalised – the state embedded the market within a politically-designed framework, Ruggie’s ‘embedded liberalism’ that characterised the period from the 1940s to the 1970s (Ruggie, 1982). As such, the legitimacy of private sector organisations was more or less taken for granted and not actively managed or often thought about.

With the advent of economic globalization since the 1980s, Scherer and Palazzo argue, this means of deriving legitimacy broke down because established mechanisms of democratic governance were eroded. Across national boundaries there are no broadly accepted standards, either in legal or moral terms, for companies to straightforwardly align with, but rather often multiple conflicting ethical norms and institutional frameworks. There is no single global authoritative body equivalent to a national government to manage a democratic process to agree and enforce appropriate universal rules for markets and companies. This led to many companies facing dilemmas regarding which rules to follow, and critiques that economic globalisation had led profit-driven MNCs to exploit regulatory vacuums to violate human rights, exploit labour in global supply chains, collaborate with oppressive regimes, and conduct operations that cause environmental harm, for example. These practices have in turn attracted critique and activist campaigns from NGOs and other civil society organisations, and many corporations operating transnationally have found their brands the targets of NGO activist campaigns, posing a direct challenge to their legitimacy. Thus, as a result of this new context of plural values and weak institutions of global governance, to retain their legitimacy, private sector companies have found they needed to partner and work 'communicatively' or 'deliberatively' with other actors, rather than 'instrumentally' or 'strategically' (to use Habermasian terms) to develop satisfactory governance arrangements. In the new 'globalized' or 'post-national' or 'post-Westphalian' context, according to Scherer and Palazzo's argument, it is only through participating in these deliberative processes in a communicative mode that the private sector can maintain its legitimacy. Companies found that the governance gap created by the absence of a global regulator of markets in an era of transnational companies was causing them problems, and they responded by collaborating with others to develop private governance arrangements.

While offering this overall account of why corporations engage in PCSR activities such as helping develop voluntary rule-making and private governance mechanisms to further social welfare, PCSR theory is a little less developed on the question of why *some* corporations engage in PCSR activities while others do not, and leading PCSR scholars have noted the need for further empirical

research and theoretical development on this question. As discussed, PCSR scholars have noted that different corporations have responded to these changes in their external environment (the development of a 'post-national' context) differently. Scherer and Palazzo use the language of the 'bright side' and 'dark side' of global business to describe these different approaches (Scherer et al., 2009), and imply (without stating directly) that the difference is accounted for through the fact that some corporations face a greater degree of NGO campaigning than others, and hence a greater degree of challenge to their legitimacy (which can be addressed by engaging in deliberative PCSR activities). However, they also acknowledge that ambiguities and uncertainties remain, and further research is needed, particularly to explore the role of micro-level factors. For example, Scherer and Palazzo note:

“Political CSR has been largely silent about the motivation that drives corporations toward a political engagement ... How do different motivations (feeling of a moral duty versus fear of civil society pressure) influence the types of political CSR activities corporations choose? What is the role of top managers in those decisions of broadening the scope of corporate responsibility? (Scherer et al., 2014, p. 152).

And they state:

“It remains an empirical question whether all of the corporate social and political activities described above can be explained by rational profit seeking behavior, or whether other factors such as altruism, pro-social behavior, isomorphic adaptation to the changing institutional context, path-dependencies, or argumentative entrapment (i.e., the need "to walk the talk") play a significant role in the political behavior of business firms.” (Scherer et al., 2009, p. 328).

One decade on, taking stock of the achievements of this research agenda, PCSR scholars have been identifying that, partly in response to changing empirical context, there are a number of areas in need of further investigation. In particular, Scherer *et al* in their 2016 paper on Political CSR 2.0, identify seven areas that they argue have been relatively neglected in Political CSR research to date and in need of further attention (Scherer et al., 2016). Two are particularly relevant for the focus of this thesis.

First, Scherer *et al* note that the primary focus of the Political CSR research agenda to date has been on voluntary standards, soft law and private governance in contexts where traditional governmental regulation has been weak or non-existent. In focusing so much on 'soft law', PCSR research has neglected to focus on the relationship between corporate action and more traditional 'hard law', particularly given increasing empirical examples of action in this area (Scherer et al., 2016). Lawton, McGuire and Rajwani similarly argue that the relationship between CPA and Political CSR has been neglected and is in need of further research (Lawton et al., 2013).

Second, Scherer *et al* note that the primary levels of analysis of the Political CSR research agenda have been at the macro-level of the corporation as a political actor, with much less attention paid to the micro-level of leadership and individual behaviours, while hinting, as noted above, that the role of top managers may have some significance in understanding why some companies engage in PCSR while others don't and that this question is in need of further research.

Both of these two neglected areas have seen some useful development recently. On the relationship between corporate action and more traditional 'hard law', Lock & Seele have used Habermasian theory to develop a concept of deliberative lobbying as a PCSR activity (Lock & Seele, 2016). They contrast instrumental lobbying practices with deliberative lobbying, and define deliberative lobbying as CPA that is aligned with CSR that, as a process, is characterised by inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability, and in terms of intent, is aimed at resolving public issues. In parallel, links have been developed between the Political CSR literature and the Responsible Leadership literature to establish a framework for understanding the micro-foundations of Political CSR and explore the potential role of senior executives in shaping an organisation's approach to PCSR (Maak et al., 2016; Patzer et al., 2018). These two developments, their contribution so far and questions that still remain, are discussed below.

2.3.1. Linking PCSR with processes to develop hard law: Deliberative Lobbying

As discussed in the previous section, a primary focus for PCSR scholars has been the involvement of corporations in deliberative processes to develop voluntary standards and private governance initiatives – systems of rules agreed in contexts where either states are too weak to develop and enforce rules, or else unwilling. However, more recently PCSR scholars have noted the need for greater focus on business-government interaction and hard law and public governance, at the level of business engagement with both national governments and international and regional inter-governmental organisations (Scherer et al., 2016).

Lock and Seele's work on deliberative lobbying constitutes the most developed contribution in this area to date (Lock & Seele, 2016). They note that in practice, there is frequently a disconnect between, on the one hand, a company's CSR activities, which can often exhibit the characteristics of PCSR (aimed at resolving public issues to satisfaction of all stakeholders, and involving a deliberative process), and on the other their CPA activities, which all too often continue to be characterised by the features of instrumental approaches (aimed solely at furthering corporate interests, and not involving deliberative processes), which entirely contradict PCSR. This observation echoes the concerns of practitioners discussed in the introduction (AccountAbility and United Nations Global Compact, 2005; Cowe et al., 2002; United Nations Global Compact, 2013c). By way of illustration, Lock and Seele offer an empirical analysis of three instrumental lobbying cases where the CPA activities of three companies in the food and beverage industry contradicted and undermined their CSR activities (Lock & Seele, 2016). Anastasiadis explores similar themes in his paper on CPA and CSR in the car industry (Anastasiadis, 2013).

Lock and Seele then proceed to draw on the same principles from Habermasian social theory that informed PCSR to develop a model of what CPA that was consistent with PCSR would look like. Lock and Seele propose a form of CPA that promotes solutions to societal problems, which they term 'deliberative lobbying'. They distinguish this form of CPA from conventional CPA on two dimensions: both at the level of the intent of the activity and the process

followed. To be judged as lobbying activity that actively helps to contribute to addressing collective societal challenges, both the intent and the process of the CPA activity would need to be consistent with the characteristics of deliberative lobbying.

In terms of intent, Lock and Seele argue that deliberative lobbying aims at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders. Conventional CPA, on the other hand, aims at achieving public policy outcomes that further corporate interests. The intent of participants in deliberative lobbying, as Lock and Seele describe it, would be non-instrumental and non-opportunistic. They would aim at achieving agreements and solutions to public issues that are acceptable to all. This may include increased regulation, which may have the potential to negatively affect the financial bottom line of the business.

This contrasts with conventional instrumental CPA where the intent is to achieve outcomes that further the interests of the actor concerned and ensure their interests prevail over the interests of others, regardless of the consequences for other actors. This usually means preventing additional regulation or weakening existing regulation because of the detrimental effect this may have on profit-related goals and competitive strategies.

In terms of process, drawing on Habermasian principles, Lock and Seele propose that deliberative lobbying is characterised by three features: inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability. Conventional CPA, by contrast, tends to be characterised by a process which is neither inclusive, transparent, nor accountable.

In terms of the first feature, inclusive discourse, in Deliberative Lobbying, discourse is characterised by communicative action, as opposed to strategic or instrumental action. Participants must adhere to Habermas's four validity claims of ideal speech (truth, sincerity, appropriateness, and understandability), to reach consensus and solutions acceptable to all. The discourse must be inclusive: no one may be excluded, minority voices must not be marginalised, any participant can challenge the statement of another and present counter-

arguments. This contrasts with conventional CPA where the discourse process is usually bilateral between government and business or their intermediaries, and other actors are not involved, and the four validity claims of ideal speech are not necessarily adhered to – indeed critiques regarding the active promotion of mis-information are frequently made. At the extreme, influence may be pursued through discourse (ideal or otherwise), but also through activities such as financial contributions or bribery.

In terms of the second feature, transparency, the discourse process in deliberative lobbying must be transparent to all, so that any actor can know what is being discussed and proposed. This contrasts with conventional CPA where the discourse process is usually 'behind closed doors' – non-transparent, opaque or even actively secretive – what exactly is being lobbied for is unknown.

This transparency enables the third characteristic of the deliberative lobbying process: accountability. Not only must the content of what is being discussed be transparent, but it must be clear *who* is proposing what. If it is clear which organisations are lobbying policymakers, then they can be held accountable for their statements to policymakers and resulting actions. This contrasts with conventional CPA where the bilateral and non-transparent nature of the process, and the frequent use of third parties to conduct lobbying to make the corporate influence less overt, makes it difficult to know which organisations are behind the lobbying activities, and therefore makes holding participants accountable for their statements and actions much more difficult.

In the empirical cases of instrumental CPA activities Lock and Seele examine, the companies involved aimed at furthering their own commercial interests by seeking to prevent more stringent regulation. The lobbying process they engaged in involved activities such as providing biased information to policymakers, and sponsoring 'favourable' research while ensuring the source of funding for the research was unclear. Lock and Seele argue that, in contrast, a deliberative lobbying approach would have been characterised by companies engaging in a transparent, multi-stakeholder discourse with policymakers and other actors aimed at finding the best solutions to the societal problem and

acceptable to all actors. This could have involved transparently providing expert and unbiased information to policymakers and other actors, and openly and transparently providing funding for clearly independent research.

Lock and Seele's contribution responds to Scherer et al's call for more research on PCSR, government engagement and hard-law. Specifically, it helps address the normative question identified by Scherer (Scherer, 2018) of 'what should be aimed at in order to improve social welfare?' by providing a framework with a set of criteria to judge how far any particular example of lobbying activity might be judged helpful in advancing social welfare. However, Lock and Seele do not offer further insight into the question of what might account for the occurrence of this phenomenon, why some organisations might engage in deliberative lobbying rather than conventional lobbying, other than making reference to Scherer et al's existing arguments around the shift to globalization and the need to maintain legitimacy by alternative means. The questions as to how to understand what might account for the occurrence of such activity, and what insight that might provide to help address Scherer's follow up question of how such activities might be encouraged, remain in need of further research.

2.3.2. Accounting for differing levels of engagement in PCSR in different organisations: Responsible Leadership

Scholarly work on Responsible Leadership and the relationship between differing leadership styles and the different corporate activities pursued in the context of globalization and the governance gaps it has produced has flourished in recent years (Doh & Stumpf, 2005; Maak & Pless, 2009, 2006; Maak et al., 2016; Patzer et al., 2018; Pless, Maak, & Waldman, 2012; Stahl & Sully de Luque, 2014; Voegtlin, 2015; Voegtlin, Patzer, & Scherer, 2012). Recent work in the field (Maak et al., 2016; Patzer et al., 2018) has directly responded to the challenge of PCSR scholars that there is a need for further work to develop the micro-foundations of PCSR, seeking to connect macro-level explanations for the phenomenon of PCSR with micro-level factors (Scherer et al., 2016). Maak, Pless and Voegtlin propose a framework that examines the micro-foundations of PCSR. Their framework proposes a link between individual Responsible Leadership behaviour and PCSR at the organizational level. Maak *et al* argue

that a CEO's Responsible Leadership style influences the nature of a company's engagement in PCSR activities. They note that CEOs play a significant role in influencing and shaping the strategic direction of an organisation, including the nature of its involvement in CSR activities, although they also note a number of factors that moderate and limit the influence of these individuals, including individual-level influences (such as cognitive and social complexity) and organizational and societal level-factors (such as power distance and corporate governance). They cite Upper Echelon Theory to note that CEOs make choices in accordance with highly individualized lenses, formed by their experiences, personalities, and values (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Maak et al., 2016).

Their framework proposes that most CEOs tend to espouse one of two Responsible Leadership styles: either an Instrumental or an Integrative Responsible Leadership approach. The espousal of one or other style is influenced by the CEO's value orientation, specifically, their perception of the nature of their moral obligations toward shareholders and other stakeholders (a Fiduciary Duty orientation or a Social Welfare orientation). The core of their argument is that the extent to which senior executives feel a sense of moral obligation primarily to shareholders, or conversely to a wide range of varied stakeholder groups, will have a degree of influence over the extent organisations will engage in 'bright side' PCSR activities versus 'dark side' instrumental action in response to the emergence of the governance vacuum of the 'post-national' constellation.

According to Maak *et al*, an Instrumental Responsible Leadership approach is characterised by a number of specific behaviours (Maak et al., 2016). CEOs drive the business with a strategic focus on business performance and pay limited attention to non-core business issues. They lead by objectives through setting high performance business goals and to focus on managing employees' performance and excellence to meet these goals. They have regular interactions only with a limited number of key business stakeholders, such as employees, governments and investors, and apply instrumental, economic means-end relationships and exclusive, boundary setting behaviour by responding only to those constituencies that are either beneficial, or have power

(e.g., governments, legislators), and/or can create urgency (e.g., media). They show a reactive approach to broader stakeholder demands. They exhibit rational decision-making and justify their choices with a business-case logic.

This kind of approach, Maak *et al* argue, is influenced by a 'Fiduciary Duty' value orientation, which is characterised by strong perceived moral obligation toward the owners of the firm and the assumption that the best way to satisfy their personal needs is to fulfil shareholder obligations. This kind of orientation is also characterised by acceptance of the assumptions inherent to the economic theory of the firm (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) that economic actors (shareholders and managers alike) are rational, and that CEOs most effectively serve shareholders when guided by self-interest. This results in a 'learned' moral obligation of CEOs to satisfy shareholder demands, and the motivation to serve shareholders and to run the business with the primary purpose to make profit and maximize value for shareholders. This kind of value orientation motivates senior executives to engage selectively with those constituencies that are either threatening or beneficial to the firm in terms of running the business or providing business opportunities thereby serving shareholder value creation. It also motivates them to apply an economic cost-benefit logic – according to this logic, social responsible activities are only pursued if the calculated benefits associated with such an engagement are substantially higher than the costs or do not imply any cost at all. This kind of value orientation generally motivates economic means-end relationships and thus, Instrumental Responsible Leadership behaviour. This kind of CEO leadership approach would be likely to lead to low engagement in PCSR activities.

An Integrative Responsible Leadership approach, in contrast, is characterised by a different range of behaviours. CEOs take a broad and balanced approach towards value creation, and lead the business with a focus on business and societal objectives. They act as networkers; taking on boundary spanning roles; are widely connected. They interact with a large range of legitimate stakeholders. They represent the firm to external constituencies, engage in government relations and investor relations, and facilitate communication, collaboration and alignment among stakeholders. They initiate activities that span across organizational boundaries, often linking organizations from other

industries and sectors. When it comes to decision-making they facilitate inclusive processes, showing consideration for the interests, needs, and rights of a broad range of legitimate constituencies. They weigh the fit of potential options in light of the company's purpose as a corporate citizen. They show behaviour that mobilizes stakeholders, comes with a high degree of stakeholder interaction (including the integration of legitimate but powerless constituencies) and inclusive decision-making, considers strategic choices beyond the business case rationale, and shows a proactive approach towards CSR.

This kind of approach, Maak *et al* argue is influenced by a 'Social Welfare' value orientation, which is characterised by strong perceived moral obligation to toward a broad range of stakeholders, and perceived duty to create long-term welfare for all stakeholders, and is rooted in a perceived social contract between the firm and society (Maak et al., 2016). This kind of CEO leadership approach would be likely to lead to high engagement in PCSR activities.

Maak *et al* suggest that a CEO's value orientation is at least partially shaped by their experiences over their lifetimes (Maak et al., 2016). Patzer *et al*, on the other hand, argue the prevalence of Instrumental and Integrative Responsible Leadership styles is linked to historical societal context (Patzer et al., 2018). They argue that Instrumental Responsible Leadership, shaped by a concern for fiduciary duty to shareholders, emerged as a consequence of the development of modern society and its differentiation into societal subsystems, including the economic and the political system. Integrative Responsible Leadership, with its concern for social welfare and sense of obligation to multiple stakeholders, similarly emerged in response to shifts in the historical societal context – in this case as a consequence of the later development of post-modern society and the post-national constellation, where corporations operate transnationally and encounter plural values, multiple jurisdictions and legal frameworks, and weak institutions of global governance.

The Responsible Leadership literature helps begin exploring the question of how to understand why different companies respond to the governance gaps created by globalization in different ways ('bright side' or 'dark side'), exploring the potential significance of differences in leadership style and value orientation

among senior executives in understanding why organisations engage in PCSR activities to different extents, but remains under-theorised. In seeking to understand what influences responsible leadership style, for example, how can Maak *et al's* emphasis on individual value orientations be reconciled with Patzer's emphasis on changes in the macro-context? This thesis attempts to develop the insights from this literature further, and with particular reference to engagement with governments at the national level and intergovernmental organisations on the topic of hard-law.

2.4. Conclusion

This thesis seeks to interpret the phenomenon of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy for sustainable development. It looks at a specific empirical case—corporate engagement in the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals, an intergovernmental policy instrument itself aimed at influencing national government policy around the world. The thesis explores two specific questions: can such lobbying be understood as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development? And how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? The broader interest behind these two questions, inspired by the critical tradition within which this thesis sits, is that if such action can be judged helpful, understanding more about what accounts for its occurrence could help those who might be interested to try to encourage more of it.

As demonstrated in the summary presented in this chapter, a framework has been developed to help judge whether lobbying activity can be understood to be a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare, but existing theory in the literature struggles to account for the occurrence of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy on sustainable development in the context of the increased influence of transnational companies in global governance. Scholarly contributions on how businesses engage with public policymaking processes to further their commercial objectives within the field of CPA tend to assume that firms are motivated exclusively by their economic interests and engage with the political system only in order to gain economic benefits and/or to further their

competitive positions, and that regulation and government intervention increases costs and therefore firms would not lobby for it as it would not be in their economic interests. As such, this literature does not address the phenomenon of corporate lobbying for more ambitious government intervention for sustainable development and would struggle to account for the occurrence of such activity if it did.

The literature on PCSR has explored the phenomenon of transnational companies engaging in processes to develop collective rules through private governance initiatives and related this to the need for alternative approaches to maintaining legitimacy to deal with the problems created by governance gaps occurring as a result of economic globalization. And the literature on Responsible Leadership has begun to explore the significance of senior executive leadership style and value orientation in understanding why some organisations respond to these governance gaps with such 'bright side' PCSR activities while others respond with more instrumental, exploitative 'dark side' responses. Lock and Seele's contribution sets out a framework linking PCSR and direct lobbying, clarifying under what circumstances such lobbying could be considered helpful for advancing social welfare. But while overall offering many useful starting points, this PCSR literature does not offer an account for the occurrence of corporate lobbying for more ambitious government intervention on sustainable development. The question of how to understand what might account for the occurrence of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy at the national and intergovernmental level remains under-theorised.

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an account of the methods in the empirical study. The chapter first provides an overview of the research strategy pursued in this thesis to explore the research questions discussed in the previous chapters. It then proceeds to set out the theoretical framework and initial categories derived from the literature that guided data collection and data analysis. From there, the chapter provides further detail on sampling strategy, discussing the rationale for choosing the case of corporate involvement in the process to develop the SDGs as a focus for this study, before going on to discuss further detail on the approach to data collection and data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations and how these were approached.

Section 3.2 summarises the overall research strategy pursued in this thesis. It introduces the methodology of critical hermeneutics, tracing its development and key concepts, explaining what it is, why it is an appropriate methodological approach for this study, and how the key concepts will be operationalised in this case.

Section 3.3 presents the theoretical framework of 'initial categories' informing the study. It begins by discussing components of the theoretical framework that influenced data collection, providing a very brief summary of areas already discussed in the literature review (Political CSR and Responsible Leadership), as well as introducing additional areas of theory with a summary of theory relating to differing conceptions of citizenship linked to the liberal and republican traditions, and a more detailed discussion of Paul Ricoeur's theory of the ethical intention in motivated action, and what shapes participation in the communicative mode in deliberative processes to develop collective rules.

Sections 3.4 to 3.7 discuss, respectively, the approach to sampling strategy, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research strategy

This section outlines the methodological approach employed in this study and explains why this methodology is particularly useful for investigating the research questions discussed in the previous chapters. It then provides a generic and procedural description of this methodological approach, and goes on to describe how this approach has been operationalised in this particular study.

The methodological approach employed in this study is critical hermeneutics (Herda, 1999; Kaplan, 2003; Prasad, 2002; Ricouer, 1992; Roberge, 2011; Thompson, 1981). This thesis seeks to interpret the phenomenon of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy for sustainable development from within the critical tradition. The thesis looks at a specific empirical case—corporate engagement in the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals—and explores two specific questions: can such lobbying be understood as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development? And how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? As Scherer argues, the assumptions of a research tradition influence choices about which research questions are worth asking (Scherer, 2018). In the critical tradition, he argues, among the kinds of questions that need answering are: What should be aimed at in order to improve social welfare? And how should such goals and priorities be achieved? The first kind of question can be advanced through normative research and the second through both interpretive hermeneutic and positivist explanatory research. As such, critical hermeneutics is a particularly appropriate methodological approach to employ to investigate the two research questions at the heart of this thesis as the methodological approach is hermeneutical and combines aspects of both the interpretive and critical research traditions, enabling a focus on intersubjective meanings and socio-cultural context, in combination with a critical orientation, despite these two traditions generally being considered to be grounded in incommensurate paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Cunliffe, 2011; Morgan & Smircich, 1980). The following sections explain what critical hermeneutics is, how it has been employed with Management and Organisation Studies, key principles and how

they generally tend to be operationalised, and how this approach will be operationalised in this study.

3.2.1. What is Critical Hermeneutics?

Critical hermeneutics is particularly associated with the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, and his intervention in debates between Gadamer and Habermas on philosophical hermeneutics and critical theory. It is seen as a particular variant in the broad tradition of hermeneutics which attempts to reconcile Gadamer's focus on tradition and inherited historical and cultural meanings in his philosophical hermeneutics with Habermas's focus on critique of ideology and tradition in his critical theory. The most salient aspects of these debates are briefly traced in the following sections.

3.2.1.1. *Early origins of hermeneutics*

Different scholars note different origins of the practice of hermeneutics, but all associate it with approaches to interpretation in situations of dispute, in particular the interpretation of difficult or ambiguous texts. Prasad (Prasad, 2002) points to origins in ancient Greece, and subsequent practices around interpreting the Torah and the Bible. The term derives from the Greek for the craft of interpreting and links to the figure from Greek mythology Hermes the messenger, whose messages were frequently ambiguous and required interpretation. Hermeneutics was also significant during the Reformation, as the authority of the Catholic Church's interpretations of Christian texts was challenged and the Bible was translated into vernacular languages. Prasad (Prasad, 2002) notes how branches of hermeneutics developed for law, philology, history and poetry. In all cases, hermeneutics was about the process to be followed to interpret a text when the meaning it is trying to convey is unclear, and would involve trying to look for additional information about what the original author intended the text to mean.

3.2.1.2. *Theory of hermeneutics*

Following the Reformation, the art and theory of hermeneutics was developed in new directions by European Idealists and Romantics including Ast and Schleiermacher, and then Dilthey, who were working to develop an alternative approach to positivist approaches to interpretation (Dilthey, 1976; Palmer, 1969; Prasad, 2002; Schleiermacher, 1985). These scholars worked to develop a general theory of textual interpretation and understanding, applying hermeneutics to all texts, not just religious texts or other specific fields. They emphasised the importance of attempting to recover an author's original intended meaning, particularly seeking to understand more about the context of its production. They argued that a text is shaped by the broader cultural meanings of the time and place of its production, so to uncover the meaning of a text, the cultural and temporal context of its production must be investigated. The meaning of texts produced in different epochs or cultures could not be understood without taking that different context into account. Positivist approaches—in the ascendancy at the time—sought to explain by isolating parts. In direct contrast, the proponents of hermeneutics sought to draw a distinction between explanation and understanding, and argued that the part could only be understood by considering it in the context of the whole.

3.2.1.3. *Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics*

Gadamer developed the theory of hermeneutics further by focusing on the interpreter rather than the author. Gadamer argued that, rather than focus on an author's original intended meaning, actually the meaning of a text is as much about the interpreter as the text itself or the intent of its original author. Gadamer's contribution to hermeneutics built on insights from Heidegger's work. Heidegger critiqued Husserl's phenomenological approach. Where Husserl argued that meaning was dependent on the intention of the author, Heidegger argued that in order to identify something as potentially having meaning, a person must already be located within a system of meaning, a system of inherited meanings that one is 'thrown' into. Gadamer built on Heidegger's arguments and proposed that we cannot interpret without the points of view we already have. The beliefs we already have are the means to

understanding, rather than a barrier to it that need to be 'suspended' or 'bracketed'. Thus, Gadamer argued, the meaning in any text emerges from the sum of prior knowledge and meanings in the mind of the interpreter. Meaning emerges from the encounter between the text and the prior knowledge of the interpreter. We understand through the beliefs, the constellation of prior meanings and ways of interpreting phenomena we have already acquired or inherited. In any act of interpretation, a 'fusion of horizons' occurs between the text being interpreted and the interpreter. As an interpreter works to understand a text, a fusion of the 'horizon' of the text and the 'horizon' of the interpreter occurs and a meaning emerges. The meaning of a text is determined by all the meanings sedimented in tradition that are inherited by interpreters. This is not an objective or universal meaning, but a meaning unique to that interpreter at that point in time, based on their prior knowledge. For Gadamer, this is the only 'truth' that is possible – objective, universal meaning cannot be achieved because each individual vantage point is different. Thus, different people will make different meanings from the same text, varying depending on differences in the kinds of prior meanings they have inherited. Any act of interpretation, any attempt to understand, involves starting with prior knowledge (Myers, 2013). Such 'prejudice' is seen as a source of bias in positivist epistemological approaches, but is seen as inescapable in Gadamer's hermeneutics. For Gadamer's hermeneutics, no 'objective truth' is possible, the only understanding that is ever possible is founded on prior meaning. Each individual will see a 'truth' which is unique to them.

3.2.1.4. Habermas' critique of Gadamer

Gadamer's approach was criticised by objectivists like Betti, but also by critical theorists like Habermas (Prasad, 2002). The critical theorists wanted to build further on the insights of Gadamer's hermeneutics, and in so doing, develop a more comprehensive hermeneutics of critique and emancipation. The critical theorists were particularly focused on how the task of interpretation should include, among other things, the necessity of providing a critique of the ideological aspects of the text being interpreted. Habermas argued Gadamer was wrong to assume that everything that an interpreter understands about a thing, based on their preconceived ideas (including the inherited understandings

in any given society), is 'truth'. Habermas argued that Gadamer left no room for critical perspectives contrary to these conservative, inherited ideas that privilege as 'true' whatever the self or wider society perceives. In particular, Gadamer left no room for Freudian suspicions of the consciousness, or for the critique of ideologies operating in any society. Habermas argued you can't have a theory of meaning that says that meaning simply emerges from the encounter between phenomenon and prior knowledge, because then it would not be possible to be able to critique meaning as having been distorted by ideology (Roberge, 2011). Habermas's concern was that ideology is embedded in tradition – meanings that are not 'true' but exist because elites attempt to manipulate and distort systems of meaning to protect their interests and sustain domination and oppression of others. Habermas argued that critique of systems of meaning to identify the operation of ideology could be performed based on logic and reason. Social science methods, based on logic and reason, could be used to uncover how meanings passed down through prior knowledge embedded in culture could be manipulated by the powerful to maintain their position. Gadamer responded that psychoanalysis and critique are useful, but exist within prevailing tradition, it wasn't possible to step outside tradition to some abstract universal vantage point to perform critique, all interpretation can only occur within the frame of meanings inherited from previous generations. Habermas responded that critique must prevail, because anything else leads to a blind acceptance of tradition (Kemp, 2011).

3.2.1.5. Ricoeur's intervention in debates between Gadamer and Habermas

Ricoeur sought to reconcile Gadamer's focus on tradition and inherited historical and cultural meanings with Habermas's focus on critique of ideology and tradition by arguing that while interpreters—or 'selves'—are shaped and influenced by prior intersubjective meanings which they bring to bear in the act of interpretation (as per Gadamer), there is the opportunity for a moment of critique at the point at which 'selves' encounter these meanings (creating space within Gadamer's position for Habermas's interest in critique).

This moment of critical interpretation is possible because of what Ricoeur terms 'distanciation' – interpreters don't just straightforwardly absorb a meaning from

a text based on their own prior understandings; rather, more than one meaning or interpretation of a text is possible because of the 'distance' between the author of the text and the interpreter, the distance between the production of a text and its reception. Such distance makes ambiguity possible, and therefore the chance that more than one interpretation could be valid.

Distance can be created in a number of ways. Firstly, for example, distance is created if the author of the text is not present when the interpreter of the text is making meaning of it. Once an author's meaning has been inscribed in a text, it starts to take on a life of its own, the meaning becomes autonomous, independent of whatever the author intended. Secondly, distance is created because the interpreter of the text has a sum of prior meanings they bring to bear when interpreting the text that are (necessarily) different to the sum of meanings the author had at the point of the text's creation, not least, perhaps, because significant time has elapsed between the creation of the text and the moment of interpretation, or if the interpreter is located in a different cultural context from the author. The interpreter is in a different temporal and cultural location to the author.

Following this argument, prior meanings are not just absorbed passively (as per Gadamer), they are actively re-interpreted, and can be interpreted either trustingly at face value, or with critical suspicion. The hermeneutics of faith interprets meanings primarily with a trusting disposition; the hermeneutics of doubt, in contrast, adopts a critical and sceptical stance. The meaning of a phenomenon can be taken to be what it appears at face value, as per Gadamer. Or, it can be interpreted with some doubt, that it is not actually what it appears to be at face value, but may in fact be something else. The interpreter can look for hidden meanings which, for example, further the interests of elites, as per Habermas.

In proposing this, Ricoeur agrees with Gadamer that there can be no abstract, universal place outside of prior meanings from which critique can take place, but disagrees with Gadamer, arguing that this does not mean that there cannot be a degree of critical distance taken toward meanings that are passed down. Thus, Ricoeur agrees with Habermas that critique is possible, but differs from

Habermas in that he argues that any critique can never be finally proven beyond doubt, only ever suspected, whereas Habermas argues critical theory allows critique to be firmly established and confirmed through reasoned argument. Ricoeur accepts Gadamer's argument that you can only know things through bringing your prior knowledge to the interpretation of phenomena, but there is scope to be suspicious and critical in the act of interpretation. As a result, you cannot ever fully be certain that something is what it appears to be, but equally you cannot be certain it is an 'ideological distortion'. All you can do is just "attest" to what something appears to be at face value, and what you could question it could be if you were being suspicious, without truly knowing either way, because the interpreter cannot escape the overall system of meaning (Roberge, 2011). The interpretive act is never closed conclusively, alternative interpretations are always possible, every meaning is a construction (Myers, 2013). You can't with 100 percent certainty observe the operation of ideology, and justify with reference to reason/logic, as per Habermas. But you can justify taking a line of critical or suspicious interpretation, you just can't claim to have proved its presence with complete certainty. The critique of ideology can be begun, just not completed (Roberge, 2011). But critical hermeneutics does not reach the same conclusion as post-modern deconstruction. While multiple conflicting interpretations of phenomena are possible, this does not mean every possible interpretation is equally valid. It is possible to judge between competing interpretations, you just might get it wrong, and your view might change over time, but that doesn't mean judgement should be suspended altogether, just always remain provisional.

3.2.2. Critical hermeneutics in Management and Organization Studies

A significant body of scholarship using critical hermeneutics as a research methodology has developed in Management and Organization Studies over the past few decades. Building on discussions in the previous section, Ricoeur's approach to critical hermeneutics can be seen to straddle intersubjective and critical theory research paradigms. Gadamer's hermeneutics is clearly located in the interpretivist research paradigm of Burrell and Morgan's framework (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Interpretivist research methodologies are critiqued by critical theorists for merely seeking to understand, without seeking to be critical

or to seek change. Critical theorists thus propose the critical theory research methodology, which seeks to apply social science tools to interpret texts to identify the operation of ideology. As discussed above, this approach is critiqued by Gadamer for seeking to conduct this critique from some dis-embedded abstract transcendental location. Ricoeur's critical hermeneutics, as developed in his key works in the 1970s and 1980s, responds to these Gadamer-Habermas debates by providing a theoretical basis for conducting critique within an interpretivist paradigm.

Three key studies that set out and develop how a critical hermeneutics methodology can be approached in Management and Organization Studies are those of Phillips & Brown, Prasad & Mir, and Herda (Herda, 1999; Phillips & Brown, 1993; Prasad & Mir, 2002). Prasad also expands on the philosophical underpinnings of the approach in his paper in *Organizational Research Methods* (Prasad, 2002). These studies draw on Ricoeur's approach to critical hermeneutics (Ricoeur, 1973, 1981, 1990), and also on Thompson's interpretation and proposed methodological guidelines, which he developed based on Ricoeur's work (Thompson, 1981). Numerous studies in Management and Organization Studies have followed a methodological approach based on the principles set out in these studies (Aredal, 1986; Dye & Mills, 2012; Foster, Helms Mills, & Mills, 2014; Gabriel, 1991; Gopinath & Prasad, 2013; Hirschman, 1990; Krysa, Le, Mills, & Mills, 2016; McLaren & Mills, 2013; Nath, van Peurse, & Lowe, 2006; Parsons, Sanderson, Mills, & Mills, 2012; Peng, Yu, & Mills, 2015; Russell & Meehan, 2014).

Prasad and Prasad and Mir and Herda argue that a critical hermeneutics approach to research methodology does not prescribe a precise protocol or guidelines. Rather, they argue that a critical hermeneutics approach requires consideration of a number of core principles (Herda, 1999; Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir, 2002). Prasad and Prasad and Mir describe five core principles that inform a critical hermeneutics research methodology, which they derive from their reading of classical hermeneutics, Gadamer, Habermas, and also Ricoeur's work of the 1970s and 1980s. They set out a number of specific implications for how to approach research using a critical hermeneutics methodology, based on these five core principles (Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir,

2002). Herda offers another approach to using critical hermeneutics as a research methodology which shares many similarities while also offering a few variations (Herda, 1999).

This thesis proposes to further develop how a critical hermeneutics research methodology can be approached in Management and Organization Studies by building on additional insights from Ricoeur's later work in *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur, 1992). In particular, the thesis will propose a sixth core principle—otherness and the self—to add to Prasad's original five, based on Ricoeur's theory of the self, which can provide a basis for analysing how meanings in the wider context can shape motivated action by the self. The next sections discuss these core principles and how they can be operationalised.

3.2.3. Core principles of a critical hermeneutics research methodology

Prasad and Prasad and Mir describe five core principles that inform a critical hermeneutics research methodology, which they derive from their reading of classical hermeneutics, Gadamer, Habermas, and also Ricoeur's work of the 1970s and 1980s. These five core principles are: the hermeneutic circle, the hermeneutic horizon, the fusion of horizons, author intentionality, and critique (Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir, 2002). This thesis, drawing on Ricoeur's later work on the theory of the self, motivated action and the ethical intention, discussed in his 1992 work *Oneself as Another*, proposes to add a sixth core principle: otherness and the self (Ricoeur, 1992). The next sections discuss these core principles and how they can be operationalised.

3.2.3.1. *The hermeneutic circle*

The hermeneutic circle is a core methodological concept in hermeneutics. Prasad dates early references to the concept to the works of Ast and Schleiermacher in the early 1800s (Palmer, 1969; Prasad, 2002; Schleiermacher, 1985). Influenced by German Romantic ideas of a unitary cultural 'geist' or 'spirit', Ast argued that individual texts or cultural artefacts could not be understood without consideration of the wider cultural whole of which they were a part, and equally, an overall culture could only be understood

by considering individual texts and cultural artefacts produced by that culture. Individual texts are a record of the cultural context in which they are produced. To understand the meaning of an individual text, the creative processes of the author and the cultural context of the circumstances of the text's production must be considered. This involves an iterative, dialectical, back and forth, circular or spiralling process, considering part and whole and part and whole. Additional levels of meaning in a text emerge as different aspects or levels of context are considered. This iterative, circular interpretive process of considering the meaning of a text in relation to context is called the hermeneutic circle.

3.2.3.2. *The hermeneutic horizon*

While the concept of the hermeneutic circle originates in classical hermeneutics, the concepts of the hermeneutic horizon, the fusion of horizons, and author intentionality are all drawn from Gadamer's work (Gadamer, 1975, 1976; Prasad, 2002). While Ast and Scheleiermacher and other classical hermeneutical theorists emphasise that a text cannot be understood without considering the context of its production, Gadamer adds that any interpreter is equally located within a specific cultural context. Any interpreter will need to conduct the process of interpreting a text by drawing on their own prior knowledge, linked to their own particular historico-cultural context. This forms part of the critique of the objectivist nature of early hermeneutics. The early hermeneuticists believed that texts did have definitive meanings, which could be uncovered with enough method-governed analysis of the context of production. But for Gadamer, the text is not 'out there', amenable to being investigated in an objective way by the hermeneuticist, the researcher is not on the outside, looking in. Rather, that hermeneuticist is also located within a cultural context and set of meanings themselves. This means the researcher can only come to a limited, partial, subjective view of the meaning of a text, constrained by the meanings of their own context, rather than an objective, final, transcendental meaning of the text. The researcher brings their own hermeneutic horizon of understanding when attempting to interpret the horizon of understanding of the text. An objective, definitive meaning of any text is not possible.

3.2.3.3. *The fusion of horizons*

This core concept builds further on Gadamer's thinking (Gadamer, 1975, 1976; Prasad, 2002). Building on the previous concept of the hermeneutic horizon, a key implication of Gadamer's argument is that the meaning of a text does not derive solely from the intentions and cultural context of the author. Rather, the meaning of a text is what emerges from the encounter between the horizon of the text and the horizon of the interpreter. We can only understand a text through the combination, or fusion, of our prior knowledge or pre-understanding with the phenomenon of the text. Meaning does not reside solely in the text or the interpreter, but emerges from the two coming together. This is the only truth that is possible. Different interpreters will understand different meanings from a text because they will be located in different cultural contexts and have differing prior knowledge that they bring to bear in interpreting the same text. The same text will mean different things to different people.

3.2.3.4. *Author intentionality*

Gadamer's insights regarding the interpreter's hermeneutical horizon and the fusion of horizons have crucial implications for the significance of the intention of the author in the meaning of the text (Prasad, 2002). Classical hermeneutics was concerned with establishing the meaning of a text by investigating the intentions of the author and the influence of the wider meanings embedded and understood in the cultural context at the time of production. But Gadamer's insights signal that the meaning of a text must always be more than just the intention of the author. The producer of a text will have had certain meanings in mind when creating the text, but the meaning interpreted by an interpreter will be inevitably be more than this because the interpreter is drawing on their own prior knowledge to interpret the text and the meaning they make of the text is a fusion of the text and the interpreter's prior knowledge. Interpretation can only take place through the interpreter's pre-existing horizon of understanding and prior knowledge. The text cannot but represent more than whatever the author intended. From the moment of the text's production, it begins to take on an autonomous character, taking on a life of its own independent of the author

(Myers, 2013). The original intended meaning of the original author can never be fully recovered. And not only can the same text mean different things to different people depending on their own prior meanings, it is entirely possible for the interpreter to conclude that the text means something entirely unrelated to what the creator intended. An interpretation of the intended meaning of the author can play a greater or lesser role in the meaning of a text that an interpreter arrives at. For some interpreters, the original intended meaning of an author can be entirely unimportant in arriving at the meaning of the text from their particular perspective.

3.2.3.5. *Critique*

This rejection of the primacy of author intention in understanding the meaning of a text opens the way for a moment of critique in the process of interpretation. As discussed above, Habermas wanted to build on Gadamer's critique of objectivist hermeneutics, but critiqued Gadamer's emphasis on meaning emerging straightforwardly from the interface of the interpreter's prior knowledge with the text, arguing this provided no opportunity for critique to investigate the operation of ideology embedded in tradition and inherited meanings. Gadamer, in turn, critiqued Habermas for falling in to the same trap as the objectivist classical hermeneuticists of attempting to perform interpretation from some disembodied transcendental location outside of their own unique hermeneutical horizon, embedded in their own set of partial, subjective meanings.

Ricoeur attempts to retain and reconcile aspects of both perspectives by introducing the concept of distanciation. Ricoeur's argument is that the distance between the horizon of the author of the text and their cultural context, and the horizon of the interpreter of the text and their cultural context, introduce ambiguity and uncertainty, and this is what enables an opportunity to critique in the process of interpretation. Rather than the interpreter reaching one unambiguous conclusion about the meaning of a text based on the fusion of the horizon of their own prior knowledge and that of the text, more likely is that the interpreter will find themselves faced with multiple possible meanings of the text that could be valid. The interpreter can perform a trusting, faith-based reading of

the text, taking its meanings as they first appear when they encounter the interpreter's own set of prior knowledge, and considering the context of the text's production to become aware of additional levels of meaning. Or the interpreter can perform a critical, doubt-based reading of the text, suspecting it to be more than it appears at face value and interrogating it for the operation of ideology. But this critical interpretation does not take place from a transcendental location as per Habermas, and therefore cannot be proven definitively. Rather, a critical reading can only be performed from within the system of knowledge of the interpreter, meaning that it cannot be proven definitively, only attested to on the basis of argument. No final meaning can be reached conclusively, only argued for, to reach a kind of partial, provisional resolution, always open to further challenge. This is not to say that all possible interpretations are equally valid. Rather, it is to argue that while many interpretations are possible, some are better than others, and the case for one interpretation rather than another can be argued for, and some level of agreement about that can be reached, just not definitively proven beyond doubt. Ricoeur argues that a trusting and suspicious reading are both required to come to a comprehensive (if not final) understanding of the meaning of any text.

3.2.4. How these principles tend to be operationalised in practice

As noted above, Prasad argues that while critical hermeneutics does not offer a precise set of formulas and protocols for the interpretation of texts, there are clear implications from the five core principles he identifies that inform a critical hermeneutic approach to research methodology (Prasad, 2002).

First, the concept of the hermeneutic circle implies that in the act of analysis, the researcher needs to consider the context surrounding the circumstances of the production of the text under consideration, and follow an iterative, back-and-forth motion considering text and context and text and context. For any particular text, there are multiple possible layers of context that could be considered. Prasad recommends that a researcher begin with a relatively narrowly defined context, and gradually progress to consider ever wider levels of cultural and historical context. Themes developed from engaging with the wider context can be used to interpret the texts under consideration.

Second, the researcher must not attempt to come to an objective, definitive understanding of the text under consideration. Rather, the researcher must be self-reflexive and retain an awareness that the understanding they arrive at will be a product of both the meaning of the text and the researcher's own prior knowledge. It is inescapable that it must, to a degree, reflect the 'prejudices' or prior knowledge of the researcher. This is not to deny the value of the understanding arrived at, just to acknowledge the status of it. The researcher can argue the case for the value of the understanding arrived, they can attest to its validity, but they cannot claim it to be an objective and definitive truth.

Third, the goal of the analysis is not simply to uncover the original meaning intended by the author of the text, but rather, to recognise that the multiple kinds of distance between the moment of the production of the text and its interpretation produce ambiguities and uncertainties about the meaning of the text, to the extent that more than one meaning of the text can be valid. The researcher should consider how the different people could find different meanings in the text depending on their own prior meanings. Others may (and likely will) examine the same text or texts and reach different conclusions as to its meaning.

Fourth, in addition to performing a trusting analysis of the text, and considering context, the researcher should also perform a critical analysis of the text, seeking to understand additional meanings under the surface. Such a critical analysis will require the application of one or more critical theory perspectives. This could be a Habermasian ideology-critique. But it would be equally valid to apply lenses such as feminism, materialist Marxism, postcolonialism or others. A benefit of the critical hermeneutics approach is that it seeks to enable power relations to be considered as one dimension structuring meaning without requiring that a concern for the operation of power is the only dimension structuring meaning, not defining it entirely. A critical hermeneutics analysis encourages the interpreter to be suspicious, but not to only be suspicious, not to reject apparent meanings altogether. The researcher can put a degree of trust in apparent meanings while retaining some suspicion. The researcher should

argue for a particular interpretation, but cannot prove this interpretation to definitively be the case – it cannot be proven beyond doubt, only attested to.

Prasad and Mir build on these five core concepts and four implications to set out a four step analytical process to perform a critical hermeneutical analysis of oil industry CEO letters (Prasad & Mir, 2002). First, they argue the researcher should identify the texts to be analysed and perform a face-value reading to understand their manifest meaning, identifying themes present in the texts (acknowledging that such themes identified will partly be dependent on their own prior meanings and hermeneutic horizon). This involves performing a hermeneutics of faith, a trusting reading. Second, the researcher should consider the socio-cultural-historic context of the production of the text, by drawing on other texts that shed light on the context of production. Prasad and Mir suggest employing the hermeneutical circle to consider multiple and ever-widening layers of context, each offering an increasingly comprehensive understanding of the text being interpreted. From this analysis, a set of appropriate themes can be identified which can be used to guide a second analysis of the key texts (which are performed in the third step). Third, put these two analyses together – reconsider the meaning of the text in light of understanding more about the context of its production. The hermeneutic circle is applied again here, to understand the relationship between text and context, and further develops the hermeneutics of faith. The core texts are analysed from the perspective of key themes developed from a consideration of the wider context in the second step. Fourth, use a specific critical conceptual framework to analyse the text for the operation of elite interests, such as Habermasian ideology-critique, feminism, material Marxism or postcolonialism. This involves performing a hermeneutics of suspicion (Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir, 2002).

In their case, Prasad and Mir first performed a face-value, trusting reading of 64 letters written by six oil companies, identifying themes relating specifically to OPEC. They then re-considered the meaning of these letters in light of a set of themes they identified from the wider literature linked to successive layers of context: the dynamics of international demand and supply of oil; the October 1973 War between Egypt and Israel; the system of petroleum concessions existing during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the major oil producing

regions of the world which ultimately led to the establishment of OPEC in 1960; and finally the global dynamics of colonization and decolonization. Finally, they applied the critical theoretical lens of postcolonialism (specifically Orientalism (Said, 1978)) (Prasad & Mir, 2002).

Phillips and Brown set out and pursue a similar but subtly different three step approach in their study of oil industry adverts (Phillips & Brown, 1993). First, the researcher should examine the socio-historical context of production, transmission and reception of the text, and consider relations of power in these processes. Phillips and Brown suggest considering questions including the following: who produced the text and for whom was it produced? Consider the interests that led to its production, consider what effect the text was aiming to have in the world, consider when and where produced. What resources were available to actors producing and receiving text (eg economic, cultural and symbolic - Bourdieu)? What rules and conventions influenced? Second, they argue, the researcher should perform a formal analysis of the text using a particular critical method. Phillips and Brown suggest among those that could be appropriate are: semiotics, conversational analysis, ethnomethodology, psychoanalytic criticism, and Marxist analysis. Third, bring the two readings together to argue for a particular meaning of the text, based on this combination of the consideration of context and application of critical theory.

Herda offers another variation on how to follow a critical hermeneutical approach (Herda, 1999). Some of the key aspects of Herda's proposed approach are as follows. Herda proposes that as a first step, a researcher develop a theoretical framework of 'initial categories' from a review of relevant literature. These basic categories are used to place direction and boundaries on the inquiry, as well as providing a starting point for guiding both data collection and data analysis. As a second step, texts are assembled. For data collection, a range of different kinds of text are relevant, including written sources such as reports or policy statements on organisations or communities related to the study, pertinent in-house or in-country journals or documents, and correspondence. Herda also argues that transcribed interviews can form key texts. The researcher can use the initial categories developed in the first step to guide the creation of an interview protocol and conversation guide, and conduct

conversations with relevant individuals for the study, which are recorded and transcribed. The questions can be informed by the initial categories, but the questions do not need to be the same nor asked in the exact same manner to all participants in the study. Once transcribed, the conversation becomes a text like any other, fixed in writing whereby an act of distancing occurs, distancing the interviewee and interviewer from the conversation and opening the text up to additional possible meanings over and above any authorial intention. As a third step, data is analysed. The initial categories again serve as a point of departure, with the researcher linking themes emerging from the data with initial categories. Sometimes initial categories will not be appropriate and new categories will surface. These initial categories serve only as a point of departure and can be changed as the research progresses in response to the data. In this way, themes are developed from the empirical data which provide additional insight on the original categories (Herda, 1999).

In addition to Phillips and Brown's critical hermeneutical analysis of oil industry adverts and Prasad and Mir's critical hermeneutical analysis of oil industry CEO letters, many other studies in Management and Organization Studies have employed a critical hermeneutics research methodology. For example, Hirschman has used the methodology to interpret adverts in US Glamour magazines in the context of consumption and affluence (Hirschman, 1990). Aredal has examined the minutes of committee meetings in the context of cultural pressures (Aredal, 1986). Gabriel has used the methodology to interpret organisational folklore (Gabriel, 1991). Foster et al used the methodology to examine how ideologies are reproduced in textbooks, but also how cultural difference influences this reproduction in different places (Foster et al., 2014). Peng et al use both feminist and postcolonial lenses in a critical hermeneutical analysis of texts relating to leadership in seventh century China (Peng et al., 2015). Dye et al use critical hermeneutics to explore the gendering of Pan American World Airlines over time (Dye & Mills, 2012). McLaren et al use the methodology to consider the development of The Administrative Sciences Association of Canada in historical context (McLaren & Mills, 2013). Parsons et al examine how flight attendants formed an organization to fight discrimination in the industry as part of the women's movement of the 1960s and early 1970s (Parsons et al., 2012). Russell and Meehan use critical hermeneutics to

examine public procurement projects in context using ideology-critique (Russell & Meehan, 2014). Gopinath and Prasad combine postcolonialism and political economy to examine Coca Cola's exit from India in historical context (Gopinath & Prasad, 2013). Nath et al use the methodology to examine the circumstances of the emergence of public accounting in Fiji (Nath et al., 2006). Krysa et al use a postcolonial lens to examine the role of a Western corporation (RAND) in the representation of the colonised in Vietnam (Krysa et al., 2016).

Most of these studies have drawn to some extent on the five core principles as set out by Prasad, and employed some variation of Prasad & Mir's four-step process to combine a focus on context and latent meanings with a critical lens when analysing texts. Different studies employed the four steps in different sequences and combinations, some applying a critical lens prior to considering wider context for example. A variety of different critical lenses have been employed in these studies, including ideology critique, feminism and postcolonialism.

3.2.5. Proposing a sixth principle—otherness and the self—and how it could be operationalised

Here this thesis is proposing that insights from Ricoeur's 1992 work *Oneself as Another* can constitute a sixth core principle informing a critical hermeneutics research methodology, a principle that is particularly useful for providing a more theoretically developed grounding for conducting critical hermeneutical analyses of action, and analysing how meanings in the wider context can shape motivated action by the self (Ricoeur, 1992).

This thesis argues that, as with Prasad's five core principles, this sixth principle brings clear implications for a critical hermeneutical approach to research methodology. It implies that a critical hermeneutical analysis of action would perform an interpretation of the meaning of that action at face-value, but then seek to understand additional specific context to that action to understand further layers of meaning by paying attention to the meanings that informed the action, and how these were linked to meanings in the wider context critically

appropriated by the self through encounters with others and otherness over their lifetimes.

This section discusses how this sixth principle draws on Ricoeur's theory of the self and theory of motivated action. It then sets out how this principle could be operationalised. The following sections first summarise Ricoeur's theory of the self, then his theory of motivated action. There then follows a discussion of how these ideas can constitute a sixth principle of critical hermeneutics, and how it can be operationalised in practice as part of a critical hermeneutics research methodology.

3.2.5.1. *Ricoeur's theory of the self*

Ricoeur's theory of critical hermeneutics (his reconciliation of Gadamer and Habermas), as developed in the 1970s and 1980s, forms the basis for Ricoeur's subsequent theory of the self as set out in his 1992 work *Oneself as Another* (Ricoeur, 1992). Here Ricoeur applies ideas from his earlier works on critical hermeneutics and narrative to propose a critical hermeneutical and narrative theory of the self. Key aspects of this theory of the self are that the self is constituted by each act of interpretation it performs. Although on one level, the self remains the same over its lifetime, on another level it is constantly changing and evolving – each consecutive act of interpretation that the self performs adds something to the sum total of meanings that constitute what the self is. In every act of interpretation, every moment of configuration, a fusion of horizons occurs – meaning is created. This meaning is critically appropriated by the self – refiguration – and becomes part of the sum of prior meanings that will be used to perform the next act of interpretation. Through this process, the self receives, and critically appropriates, all kinds of inherited meanings from encounters with past and present others – from encounters with other individuals, participation in communities, and engagement with texts and signs of various kinds.

Ricoeur's theory of the self makes its point of departure in debates between modern and postmodern conceptions of the self. Enlightenment, or Modernist conceptions of the self involve conceiving of a 'transcendental ego'. This can be seen, for example, in Descartes' 'Cogito' – I think therefore I am – the only thing

I can be sure of is that 'I' exist, and in Kant's 'voluntary free will' which stands opposed to a body and world subject to the laws of nature. These conceptions of a self are characterised by initiative and agency.

Postmodern conceptions of the self cast doubt on this 'transcendental ego'. For example, Nietzsche argues "I" is not a fact, it is only an interpretation, therefore we cannot be certain beyond doubt that there is an "I". A variety of thinkers that Ricoeur characterises as the 'masters of suspicion' (Nietzsche, Marx, Freud) propose various arguments that human action is determined by things other than conscious free will (which is an illusion). These kinds of arguments are also extended by structuralists and post-structuralists, for example Foucault, Derrida and Levinas. Ricoeur argues these kinds of conception of a self are characterised by 'passivity' or 'suffering', ie the self doesn't have free will and agency, it is forced to be passive, or to suffer, in the face of broader or hidden forces which ultimately determine human action.

Ricoeur acknowledges the challenges of Nietzsche, Freud and the poststructuralists that we cannot know that the 'I' exists, but Ricoeur argues that, following a 'critical hermeneutics' epistemological perspective, we can put a degree of trust in our sense that some kind of 'self' with some kind of agency does exist, while retaining some suspicion that it might not. Thus, while we cannot prove it beyond doubt, we can 'attest' to the notion of a self who chooses, decides and undertakes actions with the aim of achieving things, a self with limited agency, a self who acts into systems with the aim of achieving things, and a belief in its ability to achieve some things, but in the face of broader forces that (a) may equally frustrate its ability to do so, and (b) mean that there are many other additional unintended consequences of the self's intentional action.

Ricoeur takes a critical hermeneutics approach to interpreting the self, he treats the self as a text open to interpretation: it appears to be one thing, self's attest to that, but we must remain open to possible alternative interpretations, we must remain suspicious that it could be something else, that our sense of free will is an illusion. We attest to having free will and the capacity to initiative action, but must remain suspicious that in fact we do not. We can attest to the idea of a

modernist, liberal transcendental ego, a self with agency, but unlike the modernists, we cannot be completely sure that this self is what we think it is, we must be somewhat suspicious that it is not what we think it is but might be in fact something like what the various post-modernists propose. However, equally, we cannot be completely sure that the arguments of the post-modernists are correct either.

Ricoeur's theory of the self thus proposes a kind of 'weak agency'. There are many various external forces which shape the action a self takes, that it can only be passive in the face of, but nevertheless, a self can still attest to some sense of agency and initiative in how it responds to these. One example is the inherited meanings from wider social groups that the self is connected with over time. The act of interpretation is an example of active initiative, of a self with agency, but, as per Gadamer, selves cannot interpret and make sense of phenomena without reference to these pre-existing meanings, there is a limit to the agency of the individual. What a self can interpret when encountering a text or phenomenon is limited by its social-historical location, the inherited context of shared meanings. Our capacity for active interpretation and making meaning is limited by our socio-historical location, the particular constellation of our unique individual inherited context of shared meanings. And yet, because of the process of distancing and the possibility of critique in the moment of interpretation, a self has some capacity for initiative and agency in the way in which they interpret pre-existing meanings. Thus, for Ricoeur, 'sedimentation' and 'innovation' of meanings are twin processes that occur side-by-side. Pre-existing meanings become 'sedimented', and pass down between individuals over time, becoming a kind of cultural deposit – this is how certain values, norms, ideals and practices can become associated with distinct groups. Yet innovation and mutation of these meanings occurs in this process of active interpretation and trusting or suspicious appropriation by each individual involved in these processes.

It is the repeated act of interpreting and appropriating meanings from texts, signs and phenomena that surround the self and that it encounters over its lifetime that forms the self. Although on one level, the self remains the same over its lifetime, on another level it is constantly changing and evolving – each

consecutive act of interpretation that the self performs adds something to the sum total of meanings that constitute what the self is. Ricoeur argues that the process that is occurring is one of emplotment and the making of narratives. Referencing Aristotle as well as Gadamer, Ricoeur argues that a three-stage process of mimesis takes place. This is an example of a self displaying initiative. Selves encounter phenomena, an object of perception. Because the body can only be in one place at one time, phenomena can only be observed from one particular point in time and space, the perspective the self has of the phenomena can only be partial. To make meaning when encountering any phenomenon, the self has to draw on prior knowledge to construct something new. The meaning constructed is necessarily unique and new because the act of interpretation is done by a specific individual at a specific moment in time. The first of the three stages in this process of mimesis is prefiguration. This refers to the sum of our prior knowledge that exists in the moment before any act of interpretation. The second stage is configuration. This refers to the act of interpretation. Selves actively ascribe meaning to this phenomenon, actively constructing a signification based on the perception it receives. The self can only draw on pre-existing, intersubjectively shaped inherited meanings to do so, but it can be critical as well as trusting in this act of interpretation. The third stage is refiguration. This refers to the change that occurs in the self as a result of the process of configuration. The act of configuration (making meaning out of phenomena encountered) in the process also changes and adds something to the self. If each act of interpretation draws on prior knowledge and experiences, the meaning created in the act of interpretation adds to the sum of prior knowledge that the self will bring to bear on the next act of interpretation. After the act of interpretation, the self is more than it was before. The sum of prior meanings it has appropriated has expanded.

3.2.5.2. Ricoeur's theory of motivated action

Ricoeur's theory of the self makes the notion of motivated action possible. Ricoeur argues that the motivation for each individual action pursued by a self is guided by life plans constructed aiming towards happiness and living a good life. He begins this discussion by drawing on Aristotle's notion of phronesis, but develops a version of it based on the intersubjective creation of meaning.

The self aims toward living a good life. Individuals construct life plans aiming towards happiness and living a good life. These unique personal ideals of a good life and happiness are shaped intersubjectively. Any individual's idea of happiness and what would constitute a good life to aim towards is shaped by inherited intersubjective meanings – social and cultural ideals (albeit actively critically appropriated). My imagination about what a good life could be is limited by the range of pre-existing intersubjectively created ideas about what this could be. Although I can innovate, I cannot do so outside of the starting point of the context of ideas that already exist. It is the precise constellation of encounters with other individuals, participation in communities, and engagement with texts and signs of various kinds, and the extent to which the self appropriates these trustingly or critically, that shape any individual's notion of what constitutes a good life that they seek to aim towards.

These intersubjectively-shaped imaginative horizons are what guide motivated action. Various constraints will frequently prevent a self from pursuing a course of action that they could choose, but to the extent that a self can act in accordance with their intent, their action will be guided by the aspiration to be pursuing activities consistent with their pursuit of their own personal conception of happiness and a good life. Where individuals are forced to do things which are not consistent with their desired course of action, such as by, for example, the laws of nature, the limitations of the body, or the actions of others, Ricoeur terms this 'tragic action'.

Thus, human action can be interpreted as the performance of critically-appropriated inherited meaning, and/or tragic action. Action can be 'read' as either activity consistent with individual's ideas of a good life, shaped by the meanings critically appropriated through all their encounters with other individuals, participation in communities, and engagement with texts and signs of various kinds, or as 'tragic action' – activity not consistent with an individual's own sense of a good life, but something they are forced to pursue by other forces such as the laws of nature, the limitations of the body, or the actions of others.

Again, Ricoeur's interplay of both individual agency and passivity in the face of broader forces can be seen. Individuals attest to a degree of agency – we have the sense that we actively make choices about what we do. And generally we seek, as far as we are able, to choose actions and practices that are consistent with our own personal conception of what a good life looks like, actions that are consistent with the ideal we are aiming at. In all my activities and practices, my action is motivated by my desire to seek to achieve my life plans, my projected ideal, my conception of happiness – my own personal imaginative horizon that I am aiming at.

But these active choices are constrained at a number of levels too, this agency is within a system of constraints, so it's a limited capacity to initiate action consistent with life plan aimed at achieving happiness, subject to various obstacles that get in the way that the self will have to consent to. For example, first, any individual's idea of happiness and what would constitute a good life to aim towards is shaped by inherited intersubjective meanings – social and cultural ideals (albeit actively critically appropriated). My imagination about what a good life could be is limited by the range of pre-existing intersubjectively created ideas about what this could be. Although I can innovate, I cannot do so outside of the starting point of the context of ideas that already exist. And second, numerous external forces could force me to engage in action contrary to my preferred course, forces such as the laws of nature, the limitations of the body, or the actions of others. Ricoeur terms such action, where individuals are forced to do things which are not consistent with their desired course of action, as 'tragic action'.

Ricoeur's theory of motivated action suggests that a helpful way to think about action is performance. All action pursued by individuals is a performance of meaning. In taking actions, individuals are engaging in a performance of the meanings that guide their action. Such meaning operates at two levels – one informed by the past and the other informed by aspirations for the future. The meaning being performed is, firstly, an outcome of the active process of interpreting and constructing meaning (balancing trust and suspicion) out of all the phenomena the self has encountered over its lifetime, including all the meanings, values, norms and ideals of the communities and groups it has been

exposed to, and all the wider inherited meanings of the specific socio-historic moment at which it exists in time and space. Secondly, these actively appropriated inherited meanings from the past inform aspirations for the future and the kind of life being aimed at, which in turn shapes action in the present. Such performance is a phenomenon (or text) available to others to interpret, and make their own interpretation, or meaning of, trying to figure out the ambiguities of the phenomena by drawing on the sum of their own prior intersubjectively shaped meanings.

3.2.5.3. The sixth principle—otherness and the self—and how it can be operationalised

Ricoeur's theories of the self and motivated action can provide a means for exploring how meanings in the wider context shape the action of the self. They provide a means for thinking about how certain meanings in the wider context can become critically appropriated by individuals based on their patterns of relationships and encounters with others and otherness over their lifetimes to both populate and limit the imaginative horizon and ideas of the good life that any self is aiming towards when acting. They can be seen as an additional means of applying the hermeneutical circle to arrive at a meaning of the specific phenomenon that is the focus of interpretation (the action performed in a specific situation) by considering it in the context of a wider whole (how meanings in the wider context shaped that action through being critically appropriated by the self and shaping the aim that self is acting towards).

To use these theories in this way, the researcher could pay attention to the patterns of relationships and encounters with others and otherness present in the life histories of actors in the empirical situation being investigated, and the meanings critically appropriated from these. In particular, the researcher could seek to understand the extent to which the action was either tragic action, or action motivated by seeking to act in accordance with the individual's notion of the good. And if the latter, the researcher can seek to understand the wider context of the range of encounters with otherness that have shaped that individual's notion of the good, and thus the diverse constellation of sources of the meanings being performed in the action. The meanings being performed in

action can be traced back through multiple moments of encounters with others and otherness which shaped the self through the critical appropriation occurring during each act of interpretation the self was performing. Who has the actor spent time with? Which communities have they been part of? How have the intersubjective meanings they have been exposed to through these encounters, experiences and relationships been critically appropriated? How has this particular constellation of meanings shaped their ideas of a good life to aim towards and life plans, and thus the action they perform in particular moments? Such a reading of the critical appropriation of inherited meanings by any particular self performing action can be performed both trustingly, paying attention to culture and tradition and the operation of sedimentation and innovation in the way meanings are passed down, as well as suspiciously, paying attention to the operation of power and ideology and the manipulation of meanings to further the interests of particular groups.

3.2.6. How critical hermeneutics is used in this study

The specific approach to employing a critical hermeneutics research methodology in this study is described in this section, drawing on each of the discussions above. More detail on the theoretical framework, data collection and data analysis is provided in the following sections.

First, following Herda, a theoretical framework of 'initial categories' was developed from a review of relevant literature and theory. This framework was used to provide a starting point for guiding data collection and data analysis (Herda, 1999). This framework is described in the next section – section 3.3. Next, a range of texts relating to the empirical focus was assembled. This includes documentation such as public and private reports, briefing documents, presentations, correspondence, as well as transcripts of interviews.

Once the data had been collected and some insight into the nature of the data had been established, additional 'initial categories' potentially relevant for guiding data analysis were developed from the literature. These two sets of 'initial categories' are described in section 3.3 on theoretical framework below,

and more detail on the approach to data collection and data analysis are provided in the sections that follow.

Following Prasad and Herda, these 'initial categories' were used to guide an initial 'face value' analysis of these texts, developing further themes. This analysis is presented in the first parts of each of chapters four to seven. Then, following Prasad, the hermeneutical circle was used to consider the meanings of the texts in light of wider context and critical perspectives – this analysis is presented in discussion sections in the second parts of each of chapters four to seven.

The question of whether the corporate lobbying that occurred during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals can be seen as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development is explored in chapters four and five by considering what the empirical material revealed about what the companies were lobbying for and how they approached the lobbying process. The critical frameworks of Political CSR and Deliberative Lobbying, derived from Habermas' critical theory, were applied, and wider context was considered with reference to the literatures on debates on the SDGs and MDGs and international development theory.

The question of how to account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities is explored in chapters six and seven, initially through a face-value reading of the narratives constructed by individuals involved in the lobbying activity in interview situations. The meaning of these narratives is then considered in light of wider context and critical perspectives. Chapter seven specifically employs the sixth principle proposed here, the operation of otherness through the self, to consider how meanings in the wider context encountered and critically appropriated over a lifetime may have influenced the imaginative horizons actors aimed towards in their action, and thus how these meanings in the wider context may have influenced the action that is the focus of this study.

3.3. Theoretical framework and initial categories

This section discusses the theoretical framework informing this study. Herda proposes that a researcher develop a theoretical framework of 'initial categories' from a review of relevant literature and theory that can direct and place boundaries on the study, and provide a starting point for guiding data collection and data analysis (Herda, 1999). This pre-existing theory is first used to inform what data to collect in the first place. Then, key ideas from pre-existing theory are used as point-of-departure categories to analyse the empirical data. Depending on the nature of the data collected, it may be appropriate to seek to draw on additional pre-existing theory from the literature in addition to that used to guide initial data collection. The insights from this analysis of the empirical data can then be used to further develop, elaborate, adjust and refine the theory.

In this study, a number of key ideas from pre-existing theory were employed to guide initial data collection. Based on the nature of the data collected, some further ideas were added to this theoretical framework to guide data analysis. Furthermore, as data collection occurred in the period 2012-2015 and data analysis occurred in the period 2016-2019, additional literature was available to review and draw on for the data analysis that had not been available to inform the data collection.

3.3.1. Theory influencing data collection

Four key areas of theory informed the sampling strategy and data collection. The first two, Political CSR and Responsible Leadership, were already described in the literature review and a brief summary is provided here. The third area was theory relating to differing conceptions of citizenship linked to the liberal and republican traditions, which is here connected to Maak et al's senior executive value orientations of fiduciary duty and social welfare, and is briefly described below (Maak et al., 2016). The fourth area was Paul Ricoeur's theory of what shapes the ethical intention in motivated action in general, and what shapes participation in the communicative mode in deliberative processes to develop collective rules in particular (Ricoeur, 1992). A very brief summary of

key points from the PCSR and Responsible Leadership literatures that informed data collection is provided in the remainder of this section. Section 3.3.1.1 briefly summarises key ideas relating to debates on liberal and republican citizenship. Sections 3.3.1.2 and 3.3.1.3. summarise in more detail Ricoeur's theory of the ethical intention.

In addition to informing the research questions and choice of research methodology, Scherer and Palazzo's theory of Political CSR as it had been articulated in publications between 2006 and 2012 was also employed to inform data collection. Key themes guiding the sampling strategy, collection of written texts, choice of meetings to observe, and design of interview conversation guides included many of the key attributes of PCSR theory as described in the literature review. These include: the notion of globalization creating governance gaps which prompt legitimacy challenges for corporations which in turn prompt participation in deliberative processes to develop private governance mechanisms; the distinction between aiming at the effective resolution of public issues to the satisfaction of all versus pursuing self-interest at the expense of others; and the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate engagement, characterised by either communicative or instrumental/strategic action.

The theory of Responsible Leadership, as it had been developed to 2012, was also employed to guide data collection. In 2012, scholars in this field had begun to investigate the micro-foundations of PCSR by exploring the relationship between differing leadership styles and the different corporate activities pursued in the context of globalization and the governance gaps it had produced (Doh & Stumpf, 2005; Maak & Pless, 2009, 2006; Pless et al., 2012; Voegtlin et al., 2012). The notion of senior executive leadership style and orientation potentially having some significance in accounting for differing corporate responses to the governance gaps created by globalization was another key theme and 'initial category' influencing sampling strategy and data collection.

3.3.1.1. Value orientations and conceptions of citizenship

The third area of theory influencing data collection was the literature on differing conceptions of citizenship linked to the liberal and republican traditions.

Although the connection has not previously been made in the literature, Maak's two categories of fiduciary duty and social welfare orientation, and the two variants of responsible leadership that derive from them, share many characteristics with the distinctions between liberal and republican notions of citizenship, as discussed below. Connections have also been drawn between Ricoeur's theory of the ethical intention and republican notions of citizenship (Deweert, 2013). These notions of liberal and republican citizenship were identified as potentially useful 'initial categories' to guide data collection and data analysis.

Liberalism and republicanism are schools of thought that arose in different historical and political contexts in Europe. Republican theory arose in the early modern period in Italian city states and later developed in places like England and the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, and more widely across Europe and the Americas in the eighteenth century. Key thinkers included Niccolò Machiavelli, James Harrington, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, and James Madison, and among the chief concerns of this movement was to challenge pressure from kings and princes and defend self-governing citizen polities. To help achieve this, these thinkers drew on ideas from the works of Aristotle, Plato and Cicero and others regarding the functioning of Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic. Key features of this thinking were freedom from slavery and subjection to a master, the legal rights of the citizen and the rule of law, guaranteed by institutions, and the active participation of the citizen in collective decision-making and preserving and protecting the institutions of the republic (Honohan, 2002, 2017).

Republican theory declined and was superseded by liberalism in the nineteenth century, advanced by thinkers including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Alexis de Toqueville, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith and David Ricardo (and later in the twentieth century developed further by thinkers including John Rawls, Will Kymlicka, Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman). While continuing to draw on many of the central tenets of republicanism, the chief concern of liberalism was fear of growing centralised state power and risk of tyranny, and these thinkers emphasised and accentuated the autonomy of the private individual and limits to government, and the role of the rule of law in protecting

the legal rights of individual citizens from interference by the state. The role of the state in the affairs of the individual was to be as minimal as possible, and shared public goods and any sense of a shared 'common good' de-prioritised in favour of ensuring as little as possible risked interfering with individual private autonomy and freedom to pursue one's own interests and divergent moral perspectives. Wealth and welfare would be advanced by minimising the intervention of the state in the economy and prioritising the pursuit of private interests and the 'invisible hand' of the market (Honohan, 2002, 2017).

Interest in republicanism re-emerged in the later twentieth century in response to a number of criticisms of liberalism, including its individualist assumptions, lack of focus on shared goods, its struggle to identify certain kinds of oppression, and the challenge of how to sustain liberal institutions. Key thinkers included Hannah Arendt, Michael Sandel, Quentin Skinner and Philip Pettit (Arendt, 1958, 1977; Pettit, 1997, 2012; Sandel, 1998; Skinner, 1978, 1998). These thinkers retained liberalism's emphasis on the need for measures to protect the individual from the risk of tyranny by the state, but also emphasised the value of and need for individuals acting together in concert through the state. Republicanism values a degree of collective action which liberals might interpret as state interference – for republicans what is important is how arbitrary such state action is: does it represent collective action resulting from deliberative, inclusive processes, or does it represent the arbitrary action of one group imposing its view on another? Republicans are more comfortable with state intervention in general, so long as it is subject to appropriate checks and balances for accountability.

These connected but contrasting schools of political thought have given rise to two similar but distinct views of citizenship and the rights and responsibilities of individuals in society. The liberal conception of citizenship emphasises the legal rights individuals have of equal status, rights of freedom of speech and conscience, and freedom and autonomy from state interference. It does not place great emphasis on the idea of the individual having obligations, as this would imply the state requiring something of the individual and as such interference in their freedom. As such, the obligations of the individual are limited to obeying the law, paying taxes, and serving on juries, in a context

which seeks to minimise the role of the state and associated laws and taxes. A liberal citizenship orientation tends to be associated with valuing tolerance, pluralism, equal rights and individual autonomy, as well as the importance of minimal state intervention in all aspects of society, including the economy, where private interests should have maximum autonomy. Collective welfare will thrive if each individual acts in accordance with their own individual interests, rather than altruism, and decision-making is left to private interests and the market.

The republican conception of citizenship retains the central emphasis on freedom, but interprets it differently. The republican conception of citizenship also assumes legal rights to protect the individual from tyranny. But, in contrast to the liberal conception, it also emphasises the importance of the individual pursuing more than just private interest – it is the responsibility of the individual to be concerned with the wider common good and to participate in collective decision-making and political processes (beyond just voting in elections), and help protect public institutions. Freedom from the tyranny of the state can only be achieved if citizens actively participate in collective decision-making and working towards the effective resolution of public issues in the interests of all. It is the role of citizens and their responsibility to be public-spirited and act cooperatively with others towards the collective good, even if this on occasion might mean acting counter to their own private interests and desires.

The argument advanced here is that these two notions of citizenship share many characteristics with Maak *et al's* two value orientations. Specifically, it can be seen that Maak *et al's* conception of a Fiduciary Duty value orientation shares characteristics with a liberal conception of citizenship where notions of responsibility are associated with valuing freedom, tolerance, pluralism, equal rights, limited state intervention in society and the economy, and assumptions that welfare is best advanced through each individual in society focusing on pursuing their own individual interests and a market economy which emphasises the fiduciary duty of managers to maximise the creation of financial value for private shareholders. Similarly, it can be seen that Maak *et al's* conception of a Social Welfare value orientation shares characteristics with a republican conception of citizenship where notions of responsibility are similarly

associated with valuing freedom, tolerance, pluralism, equal rights, but diverge by valuing collective action of individuals in public-decision making in order to advance welfare through state intervention. Welfare is not advanced best through each individual focusing on pursuing their own individual interests. Rather, welfare is advanced when each individual has a sense of obligation towards the welfare of others and takes on the responsibility of acting collectively with others towards the collective good, acting counter to their own private interests and desires if this is required.

These two notions of citizenship were added to the 'initial categories' guiding data collection and analysis alongside other themes from the Responsible Leadership literature.

3.3.1.2. Ricoeur's theory of what shapes the ethical intention

The fourth area of theory influencing data collection was Ricoeur's theory of what shapes the ethical intention in motivated action in general, and what shapes participation in the communicative mode in deliberative processes to develop collective rules in particular. This theory is set out in his 1992 work *Oneself as Another*, and was developed from his earlier works on critical hermeneutics and the theory of meaning from the 1970s and 1980s, discussed already in section 3.2.1.5, as well as his theories of self and motivated action set out earlier in the same volume, discussed already in sections 3.2.5.1. and 3.2.5.2. (Ricoeur, 1992). In developing his theory of what shapes the ethical dimension of motivated action, Ricoeur draws on and connects the ideas of many thinkers on ethics, not least Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Rawls, Levinas, Habermas and Arendt. In his theory of what shapes the ethical intention, Ricoeur argues for the significance of what he terms 'solicitude' – the particular significance of meanings critically appropriated through (a) relationships with friends that the individual cares for and is concerned for, (b) encounters with others that act as 'Masters of Justice', challenging the individual and instructing them in some way or another regarding what counts as right and what counts as wrong, and (c) encounters with suffering others that the individual feels sympathy for.

As discussed in sections 3.2.5.1. and 3.2.5.2., Ricoeur argues that action can be thought of as the performance of meaning—in every act of interpretation that occurs during encounters with others and otherness over their lifetimes, individuals critically appropriate meanings which populate and also define the limit of their imaginative horizons. Through this, they come to intersubjectively develop lifeplans based on ideals of what a good life looks like for them, and aim towards this ideal through their everyday actions. In this way, the meanings critically appropriated through the particular pattern of encounters any individual has with others and otherness come to influence their action in any given moment.

Ricoeur argues that there is necessarily an ethical dimension to the discussion of the kind of life individuals aim at, and thus the motivated action performed in any moment. Ricoeur's theory of action creates the possibility of violence. As noted above, the actions of others are one of the external forces that can constrain a person's own individual agency and capacity to engage in actions consistent with their own lifeplans and idea of a good life. Ricoeur defines violence as this 'power-over', where a self's 'power-to-act' is destroyed by others. Clearly then, any individual pursuing actions consistent with achieving their own goals and lifeplans risks limiting the capacity of another to pursue their desired actions and achieve their own goals. Because we live with others, the pursuit of my own life plans carries the risk of engaging in action resulting in violence and domination through power-over others. It is because of this possibility that the pursuit of my own life plans carries the risk of violence to others, Ricoeur argues, that we realise we must include an ethical dimension to our lifeplans, a dimension whereby we include within our lifeplans and our idea of a good life a dimension that seeks to limit the risk that our own actions will harm others. My actions and desires are directed towards a vision of the good life. But seeking this good life is not a solitary endeavour, I have need of the assistance of others, indeed the mere existence of some others contributes to my good. And, this quest for the good life is carried out within a public realm governed by institutions upon which I depend in my endeavours. Selves aim at living a good life in a world populated with others. Because of the risk each self's aim of living well presents to each other self's aim to live well, living a good life requires living well with others. The world is full of others so living well

requires living well with others, in a way that manages the capacity of one self, in pursuit of their own life plans, to do violence to another. If action is motivated by seeking to take choices consistent with one's own conception of a good life, Ricoeur argues that the ethical dimension of this aim or intention is "aiming at the 'good life', with and for others, in just institutions" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 172). Living well with others and effectively managing the risk of violence to others through pursuit of one's own ideals of the good life, Ricoeur argues, requires some level of concern for others, and also effective and just institutions.

Ricoeur terms this active concern for others 'solicitude' and points to its development through three specific kinds of encounter with others and otherness over a lifetime. As with other dimensions of the life plans and ideals aimed at in everyday action, this 'ethical intention', this aim to live well with others in just institutions, is shaped intersubjectively through the critical appropriation of meanings encountered through the particular pattern of encounters any individual has with others and otherness over their lifetime. Ricoeur argues that there are three specific kinds of encounter with others and otherness that play a significant role in the development of this 'ethical intention': relationships with and concern for friends, challenges and injunctions received from 'Masters of Justice', and sympathy evoked through encounters with suffering others. Each of these three is discussed in more detail below.

First, Ricoeur discussed the role of friends. Ricoeur starts again with Aristotle: the happy man needs friends. The search for a good life has a gap or lacuna if one doesn't include friends. Friendship is characterised by mutuality, the good one wishes for oneself one also wishes for the friend as well. My quest for a good life involves a concern for the good of those with whom I'm in a relationship of friendship.

Second, the self is receptive to the moral injunction that comes from the other. Over their lifetime, an individual will encounter others who, to use Ricoeur's term, appear to them as 'Masters of Justice' – people from whom they will receive commands to act in a certain way toward others, people who will challenge them, enjoin them, exhort them, express to them a sentiment as to what is right or wrong, issue commands or demands or instructions as to how

they should behave towards others, sometimes framed as a command to care for others, to be protective of others (what Hall has called the 'love command' (Hall, 2008)), acting not from the logic of exchange, but the logic of the gift, giving more than receiving, perhaps requiring them to act counter to their immediate self-interest. Over their lifetime, various individuals a person will encounter will, in different ways, 'call them to justice'. These others present arguments that it is necessary to behave this way toward others as that is what is required to in order to be able to live well with others, and manage the risk of doing violence to others in pursuing one's own life plans. What precise models of what counts as right and wrong these others communicate and command will, as with all other meaning, vary with time and place and the particular values and norms and ideals of different communities as they have evolved over time. The kinds of commands and injunctions these 'Masters of Justice' make may relate to learnings from specific experiences they themselves have had. But equally, they may derive from commands these individuals have encountered and critically appropriated themselves from previous 'Masters of Justice' they have met. In some cases such commands will have been passed down and down through multiple generations, and perhaps even stemming from classical philosophical and religious teachings. And as with all other encounters, any self exposed to such commands can respond trustingly or suspiciously, acknowledging, responding to and acting on the call to behave in a certain way towards others, or discounting the call to justice and continuing as before.

Third, the self is receptive to the suffering of others. Again, throughout their lifetime, an individual will encounter others who are suffering. Depending upon an individual's precise constellation of prior experiences and the meaning that person made out of these, most individuals, on encountering someone else who is suffering, will respond with sympathy, compassion and will want to act to attempt to relieve the pain and suffering of the other. The extent to which the self has had first hand encounters with others who are suffering will shape the extent to which this concern will loom large in their sum of prior knowledge and experiences that informs their notion of the good life that they are aiming at in all the current actions they are performing.

Ricoeur argues that, through the process of critical interpretation and appropriation active in all encounters with phenomena through a lifetime, the voice of these others encountered in these three different ways will become internalised within the self—in this case internalised as the voice of conscience—and become part of the sum of prior meanings that guide motivated action.

Ricoeur argues that these kinds of encounters with others help develop an ideal of the good life which leads to the intention to act in such a way as to avoid harm to others and exercise care for others.

In constructing this theory of how individuals aim at living a good life, with and for others, in just institutions, Ricoeur emphasises individual agency, action motivated individual life plans and conceptions of the good, albeit constrained by the scope of intersubjectively shaped meanings critically appropriated by others and internalised as the voice of conscience.

However, in addition to needing to have a concern for others, Ricoeur argues that in order to live well with others, an individual also comes to recognise, through these same kinds of encounters with others and otherness, that they must have a concern for just institutions. It is not enough to develop my own sense of what it is to act with the intention of avoiding harm to others. In order to live well with others, any individual's own personal conception of the good needs to be subjected to, and pass, the test of whether it is acceptable to everybody else. We need to participate in collective processes to develop rules and norms, and then submit our own intentions to the test of those rules, and only proceed if they pass. The self, acting from its own initiative, comes to realise it must submit itself to additional constraint.

Thus, the self comes to realise the need for just institutions: collectively agreed rules and the institutional machinery to guarantee them. Here Ricoeur moves from Aristotle's teleological ethics to Kant's deontological morality. Ricoeur points to some fundamental collectively agreed norms that each individual's own ethical aims need to be submitted to because of the ever-present risk of violence to others. At the individual level, the self must submit its quest for the

good life to the test of the first formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative: "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law." At the interpersonal level, the self must submit its aims to the test of the Golden Rule, formalised as the second formulation of Kant's Categorical Imperative. Ricoeur prioritises the negative formulation of the Golden Rule: "Do not unto your neighbour what you would hate him to do to you", arguing that this becomes formalised by Kant as "Beings should never be treated merely as means to ends but always at the same time ends in themselves." And therefore individuals come to realise they need to work together to create processes and institutional machinery to enable people to submit their own aims to these fundamental rules, and all other collectively developed rules that flow from them.

Here Ricoeur points to Rawls' principles of justice as an appropriate model for developing institutions to govern each individual's quest for a good life.

However, Ricoeur disagrees with Rawls about where the intent to develop such principles and institutions of justice comes from. Where Rawls suggests an imaginary situation where individuals meet prior to the establishment of any society to work out principles that will work to everyone's self-interest, Ricoeur instead proposes the intent to develop such institutions springs from concern for the welfare of others and the part this plays in each individual's ability to lead a good life themselves. Such a view is developed from 'the good', as opposed to Rawls's account which focuses on 'the just'. Rawls's position is consistent with liberal principles of self-interest while Ricoeur's proposal is consistent with a more republican concern for others and the wider good as well as self-interest.

Ricoeur does however agree with the liberal concern for the risk of power-over or tyranny inherent in the creation of institutions – such institutions themselves present the risk of causing violence to others and frustrating their ability to act in line with their intentions and aims of a good life. Ricoeur discusses this in terms of what he calls the political paradox: groups can act in concert to achieve more than the sum of their parts by exercising power-in-common through state and other institutions. But in so doing, there is the risk of harm and violence to individuals where the state's actions prevent individuals from pursuing their own aims, exercising power-over.

Here Ricoeur draws on Arendt, a key proponent of republican ideas, arguing that if individuals focus solely on the pursuit of private interests and withdraw from the public realm, this risks the collapse of the public realm that protects their freedom, their very ability to pursue private interests (Honohan, 2002, 2017; Vetlesen, 1995). It is power exercised in concert that preserves the public realm and makes the individual possible in the first place. The individual should not withdraw (as per liberalism), rather, the individual has to be active and be concerned for others, otherwise the public realm collapses and state institutions will be hijacked by those who wish to exercise power-over (as per republicanism).

Ricoeur thus argues that individuals come to realise that pursuit of their own good risks harm to others, that concern for the wellbeing of others is part of what is required for their own good, and thus they should act to avoid harm to others, and part of what this requires is collectively developing rules acceptable to all, submitting their own intentions to the test of these rules, creating and sustaining the kind of public institutions that enforce such rules, and generally holding the intention to act in the wider public good as well as their own self-interest, with the former taking precedence over the latter where required. Such sentiments are developed through direct experiences and critical appropriation of pre-existing meanings encountered through engagement with others and otherness, specifically friends one cares for, masters of justice that command them to act a certain way, and suffering others that evoke sympathy, and become critically appropriated within the self as the voice of conscience.

3.3.1.3. Ricoeur's theory of what shapes the intent to engage in communicative action to work deliberatively with others to develop common laws, rules, norms and standards for governing collective behaviour

As discussed in the previous section, Ricoeur argues that, because of the ever-present risk of violence to others, individuals come to realise the need to add an ethical dimension to their life plans, and a central element of this ethical intention is the need to work with others to collectively develop norms and rules

and the institutions to enforce these, and then continually submit one's own intentions to the test of whether they pass these rules and norms.

Ricoeur argues in respect of this process to collectively develop rules and norms that individuals come to realise that, for this process to achieve its goal, it must proceed following Habermas's mode of communicative action, rather than following strategic or instrumental action.

Here, Ricoeur develops Habermas's work on communicative action, fleshing out what shapes participation in communicative action processes. Habermas emphasises the operation of reason in the process of communicative action. His concern is to be on the look out in the communicative action process for the operation of ideology which could further the interests of elites versus the oppressed, through tradition and superstition. Ricoeur agrees with this sentiment, but as per his critical hermeneutics principles, he argues that prior knowledge and meanings cannot be excluded from the communicative action process, it cannot take place on the basis of universal reason alone.

Habermas emphasises how participants in deliberative processes put aside preconceptions, convention, tradition and inherited meanings because of the risk of ideology. The basis for discursive processes to develop shared norms that all can find acceptable should be developed primarily on the basis of reason and 'through the force of the best argument' – arguments based on convention and tradition have no place in this kind of process.

Ricoeur on the other hand argues that such prior meanings cannot be put aside. Inherited meanings cannot be escaped, it is inevitable that they form the starting point. There is no independent place outside of tradition and intersubjectively-shaped, historically and culturally received meanings from which pure reason can operate. Ricoeur argues that Habermas's focus on *reason* versus *convention* would be better replaced with consideration of *argumentation* and *conviction*.

"I should like to suggest a reformulation of the ethics of argumentation that will allow it to integrate the objections of contextualism, while allowing the latter, at the same time, to take seriously the requirement of

universalization in order to focus on the conditions for placing this requirement in context... What has to be questioned is the antagonism between argumentation and convention, substituting it for a subtle dialectic between argumentation and conviction." (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 287)

Rather than eliminating convention by privileging some historically-abstract reason, Ricoeur argues that it is better to acknowledge that all discursive processes take place at a distinct point in time, and that all participants in the process bring with them prior convictions, shaped by relationships with others and multiple prior inherited intersubjectively-shaped historical and cultural meanings. These meanings and convictions are not eliminated by reason. Rather, through the deliberative or communicative process – a process of argumentation – these prior convictions are put to the test: which prior convictions can survive the test of being acceptable to all? Thus, what emerges from the deliberative process are not abstract universal norms, acceptable to all and purified of distorting tradition and convention, but rather what emerges are ‘considered convictions’ – prior meanings that are carried in to the process are subjected to the test of ‘which meanings are acceptable to all?’, and the ‘considered convictions’ that pass the test are the norms and rules that result. Thus, where Habermas downplays the meanings embedded in tradition, convention, and prior convictions, for Ricoeur, the unique constellation of intersubjectively-shaped aims, motivations and convictions of the specific individuals involved in communicative action processes does play a role in shaping the norm agreed.

Ricoeur’s work in particular draws attention to the potential influence of a range of intersubjective processes that can shape the intention to participate in communicative action processes to develop collective rules, including: the historically and culturally embedded meanings received through participation in specific communities; the role of friendship with others; and a concern for the welfare of friends: the role of challenge from specific ‘others’ that an individual has engaged with; and the role of sympathy for others who are suffering.

As discussed in the previous section, Ricoeur sums up his position by arguing that endeavour to collectively develop mutually acceptable norms and rules to

govern conduct is shaped by the aim or intention to live well, with and for others, in just institutions (Ricoeur, 1992).

Thus, where Habermas argues that norms are reached through rational argument where a group of individuals agree the 'rationally' best norm on the basis of 'reason', Ricoeur offers a more constructivist take, arguing that when a group of people agree between themselves what kind of norm is acceptable to all, rather than seeing this outcome as just being an inevitable, final, universal outcome, it is rather something much more contingent, based on the particular constellation of conceptions of 'the good' held by the particular individuals involved.

Ricoeur sees these conceptions of 'the good' as intersubjectively-shaped meaning, developed by these individuals through their critical appropriation of meanings absorbed through relationship with others over the course of their lifetimes, including both longstanding inherited meanings embedded in cultural communities critically-appropriated from childhood onwards, and also meanings critically appropriated through more recent interactions with others, a pattern of meanings which will vary from individual to individual depending on the precise pattern of relationships that individual is engaged in, and the degree of trust or suspicion with which they appropriate the meaning.

The particular variety of communities an individual belongs to over their lifetime and the particular pattern of individuals they are in relationship with will affect (but not wholly determine) the particular views of 'the good' that those individuals will seek to see become agreed as 'norms' or 'rules'.

Here we see at play Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons', where in any discussion to agree norms, the perspective individuals bring to the debate is shaped by the sum of prior meanings they have developed through their experiences and relationships to date, but with a Habermasian twist that such meanings are not just absorbed passively, but through a process of active critique that allows for rejection and suspicion as much as simple appropriation.

Ricoeur's theory of what shapes the ethical intention in motivated action in general, and what shapes participation in the communicative mode in deliberative processes to develop collective rules in particular, and specifically his focus on the three elements of solicitude in encounters with others and otherness, form further 'initial categories' which guide data collection and data analysis in this study. How these theories, as well as the theories of PCSR and Responsible Leadership influenced sampling strategy and data collection are described in sections 3.4 and 3.5 below.

3.3.2. Additional theory influencing data analysis

In addition to the theory of Political CSR, Responsible Leadership, liberal and republican citizenship and Ricoeur's body of theory as described in previous sections, a further set of theoretical ideas were identified as being relevant for assisting the data analysis. These are set out below.

First, while the process of data collection occurred between 2012 and 2015, the process of data analysis took place between 2016-2019. Therefore, publications in the field of PCSR since 2012 were reviewed for additional theoretical developments of relevance. A key development here was the publication of Lock and Seele's extrapolation of PCSR theory to the phenomenon of direct lobbying of government to influence and encourage the development of hard-law, applying Habermasian critical theory to develop their framework of Deliberative Lobbying, already described in the literature review (Lock & Seele, 2016). While this did not directly influence data collection as it had not been published at that time, the key themes regarding the characteristics of what is being aimed at and the characteristics of the process employed were both adopted as 'initial categories' guiding data analysis. Similarly, key themes from more recent publications on Responsible Leadership were also adopted as 'initial categories' guiding data analysis, including Maak *et al's* further development of a connection between level of corporate engagement in PCSR activity, and senior executive responsible leadership style, and value orientation, and Patzer *et al's* focus on link between conditions in the external context and prevalence of different RL styles, with integrative leadership styles becoming more common in tandem with the shift from national to transnational

operations and the emergence of the governance gaps relating to globalization (Maak et al., 2016; Patzer et al., 2018).

Second, based on initial engagement with the nature of the data collected, some further bodies of literature and theory were engaged with and added to this theoretical framework to guide data analysis. These included literature on debates informing the development of the SDGs, and debates regarding the development and impact of the preceding Millennium Development Goals, as well as key aspects of international development theory, neo-liberal economic theory, and the theory of policy instruments.

For example, a number of key debates informed the questions to be deliberated during the process to develop the SDGs. These can broadly be delineated into three categories: the scope of the issues to be included within the goals, more technical issues about precisely how the goals should be formulated, and the means of implementation – how the goals should be achieved.

In terms of the scope of the issues to be included within the SDGs, one of the areas judged to be one of the successes of the MDGs was the focus on the human aspects of poverty (hunger, health, education, gender), as opposed to a narrow focus on economic measures in earlier approaches to international development. Many were keen to retain the focus on these human aspects of poverty, whilst some felt greater prominence needed to be returned to economic growth, and others felt greater prominence needed to be given to climate change and other environmental issues than had featured in the MDGs. Many were also calling for a stronger focus in the SDGs than had featured in the MDGs on tackling inequality, and also on good governance – in particular for institutional reform, anti-corruption, human rights and the rule of law (Chibba, 2011; Devarajan Margaret J. Swanson, Eric V., 2002; Kwon & Kim, 2014; Lomazzi, Borisch, & Laaser, 2014; Manning, 2009; Roberts, 2005; Sachs, 2012; Vandemoortele, 2011; Waage et al., 2017).

In terms of technical issues about precisely how the goals should be formulated, key debates were around the timespan of the goals period, how many there should be, whether they should be global in scope rather than focused solely on

developing countries, the kind of language they should be couched in to make them most accessible, how clear to be about accountabilities for delivery, how differentiated to be in order to take into account differences between different regions and remain both achievable and ambitious, and how explicit to be about interconnections between different goals and issues (Chibba, 2011; Devarajan Margaret J. Swanson, Eric V., 2002; Kwon & Kim, 2014; Lomazzi et al., 2014; Manning, 2009; Roberts, 2005; Rosenbaum, 2016; Sachs, 2012; Vandemoortele, 2011; Waage et al., 2017).

In terms of the means of implementation – how the goals should be achieved – this was perhaps one of the most contentious areas. A central issue was the relative roles of states versus markets and the private sector, and how much the emphasis should be maintaining the Washington Consensus focus on creating an ‘enabling environment’ for the private sector to generate economic growth that would lead to poverty alleviation, versus alternatives including a more interventionist approach from states (Altenburg & von Drachenfels, 2008; Bello, 2013; Chibba, 2011; Edward & Tallontire, 2009; Fukuda-Parr, 2011, 2016; Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011; Grieg-Gran, 2003; Kwon & Kim, 2014; Lomazzi et al., 2014; Manning, 2009; Vandemoortele, 2011; Waage et al., 2017; Ziai, 2011). Global development policy in the 1980s and 1990s was dominated by the Washington Consensus, which, as noted above, promoted the principles of deregulation, privatization and a minimalist state that rejects state intervention in the economy (Broad, 2004; Williamson, 1990).

These three categories of debate formed further ‘initial categories’ used to guide the data analysis. All this literature and theory and its role is described in more detail in chapter four as part of the consideration of themes in the wider context.

How these theories influenced data analysis is described in section 3.6 below.

3.4. Sampling strategy

As with other methodologies in the interpretive research tradition, in critical hermeneutics, the choice of empirical focus must be guided by seeking an empirical situation which aligns with the general phenomenon being studied and

possesses characteristics that make it suitable for the investigating the phenomenon, a process sometimes referred to as ‘theoretical sampling’ (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2014). Given the phenomenon under investigation in this study, an empirical focus was sought that would enable an empirical investigation of corporate engagement in global governance where lobbying of policymakers at the national and intergovernmental level with the aim of encouraging more ambitious public policy to address sustainable development challenges was occurring.

The first key characteristic of the process to develop the SDGs that makes it an appropriate empirical focus is that the SDGs framework is both a policy instrument in its own right, developed at the intergovernmental level, and moreover a policy instrument which seeks to influence policymaking and regulation at the national level. The case of the SDGs is valuable one to consider as this policy instrument originated from within the UN system, so it is a policy instrument developed by governments working collectively through an intergovernmental body. Additionally, while being a policy instrument in itself, part of the aspiration of the SDGs is that they will influence hard-law public policy at the nation state level around the world. Thus it is a useful case study to respond to Scherer et al’s observation that more Political CSR research is needed in relation to the interaction of MNCs and government policymaking and regulation at both the national and intergovernmental level (Scherer et al., 2016).

The centrepiece of the policy instrument is a set of voluntary, non-binding ‘goals’ (17 goals and 169 associated targets), and it is accompanied by a data reporting and monitoring framework as a means of encouraging change in behaviour, rather than any kind of coercive measures or sanctions to ensure compliance. However, at the heart of the aspiration around the goals is that they will influence the policy and regulatory activities of national governments around the world, shaping policy choices, public and private investment priorities, and the introduction of ‘hard law’ in specific areas. As such it can be seen as a policy instrument that is a stepping stone to shaping public policy and intervention at the national government level (Kanie & Biermann, 2017).

The second key characteristic of the process to develop the SDGs that makes it an appropriate empirical focus is that a notable feature of this process was that representatives from the private sector played a significant role in the various ‘sub-processes’ organised to shape the SDGs. The main platform for relationships between the UN system and the private sector on matters of sustainable development in particular – the UN Global Compact – played a significant role in mediating business input into the political process over the course of the three-year development of the goals. Other business associations also played significant roles, including the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), which since 1946 has been the central interface for business engagement with the UN generally, and which convened a Global Business Alliance to organise business inputs to SDGs policymaking processes. Furthermore, in the first year of the process, the UN Secretary General convened a ‘High Level Panel’ to inform the work to develop the goals, and among its 27 members was Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, who convened a major consultation of the private sector to inform his input to the panel. In the subsequent two years of the process, Unilever worked with a group of other companies and business associations to convene other direct inputs to the political process. Anecdotal evidence in the initial stages of this engagement suggested that many of the companies participating in this process would be advocating for more ambitious government intervention on sustainable development to form part of the final SDGs framework (whether this did occur or not is something examined as part of the empirical analysis).

3.5. Data collection

This section sets out the approach to data collection, including indicating how the initial categories guided data collection where appropriate. A range of texts relating to the empirical focus were collected. This included documentation such as public and private reports, briefing documents, presentation decks, correspondence, as well as transcripts of interviews. The following section describes aspects of the process to develop the SDGs over the period 2012-2015 where there was notable participation by MNCs, and discusses the nature of the data collected at each stage.

3.5.1. The multiple parallel processes to develop the SDGs

The consultation process to develop the SDGs over the period 2012-2015 has been described as the world's largest ever public consultation programme (Ford, 2015). The agreement to create a set of goals was an outcome of the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, which mandated the creation of an 'open working group' of policymakers from a sub-set of the world's governments (70 governments in total, out of the 193 member states of the UN) to propose a draft set of goals, which would then be subject to final negotiation and agreement by all 193 full UN member states. The Open Working Group (OWG) of 70 countries had its first meeting in March 2013 and published its final draft in July 2014. This draft was presented to the UN General Assembly in September 2014 and the member state negotiations then took place in the remainder of 2014 and during 2015 before the SDGs were finally agreed at the UN General Assembly in September 2015.

Alongside these core processes, multiple other consultations and engagement activities were pursued to seek input to the development of the goals, including 11 thematic and 83 national consultations led by the UN and a survey entitled 'MyWorld' in which over seven million people participated around the world through a combination of online and offline methods (UN Millennium Campaign, 2014).

At the request of the UN Secretary General, a 'High Level Panel of eminent persons on the Post-2015 development agenda' was established following the Rio+20 UN summit in 2012 to develop ideas to feed in to the work of the OWG. The High Level Panel was chaired by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, and composed of 27 representatives from civil society, the private sector, and government. This High Level Panel was established in July 2012 and submitted its report to the UN Secretary General in June 2013. Over this period, it held meetings in London, Monrovia, Bali and New York, and organised several of its own outreach consultations.

Another consultation process was led by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network to engage with research centres, universities and technical institutions to provide input on the best available information on the most effective pathways to achieve sustainable development. The leadership council of this initiative included representatives from academia, civil society, business and government and the public sector. The initiative was directed by Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals (UN News, 2012).

As discussed in more detail below, the UN Global Compact also held a series of consultations with the private sector over this period and provided a series of formal inputs on behalf of the private sector into the process.

Another significant process was the Intergovernmental Expert Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, which met between August 2013 and August 2014 and focused specifically on how the SDGs should be financed (Hurley, 2014). As well as being a core input to the SDGs process, this initiative was also a core input to the parallel Financing for Development process, including the UN summit in Addis Ababa in July 2015 (see below).

There were also two notable separate UN processes running in parallel that were distinct from the SDGs process but with considerable thematic overlaps. The first was the UN climate change negotiations, which had begun at the first Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and culminated in the Paris Climate Agreement in December 2015. The second was the Financing for Development process, which began at the UN International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002, and continued with a second major UN conference in Doha, Qatar, in 2008. This process held its third international conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2015. Although the Financing for Development process was distinct from the SDGs process, because of the proximity in time between the third Financing for Development conference and the culmination of the SDGs process, a core focus of the Addis Ababa conference became the means of implementation of the SDGs.

Figure 1 is a graphic produced by the UN Foundation which attempts to visualise how these multiple parallel consultation processes related to each other over the period 2012-2015.

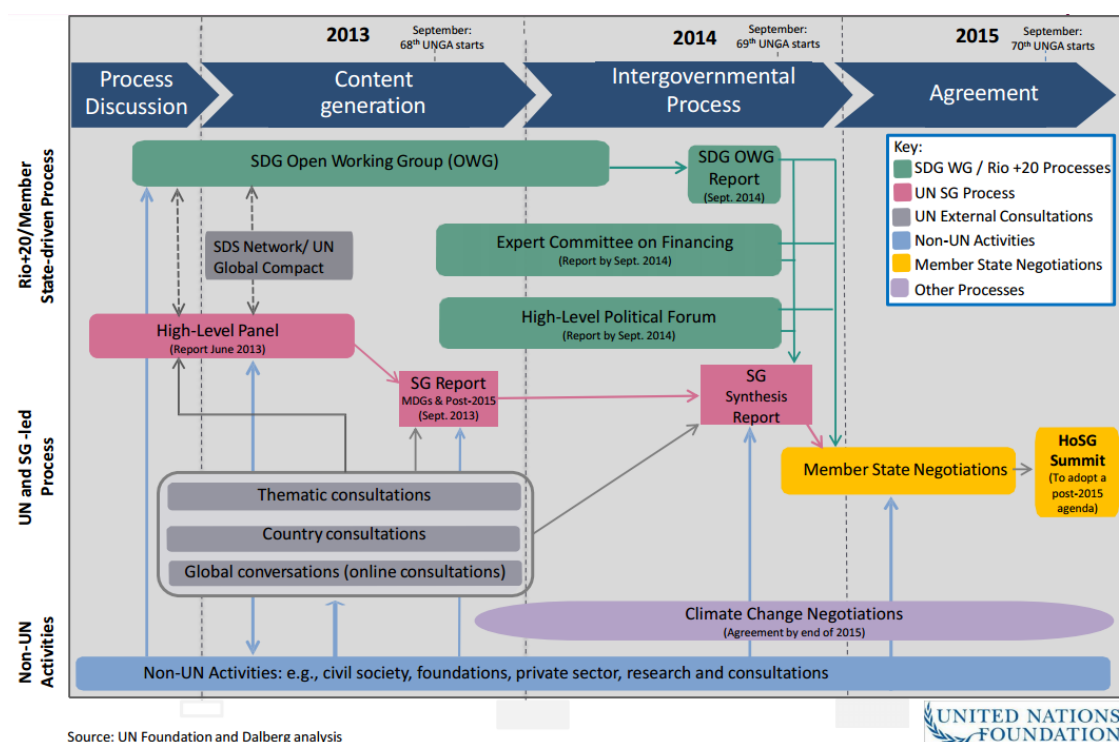


Figure 1: Visualisation of various consultation activities informing development of SDGs

3.5.2. Business engagement in the processes to develop the SDGs, and data collected

A number of businesses actively participated in several parts of this process. The most significant aspects of business involvement are described below, along with an overview of the corresponding data collected as part of this study. Four distinct focus areas relating to business advocacy on the SDGs are identified: two processes in the first year from mid-2012 to mid-2013, the UN Global Compact process, and the High Level Panel process; and two processes running over the second two years from mid-2013 to September 2015, a second phase of engagement by the UN Global Compact, plus a range of other more ad hoc business activities – both through the ICC Global Business Coalition and through a Unilever-led partnership with the UN Foundation which led to the publication of a ‘Business Manifesto’ and associated activities.

Across all four focus areas, a range of different types of data were collected, including documentation such as public and private reports, briefing documents, presentation decks, correspondence, as well as transcripts of interviews. The following section describes the specific documentation collected and meetings observed. The section after that discusses the interviews that were conducted.

Public domain documents were accessed through the internet. Video recordings of some meetings were available through the UN WebTV online platform. Access to private documents and meetings was negotiated. Specifically, two institutions provided access to the majority of the private domain documents and meetings, and assisted with introductions for conducting interviews. These were the UN Global Compact and Unilever. The researcher approached both organizations, described the objectives of the research, and requested support in the form of access. Both organizations were supportive of the aims of the study and provided assistance with access to documents and meetings over the course of the SDGs process between 2012 and 2015. A small number of interviewees provided access to a small number of further private domain documents. All private domain documents that access was provided to were examined in the study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

| | Key elements of process | High level summary of data collected and analysed | | | |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| | | Public domain documents submitted to policymakers | Non-public domain documents submitted to policymakers | Meetings observed between business leaders and policymakers | Coordination meetings observed among business representatives |
| Year 1: 2012-2013 UN Global Compact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nov 2012: LEAD symposium Jan 2013: Davos CEO lunch meeting April 2013: Bali HLP meeting Feb-July 2013: Conference calls among LEAD group April 2013: Geneva LEAD group meeting Nov 2012-May 2013: Local network meetings Nov 2012-May 2013: Issue platform meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2013: Joint Report to High Level Panel from UN Global Compact and WBCSD with World Economic Forum June 2013: UN Global Compact Report to the UN Secretary General | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2013: UN Global Compact CEO-UN Secretary General meeting, Davos | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2012: UN Global Compact LEAD Symposium meeting, New York February-July 2013: Three conference call meetings of the LEAD Post-2015 Project Group |
| Year 1: 2012-2013 Unilever and UN High Level Panel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jan-April 2013: Unilever country consultation meetings Jan-April 2013: Unilever thematic consultation letters Engagement of business membership organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2013: Joint Letter to the High Level Panel from nine International Business Organisations April 2013: Summary of Unilever Outreach for the High Level Panel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2013: Business Orgs Joint Letter – BIAC appendix March 2013: Business Orgs Joint Letter – ICC appendix March 2013: Business Orgs Joint Letter – BAA appendix March 2013: Business Orgs Joint Letter – IOE appendix March 2013: Business Orgs Joint Letter – BITC appendix March 2013: Business Orgs Joint Letter – TPI-IBLF appendix | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2013: Unilever HLP India Country Consultation meeting, New Delhi March 2013: Unilever HLP Netherlands Country Consultation meeting, The Hague March 2013: Unilever HLP South Africa Country Consultation meeting, Johannesburg March 2013: HLP Business Outreach meeting, Bali | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March-July 2013: Four conference call meetings between Unilever and International Business Organisations |
| Years 2-3: 2013-2015 UN Global Compact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Side event communications and meetings between UNGC companies and OWG policymakers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2013: UN Global Compact report “Building the Post-2015 Business Engagement Architecture” July 2014: UN Global Compact White Paper on Business and Finance August 2014: Implementation Brief on Government Policies August 2014: Implementation Brief on Partnerships August 2014: Implementation Brief on Private Sustainability Finance September 2014: Engaging with the Private Sector Report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May 2014: Letter from UN Global Compact to OWG June 2014: Comments from UN Global Compact to OWG March 2015: Letter from UN Global Compact to OWG March 2015: Brief from UN Global Compact to OWG | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2015: UN Global Compact Side Event with policymakers, New York | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> November 2013-May 2015: Two conference call meetings of the LEAD Post-2015 Project Group March 2015: In-person meeting of the LEAD Post-2015 Project Group, New York |
| Years 2-3: 2013-2015 Unilever and UN Foundation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dec 2013-2015 Unilever direct contributions to OWG May 2013-Sept 2015 ICC Global Business Alliance April 2014-Sept 2015 Unilever-UN Foundation partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2014: “Business Manifesto” April 2015: Aviva White Paper – A roadmap for sustainable capital markets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2014: Unilever Comments to OWG May 2014: Unilever Comments to OWG June 2014: Joint Letter from Private Sector, Civil Society and Academic Organisations to OWG on WASH | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2013: Paul Polman at OWG Meeting, New York September 2014: UN General Assembly “Business Manifesto” Side Event, New York January 2015: Civil Society and Business CEO Dialogue, Davos | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2014: Unilever and UN Foundation meeting with potential signatories of “Business Manifesto”, London October 2014: Unilever and UN Foundation conference call meeting with other companies |

Table 1: Summary of business participation in process to develop SDGs, and overview of data collected

3.5.2.1. Year 1: United Nations Global Compact

In the first year of the process, from July 2012 to July 2013, the UN Global Compact was formally tasked by the UN Secretary General's office with seeking input from the private sector and presenting a report to the UN Secretary General that would be one of a number of inputs that would shape a report the UN Secretary General would author at the end of the first year. The UN Global Compact report to the UN Secretary General was published in June 2013. The Global Compact also jointly authored a letter with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and supported by the World Economic Forum which was submitted to the High Level Panel in March 2013 (see details of High Level Panel process below). Over 7000 companies were signatory to the UN Global Compact during this period, and the Global Compact secretariat maintained multiple Local Networks in different regions and Issue Platforms focused on specific issues, as well as a global leadership group of 55 companies – UN Global Compact LEAD. The UN Global Compact engaged with all of these groups to elicit private sector input to inform its report. Specifically, the SDGs process was the primary focus of a two-day symposium held in New York in November 2012 for working representatives from the LEAD group of companies. The SDGs process was also the primary focus of a two-hour lunch meeting between the UN Secretary General and LEAD company CEOs in Davos in January 2013 alongside the World Economic Forum meeting. A project group of working-level representatives from 30 companies within the LEAD group was established to provide input to the UN Global Compact report and held a series of series of conference calls between February and July 2013, and a one-day face to face meeting in Geneva in April 2013. A series of engagement meetings were also held by Global Compact Local Networks and Issue Platforms over this period. The UN Global Compact Indonesia Local Network organised a two-day business outreach meeting as a formal part of the High Level Panel meeting in Bali, Indonesia, in April 2013, which included a three-hour session meeting directly with some HLP members.

Two key public domain documents setting out to policymakers the perspectives of business leaders on the SDGs form the main output from this part of the process and are examined in this study. The first is the main UN Global

Compact 25-page report to the UN Secretary General at the conclusion of this process in June 2013 entitled *Corporate Sustainability and the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda*. The second is the six-page letter jointly authored by the UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and supported by the World Economic Forum, which was submitted to the High Level Panel in March 2013.

This study also reviews a number of non-public domain sources of data. The author was an observer at the January 2013 CEO meeting with the UN Secretary General in Davos in January 2013 as well as an observer during three conference calls of the project group in February, June and July 2013 and the Business Outreach meeting held in Bali in April 2013. Internal documentation relating to the organisation of the November 2012 New York symposium, January 2013 Davos lunch meeting, and April 2013 meetings in Bali and Geneva (for example invitations, agendas, invite lists, pre-meeting briefing notes, slide deck presentations, minutes and post-meeting summaries) was analysed. The study also reviews early drafts of the HLP letter and final report, including comments received from companies participating in the drafting.

3.5.2.2. Year 1: Business engagement through the High Level Panel

The other major business involvement in the SDGs process in the first year from mid-2012 to mid-2013 was through the High Level Panel. Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, and Betty Maina, Chief Executive of the Association of Manufacturers of Kenya, were the two private sector representatives participating in the group of 27 individuals that made up the panel, and thus were present throughout all deliberations. They participated in a personal capacity, having been nominated by the governments of the Netherlands and Kenya respectively. The panel met in London, UK, in November 2012, Monrovia, Liberia, in February 2013 and Bali, Indonesia, in April 2013. In each case, the panel met for 2-3 days, and a business outreach meeting was organised as part of the event in order to allow business leaders to meet and discuss directly with HLP members (separate outreach meetings were also organised for HLP members to meet with representatives from civil society

organisations). In the case of the Bali HLP meeting, the business outreach session was organised by the UN Global Compact Local Network, as described above.

In addition, Paul Polman, with support from Unilever, undertook to organise a global consultation of business to inform the HLP's work. This sought to build on the business outreach meetings in London, Monrovia and Bali with a wider country consultation and thematic consultation, as well as engagement with CEOs at the World Economic Forum in Davos, and representatives of business membership organisations.

For the country consultation, at Polman's request, a number of CEOs of Unilever's country-level business units in countries that were represented on the HLP hosted a business roundtable in their country attended by local business leaders as well as civil society and government representatives, and the relevant HLP member. Nine roundtables were organised in total, in addition to the HLP business outreach meetings in London, Monrovia and Bali. These nine roundtables were organised in India, The Netherlands, Russia, Colombia, Brazil, South Africa, France, Spain and Mexico. A further survey input was organised in China as organising a physical meeting proved difficult to organise.

For the thematic consultation, Polman wrote directly to 13 CEOs on a range of specific issues asking them to engage with others in their sector to provide input for the HLP on the SDGs. Polman received replies from Peter Brabeck, Chairman of Nestlé, on water; Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo, and Daniel Servitje, Chairman and CEO of Grupo Bimbo, on food; Feike Sijbesma, CEO of DSM, on nutrition; Sir Andrew Witty, CEO of GSK, on health; Ginni Rometty, Chairman and CEO of IBM, and Peter Loscher, CEO of Siemens, on infrastructure; Peter Bakker, CEO of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and former CEO of TNT, on forests; Peter Sands, CEO of Standard Chartered, Antony Jenkins, CEO of Barclays, and Piet Morland, Chairman of Rabobank, on finance; Doug McKay, VP International Organisations at Shell, on energy; and John Fallon, CEO of Pearson, on education. Polman also received letters on SMEs from Brent Wilson, Secretary

General of the International Organisation of Employers (OIE) and Jin-Yong Cai, CEO of the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Polman coordinated with the UN Global Compact so that the Global Compact LEAD meeting between LEAD CEOs and the UN Secretary General in Davos in January 2013 (discussed above) would provide input directly to the HLP.

Unilever's government affairs team additionally organised a series of conference calls with various business membership organisations to coordinate their input to the HLP. This culminated in two letters to the HLP in March 2013. The first was jointly authored by the UN Global Compact and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development with support from the World Economic Forum. The second was co-signed by a wider group of nine business organisations: the UN Global Compact, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the International Chambers of Commerce (ICC), the International Organisation of Employers (OIE), the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC), Business Action for Africa, Business Fights Poverty, Business in the Community (BITC), and the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF). A number of these organisations attached their own letters as appendices to this joint letter, including OECD-BIAC, ICC, IOE, Business Action for Africa, BITC and IBLF.

One key public domain document setting out to policymakers the perspectives of business leaders on the SDGs forms the main output from this part of the process and is examined in this study. This is Unilever's published summary of its private sector outreach programme conducted as part of the SDGs process. This document is 48 pages long and contains brief summaries of key points from each of the issue areas in the thematic consultation, each of the country consultation meetings, and a copy of the letter co-signed by nine business organisations (which is two pages long).

This study also reviews a number of non-public domain sources of data. The author was an observer at the country consultation meetings in New Delhi, India, in February 2013 and in The Hague, The Netherlands, and Johannesburg, South Africa, both in March 2013, as well as an observer during

four conference calls between March and July 2013 organised by Unilever convening the nine business organisations towards jointly authoring and co-signing the letter to the HLP. Internal documentation relating to the organisation of all of the country consultation meetings (for example invitations, agendas, invite lists, pre-meeting briefing notes, slide deck presentations, minutes and post-meeting summaries) was analysed. Original copies of some of a sample of the letters from Paul Polman to other CEOs and the replies he received were also analysed. The study also reviews early drafts of the letter from the nine business organisations to the HLP, including comments received from the business organisations participating in the drafting, and also the six appendices from individual business organisations.

3.5.2.3. *Years 2-3: United Nations Global Compact*

Following submission of its report to the UN Secretary General in June 2013, the UN Global Compact's formal input to the SDGs process ended but it stayed closely involved with the SDGs process contributing a number of inputs to various parts of the process, including the OWG, over the remaining period to September 2015. Over this period, the LEAD SDGs project group remained active and coordinated through a series of conference calls and internal meetings. The Global Compact also organised a number of side events alongside OWG meetings to enable business representatives to meet with policymakers participating in the OWG.

Six key public domain documents setting out to policymakers the perspectives of business leaders on the SDGs form the main outputs from this part of the process and are examined in this study. The first is a 21-page document entitled *Architects of a Better World: Building the Post-2015 Business Engagement Architecture*, which was published at the time of the UN General Assembly and UN Global Compact Leaders' Summit in September 2013. The second is a ten page 'white paper' entitled *The role of business and finance in supporting the Post-2015 agenda*, which was published in July 2014. The third, fourth and fifth comprise a set of three 'implementation briefs' – one on government policies, one on partnerships and one on private sustainability finance. Each are two-three pages long and were published in August 2014.

The sixth is a 28-page report jointly published by the UN Global Compact and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) entitled *Engaging with the private sector in the Post-2015 agenda*, published in September 2014.

This study also reviews a number of non-public domain sources of data. Four non-public communications between the Global Compact the OWG were reviewed: a four-page letter to the OWG from Global Compact Executive Director Georg Kell in May 2014, a further two-page set of comments to the OWG in June 2014, another two-page letter in March 2015, and a two-page brief entitled *Post-2015 – Business Contribution to Sustainable Development* in March 2015. Additionally, the author was an observer at a side event involving business leaders and OWG policymakers in March 2015 and also observed two conference calls and one face-to-face meeting between members of the Global Compact LEAD SDGs project group over the period November 2013 to May 2015. Internal documentation relating to these activities was also analysed (for example invitations, agendas, invite lists, pre-meeting briefing notes, slide deck presentations, minutes and post-meeting summaries). The study also reviews early drafts of *Architecture* document, including comments received from the business organisations participating in the drafting. Similarly, it reviews early drafts of the three implementation briefs, including comments received from the business organisations participating in the drafting.

3.5.2.4. Years 2-3: The ICC Global Business Alliance and ad hoc business engagement through partnership with the UN Foundation

In the period following Paul Polman's involvement in the HLP, Unilever remained engaged in the SDGs process in three specific ways. First, it made a number of its own direct contributions to the OWG process. This included Paul Polman joining a three-hour meeting of the OWG in December 2013. Second, Unilever was involved briefly in discussions to create a Global Business Alliance led by the ICC. This initiative evolved out of the coordination of business associations that had culminated in the jointly developed letter to the HLP co-signed by nine business organisations and convened to directly represent business interests in core UN processes. However, the initiative evolved to include only business associations and no individual companies. It formally

launched in September 2013 and continued to be active throughout the SDGs process. Third, Unilever helped coordinate, in partnership with the UN Foundation, an ad hoc coalition of businesses to lobby and engage in advocacy around the SDGs, to complement the activity of the ICC Global Business Coalition and the UN Global Compact. This initiative began in May 2014 and continued to be active until the conclusion of the SDGs process in September 2015.

There is one main public domain record of Unilever's direct contributions to the OWG – an online video recording of Paul Polman's three-hour meeting with the OWG in December 2013 (all such meetings were broadcast live on the UN Web TV online platform, with past broadcasts available). A transcript of this recording is analysed in this study.

There are no public domain documents available relating to the work of the ICC-led Global Business Alliance.

One key public domain document setting out to policymakers the perspectives of business leaders on the SDGs forms the main output from the ad hoc coalition of businesses organised through the UN Foundation part of the process, and is examined in this study. This is the four-page document entitled *Business Manifesto*, first published to coincide with the UN General Assembly in September 2014 co-signed by 19 businesses, with a slightly revised version published in January 2015 to coincide with the WEF Davos meeting, co-signed by 21 businesses. Furthermore, a public side event meeting was organised between business leaders and policymakers at the UN General Assembly in September 2014 to discuss the themes in the Business Manifesto. This meeting was also broadcast on the UN Web TV online platform and a recording of the meeting available. The two versions of the *Business Manifesto* document and a transcript of the recording of the side event are analysed in this study.

This study also reviews a number of non-public domain sources of data relating to these activities. Two short one-page non-public communications between Unilever and the OWG were reviewed, as well as a three-page joint letter co-signed by Unilever and a number of other businesses, civil society

organisations and academic research institutions. Internal documentation relating to these activities was also analysed.

A limited amount of internal documentation relating to the initial activities of the ICC Global Business Alliance was also analysed.

Regarding the ad hoc coalition of businesses organised through a partnership of Unilever and the UN Foundation, a number of non-public documents were analysed. A one day meeting was observed in July 2014 at Unilever's London headquarters drawing together a wide group of companies together with the UN Foundation and, for the second half of the day, a number of civil society organisations, to discuss potential advocacy collaborations to influence the SDGs process. The author was also an observer at a subsequent conference call among companies participating in further developing the *Business Manifesto* in October 2014. The study also reviews early drafts of *Business Manifesto* document, including comments received from the business organisations participating in the drafting. Further, the author was an observer at a two-hour meeting between CEOs, policymakers and civil society leaders held alongside the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos in January 2015, where these individuals discussed how to coordinate their promotion of the key themes in the *Business Manifesto* in their meetings with other government leaders at Davos and elsewhere. This meeting combined the group of companies that had coalesced around the Business Manifesto through the UN Foundation with another business grouping – the B Team. Internal documentation relating to these activities was also analysed (for example invitations, agendas, invite lists, pre-meeting briefing notes, slide deck presentations, minutes and post-meeting summaries).

Finally, one further public domain document setting out to policymakers the perspectives of business leaders on the SDGs is examined here. This document was published independently by one company, although this company was also a member of the UN Global Compact LEAD SDGs project group. The document is a 60-page 'white paper' published by the insurance firm Aviva in April 2015 and entitled *A roadmap for sustainable capital markets: How*

can the UN Sustainable Development Goals harness the global capital markets?

In total, 12 key public domain documents communicating private sector views about the development of the SDGs to policymakers were reviewed, alongside a further 13 non-public domain documents. Nine meetings between business leaders and policymakers were observed. Thirteen meetings between business executives discussing their approach to coordinating their lobbying activities were observed. A further 395 related documents were reviewed and analysed.

Table 2 lists the companies involved in different parts of these initiatives, including those companies that were members of the UN Global Compact LEAD initiative during this period, and those that formed the LEAD Post-2015 project group. It also shows the companies that were involved in taking the lead on each of the different issues that formed the Unilever HLP thematic consultation (a far wider group of companies were involved in the thematic and country consultations overall). Finally, it shows the companies that co-signed the *Business Manifesto*, and also those that participated in the September 2014 UN General Assembly side event linked to the *Business Manifesto*.

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| | UNGC LEAD member | LEAD P2015 project group | Unilever HLP thematic consultation theme lead | Business Manifesto signatory | Participant in Sept 2014 UNGA event |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Accenture | | | | | |
| Acciona | | | | | |
| AP Moeller Maersk | | | | | |
| ARM Holdings | | | | | |
| Aviva | | | | | |
| BASF | | | | | |
| Bayer | | | | | |
| BBVA | | | | | |
| BMW | | | | | |
| China Development Bank | | | | | |
| China Minmetals | | | | | |
| China NTG Gas | | | | | |
| China Ocean Shipping Group | | | | | |
| Coca Cola | | | | | |
| Companhia Vale do Rio Doce | | | | | |
| Daimler | | | | | |
| Deutsche Telekom | | | | | |
| Empresa de Energia de Bogota | | | | | |
| Endesa | | | | | |
| Enel | | | | | |
| ENI | | | | | |
| Eskom | | | | | |
| Fuji Xerox | | | | | |
| Heineken | | | | | |
| Homeplus Company | | | | | |
| Infosys | | | | | |
| Intel | | | | | |
| KPMG | | | | | |
| Mansour Manufacturing & Distribution | | | | | |
| Martha Tilaar Group | | | | | |
| Natura Cosméticos | | | | | |
| Nestlé | | | | | |
| Netafim | | | | | |
| Newmont Mining Group | | | | | |
| Novartis International | | | | | |
| Novo Nordisk | | | | | |
| Novozymes | | | | | |
| Oando | | | | | |
| Pirelli | | | | | |
| PricewaterhouseCoopers | | | | | |
| Rosy Blue | | | | | |
| Royal Dutch Shell | | | | | |
| Sakhalin Energy | | | | | |
| SAP | | | | | |
| Siemens | | | | | |
| SINOPEC | | | | | |
| SK Telecom | | | | | |
| Sumitomo Chemicals | | | | | |
| Symantec | | | | | |
| System Capital Management | | | | | |
| Takeda Pharmaceuticals | | | | | |
| Talisman Energy | | | | | |
| Tata Steel | | | | | |
| Teck Resources | | | | | |
| Telefonica | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | |
| Unilever | | | | | |
| Vestas Wind Systems | | | | | |
| Yara | | | | | |
| PepsiCo | | | | | |
| Grupo Bimbo | | | | | |
| DSM | | | | | |
| GSK | | | | | |
| IBM | | | | | |
| Standard Chartered | | | | | |
| Barclays | | | | | |
| Rabobank | | | | | |
| Pearson | | | | | |
| AkzoNobel | | | | | |
| Brightline | | | | | |
| BT | | | | | |
| ConAgra Foods | | | | | |
| Hinduja | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Mastercard | | | | | |
| Ooredoo | | | | | |
| Philips | | | | | |
| RB | | | | | |
| SABMiller | | | | | |
| TOMS | | | | | |
| Anglo American | | | | | |
| AB InBev | | | | | |
| BNY Mellon | | | | | |
| CP Pokphand | | | | | |
| Caterpillar | | | | | |
| Deloitte | | | | | |
| Hivos | | | | | |
| Investec | | | | | |
| JP Morgan | | | | | |
| Mars | | | | | |
| Merck | | | | | |
| Monsanto | | | | | |
| Nielsen | | | | | |
| Pfizer | | | | | |
| Salesforce | | | | | |
| Target | | | | | |

Table 2: Companies involved in key SDGs processes (boxes in green indicate which companies were involved with which processes)

3.5.2.5. Interviews

Throughout the period 2013-2015, the collection of this documentary data was supplemented with the collection of interview data. Interviews were conducted with CEOs, Chairs and other senior executives leading major business units who participated in lobbying activities on the SDGs, as well as with working-level representatives also representing their companies in the process.

In total, representatives from 30 different companies were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with 13 individuals occupying CEO or Chair roles (sometimes both in one combined role), seven individuals occupying Business Unit head or equivalent senior executive responsibility for a major area of a company, and 25 individuals occupying government affairs, corporate sustainability or other equivalent roles directly involved in representing their companies in lobbying and policy advocacy activities and/or supporting their CEOs in that activity. In total, 45 individuals were interviewed. Some individuals were interviewed more than once – in total, 57 interviews were conducted. Table 3 indicates which interviewed companies participated in which specific processes. Table 4 lists the interviews conducted.

A semi-structured interview protocol was followed, with core questions focused around: what different parts of the processes to develop the SDGs has the company and the individual been involved in? Why has the company and the

individual prioritised making time to participate? What were they seeking to achieve? What has shaped thinking on this? Following Herda (Herda, 1999), these questions were designed with the 'initial categories' from the theoretical framework in mind, specifically Ricoeur's theory of motivated action – how action can be thought of as the performance of meaning, how intersubjectively shaped imaginative horizons shape individual ideals of the good life and lifeplans, which individuals aim at in everyday actions. Follow up questions probed for commercial, organisational and personal factors, and also explored perspectives on what might account for why their organisation has participated while some others have not. Where appropriate, follow-up probing questions often sought to ask for more detail regarding any references which linked to the initial categories developed in the theoretical framework, including: governance gaps created by globalization, legitimacy challenges, the significance of senior executive leadership, the outlook and orientations of senior executives, and what may have shaped the action of these senior executives, including any references to the significance of meanings critically appropriated from encounters with others and otherness over their lifetime, particularly encounters related to friends, 'Masters of Justice', and suffering others.

Interviewees were selected based on their personal participation in some aspect of the SDGs process on behalf of their companies – interviews were sought with both CEOs and other senior executives with responsibility for business units, as well as with individuals in corporate affairs, government affairs or corporate sustainability or corporate citizenship roles. Some initial introductions were facilitated by the UN Global Compact and Unilever, other individuals were approached for interview purely on the basis of having participated in one or more meetings or processes relating to the SDGs. Not all requests for interviews were granted, but all offers of interviews were taken.

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| | Sector | HQ location region | UNGC | | | | HLP | | Ad hoc group with UN Foundation | | | |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|---|--|--|---|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | | Member of UNGC LEAD | Member of UNGC LEAD Post-2015 Project Group | Participated in Jan 2013 UNGC Davos meeting | Participated in March 2015 UNGC policymaker side event | Participated in an HLP business outreach meeting in London, Monrovia or Bali | Participated in Unilever HLP thematic and/or country consultation | Participated in 2014 discussions about developing Business Manifesto | Signatory to Jan 2015 Business Manifesto | Participated in Sept 2014 UNGA side event related to Business Manifesto | Participated in Jan 2015 Davos 2015 |
| 1 | Financial / prof services | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Financial / prof services | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Consumer goods | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Pharmaceuticals | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Pharmaceuticals | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Biotech | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Manufacturing | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Chemicals | East Asia | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Consumer goods | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | Chemicals | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Consumer goods | SE Asia | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | Oil & Gas | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | Conglomerate | SE Asia | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | Textiles | South Asia | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Mining | Africa | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | Chemicals | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | Pharmaceuticals | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Education | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Real estate development | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | Textiles | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | Financial / prof services | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 22 | Chemicals | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23 | Advertising | N America | | | | | | | | | | |
| 24 | Telecoms | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 25 | Conglomerate | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 26 | Electronics | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 27 | Consumer goods | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 28 | Consumer goods | Europe | | | | | | | | | | |
| 29 | Financial / prof services | N America | | | | | | | | | | |
| 30 | Financial / prof services | N America | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 3: Which interviewed companies participated in which processes (boxes in blue indicate which interviewed companies were involved with which processes)

| Interviewee Number | Interview number | Date | Role type | Sector | Region of HQ |
|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 1 | 2013 Feb 13 th | Other C-suite | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 2 | 2 | 2013 March 5 th | CEO or Chair | Real estate development | Europe |
| 3 | 3 | 2013 March 5 th | CEO or Chair | Consumer goods | Europe |
| | 8 | 2013 April 22 nd | " | " | " |
| 4 | 4 | 2013 March 5 th | CEO or Chair | Textiles | Europe |
| 5 | 5 | 2013 March 8 th | Other C-suite | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 6 | 6 | 2013 March 8 th | CEO or Chair | Financial / professional services | Europe |
| 7 | 7 | 2013 March 24 th | CEO or Chair | Textiles | South Asia |
| 8 | 9 | 2013 May 22 nd | Govt Affairs | Pharmaceuticals | Europe |
| | 21 | 2014 August 21 st | " | " | " |
| 9 | 10 | 2013 June 19 th | CEO or Chair | Consumer goods | Southeast Asia |
| | 11 | 2013 June 20 th | Govt Affairs | Mining | Africa |
| 11 | 12 | 2013 June 26 th | Sustainability/CR | Manufacturing | Europe |
| 12 | 13 | 2013 June 27 th | Govt Affairs | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 13 | 14 | 2013 July 3 rd | Sustainability/CR | Chemicals | Europe |
| | 29 | 2014 October 14 th | " | " | " |
| 14 | 15 | 2013 August 1 st | Sustainability/CR | Education | Europe |
| | 30 | 2014 October 22 nd | " | " | " |
| 15 | 16 | 2013 August 7 th | Govt Affairs | Consumer goods | Europe |
| | 31 | 2014 November 7 th | " | " | " |
| 16 | 17 | 2013 August 7 th | CEO or Chair | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 17 | 18 | 2013 August 13 th | Sustainability/CR | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 18 | 19 | 2013 September 3 rd | CEO or Chair | Education | Europe |
| 19 | 20 | 2014 August 15 th | Sustainability/CR | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 20 | 22 | 2014 August 28 th | Other C-suite | Financial / professional services | Europe |
| 21 | 23 | 2014 September 8 th | Govt Affairs | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 22 | 24 | 2014 September 8 th | Other C-suite | Financial / professional services | Europe |
| 23 | 25 | 2014 September 10 th | Sustainability/CR | Financial / professional services | North America |
| | 34 | 2014 December 16 th | " | " | " |
| 24 | 26 | 2014 September 12 th | Other C-suite | Pharmaceuticals | Europe |
| 25 | 27 | 2014 September 12 th | Sustainability/CR | Telecoms | Europe |
| 26 | 28 | 2014 September 16 th | CEO or Chair | Advertising | North America |
| 27 | 32 | 2014 December 2 nd | Other C-suite | Financial / professional services | Europe |
| | 35 | 2015 January 8 th | " | " | " |
| | 37 | 2015 January 23 rd | " | " | " |
| | 40 | 2015 February 12 th | " | " | " |
| 28 | 33 | 2014 December 16 th | Govt Affairs | Pharmaceuticals | Europe |
| | 50 | 2016 April 16 th | " | " | " |
| 29 | 36 | 2015 January 20 th | Govt Affairs | Biotech | Europe |
| 30 | 38 | 2015 January 28 th | Other C-suite | Chemicals | East Asia |
| 31 | 39 | 2015 February 6 th | Govt Affairs | Chemicals | Europe |
| 32 | 41 | 2015 February 17 th | Sustainability/CR | Chemicals | Europe |
| 33 | 42 | 2015 February 23 rd | Sustainability/CR | Biotech | Europe |
| 34 | 43 | 2015 February 23 rd | Govt Affairs | Electronics | Europe |
| 35 | 44 | 2015 March 3 rd | Govt Affairs | Chemicals | Europe |
| 36 | 45 | 2015 March 4 th | Sustainability/CR | Financial / professional services | Europe |
| | 51 | 2015 April 20 th | " | " | " |
| 37 | 46 | 2015 March 13 th | CEO or Chair | Conglomerate | Southeast Asia |
| 38 | 47 | 2015 March 26 th | Govt Affairs | Consumer goods | Europe |
| 39 | 48 | 2015 April 8 th | Sustainability/CR | Pharmaceuticals | Europe |
| | 49 | 2015 April 16 th | " | " | " |
| 40 | 52 | 2015 April 30 th | Other C-suite | Biotech | Europe |
| 41 | 53 | 2015 June 16 th | CEO or Chair | Biotech | Europe |
| 42 | 54 | 2015 September 11 th | CEO or Chair | Pharmaceuticals | Europe |
| 43 | 55 | 2015 September 18 th | Other C-suite | Pharmaceuticals | Europe |
| 44 | 56 | 2015 September 26 th | CEO or Chair | Chemicals | Europe |
| 45 | 57 | 2015 October 2 nd | Other C-suite | Oil and Gas | Europe |

Table 4: List of interviews conducted

3.6. Data analysis

All documents and transcripts collected during the data collection phase were catalogued and uploaded to atlas.ti, where this software was used to assist data analysis. Following Herda (Herda, 1999), data analysis was guided by the theoretical framework of ‘initial categories’ developed from pre-existing theory and literature. At the outset of data collection, ‘initial categories’ were developed from the literatures on PCSR and Responsible Leadership, as well as from liberal and republican theories of citizenship, and Ricoeur’s theories of what shapes ethical intention and participation in communicative processes to develop collective rules. These ‘initial categories’ included the following:

- the notion of globalization creating governance gaps which prompt legitimacy challenges for corporations which in turn prompt participation in deliberative processes to develop private governance mechanisms;
- the distinction between aiming at the effective resolution of public issues to the satisfaction of all versus pursuing self-interest at the expense of others;
- the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate engagement, characterised by either communicative or instrumental/strategic action;
- the notion of senior executive leadership style and orientation potentially having some significance in accounting for differing corporate responses to the governance gaps created by globalization;
- the potential significance of meanings critically appropriated through encounters with others and otherness, including specifically relating to ‘solicitude’ – the particular meanings critically appropriated through:
 - (a) relationships with friends that the individual cares for and is concerned for,
 - (b) encounters with others that act as ‘Masters of Justice’, challenging the individual and instructing them in some way or another regarding what counts as right and what counts as wrong, and
 - (c) encounters with suffering others that the individual feels sympathy for.

As discussed in the theoretical framework section above, data collection took place between 2012-2015 and data analysis took place between 2016-2019. As such, the opportunity was taken to review the development of the literatures on PCSR and responsible leadership for additional theoretical developments of relevance. This identified two specific additional 'initial categories' which were added to guide data analysis: Lock and Seele's extrapolation of PCSR theory to the phenomenon of direct lobbying of government to influence and encourage the development of hard-law, applying Habermasian critical theory to develop their framework of Deliberative Lobbying; Maak et al's connection between level of corporate engagement in PCSR activity, and senior executive responsible leadership style, and value orientation; and Patzer et al's focus on link between conditions in the external context and prevalence of different RL styles, with integrative leadership styles becoming more common in tandem with the shift from national to transnational operations and the emergence of the governance gaps relating to globalization (Lock & Seele, 2016; Maak et al., 2016; Patzer et al., 2018).

During the data collection phase, the initial insight into the nature of the data gained suggested that it could be also valuable to develop from the literature some additional 'initial categories' potentially relevant for guiding data analysis. These included literature on debates informing the development of the SDGs, and debates regarding the development and impact of the preceding Millennium Development Goals, as well as key aspects of international development theory, neo-liberal economic theory, and the theory of policy instruments. This literature and theory and its role is described in more detail in chapter four as part of the consideration of themes in the wider context.

These 'initial categories' were used to guide the analysis of the data to develop a range of themes from the empirical material. The question of whether the corporate lobbying that occurred during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals can be seen as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development was explored by considering what the empirical material revealed about what the companies were lobbying for and how they approached the lobbying process. Documents were analysed paying attention to what MNCs were calling for, and what

objectives and aims were referred to, as well as what process was followed. The critical frameworks of Political CSR and Deliberative Lobbying, derived from Habermas' critical theory, were applied, and wider context was considered with reference to the literatures on debates on the SDGs and MDGs and international development theory.

The question of how to account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities was initially addressed through an analysis of the narratives constructed in interview situations by individuals involved in the corporate lobbying action, paying attention to references to intentions aimed at, and the nature of the arguments used to justify time and resources on the lobbying activity, as well as references to the significance of senior leaders. The meaning of these narratives was then considered in light of wider context and critical perspectives. The sixth principle of a critical hermeneutics approach proposed in this thesis – the operation of otherness through the self – was employed to consider how meanings in the wider context encountered and critically appropriated over a lifetime may have influenced the imaginative horizons actors aimed towards in their action, and thus how these meanings in the wider context may have influenced the action that is the focus of this study. Further analysis of interview accounts with key actors paid attention to references to how meanings in the wider context, critically appropriated through encounters with others and otherness, may have shaped the aims of key actors, with specific reference to the three aspects of solicitude – the particular meanings critically appropriated through (a) relationships with friends that the individual cares for and is concerned for, (b) encounters with others that act as 'Masters of Justice', challenging the individual and instructing them in some way or another regarding what counts as right and what counts as wrong, and (c) encounters with suffering others that the individual feels sympathy for.

The results of this analysis of the data are presented in chapters four to seven. Herda argues that a critical hermeneutics approach involves the researcher configuring a narrative with a plot from the analysis and interpretation of texts – documents and interview scripts – in so doing the researcher creates a new text. As Herda notes, in a critical hermeneutics approach: "The researcher as

narrator—the researcher is more of a narrator than an analyst—calls upon productive imagination in the invention and discovery of plots grounded in quotes from conversation and theory” (Herda, 1999, p. 127). In interpreting the analysis of data, the task of the researcher is to develop a plot. In each of chapters four to seven, and again in chapter eight, this thesis seeks to consider a number of ways of interpreting the data that has been analysed, and seeks to propose and argue for a particular interpretation, while noting grounds for retaining some suspicion of it and the merits of alternative interpretations. These interpretations are presented and discussed in the chapters that follow.

3.7. Ethical considerations

This thesis used the University of Exeter’s Ethics Policy and ‘Good Practice in the conduct of research’ document as key reference points for considering and acting on research ethics issues relating to this study. Reviewing these two documents identified three research ethics related issues which required consideration: informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and conflicts of interest. The details of the issues identified, and the approaches taken, are discussed below. The ethics approval submission can be found in Appendix 1.

3.7.1. Informed consent

Good practice, as codified in the above two documents, is for informed consent to always be obtained from research participants. In this study, it was judged that there were no factors that made the research situation particularly complex: vulnerable people were not involved, no deception was involved, and there was nothing about the research situation likely to provoke distress. All individuals invited to participate in an interview were provided with a written summary of the nature of the research project, its aims, and anticipated consequences, as well as information about anonymity and confidentiality (see below). No relevant information was deliberately withheld. Participation in meetings was organised with the consent of the organisers of those meetings. In most cases, the presence of the researcher observing the meeting was explained to all participants and consent sought and obtained. Given the high-level nature of some of the meetings, this was not possible in every single case.

3.7.2. Anonymity and confidentiality

All participants involved in research interviews were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Steps have been taken in the presentation of the empirical research that, except in the case of data relating to public domain sources, names of individuals and organisations have not been given and data discussed are not traceable to specific individuals or organisations. Care has been taken to not include information which could easily identify which company is being referred to.

3.7.3. Conflicts of interest

Access to much of the private domain documentation and meetings was negotiated with the assistance of two organisations: the UN Global Compact and Unilever, as discussed in section 3.5. As noted in that section, the researcher approached both organizations, described the objectives of the research, and requested support in the form of access. Both organizations were supportive of the aims of the study and provided assistance with access to documents and meetings over the course of the SDGs process between 2012 and 2015. Neither organisation attached to their assistance any conditions regarding the research process, questions, focus areas or findings to the provision of this access.

Research funding was obtained to cover travel expenses for observing meetings and for of professional transcription services. This funding was obtained from an internal research fund within the academic institution employing the researcher, which in turn was supported by funds from Santander Universities. The only stipulation attached to this research funding was that the topic of the research needed to be related to business and sustainable development.

4. Empirical Findings Section 1 – Part 1: Policy outcomes aimed at

4.1. Introduction

Empirical findings section one, comprising chapters four and five, addresses the research question: can such lobbying be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development? To seek insight on this question, this section presents an analysis of the lobbying activities of companies active in the process to develop the UN SDGs over the period 2012-2015. It pursues this analysis using the deliberative lobbying framework, asking whether the lobbying in this case can be judged to meet the criteria of the deliberative lobbying framework.

Lock and Seele's Deliberative Lobbying framework argues that to be judged lobbying activity that actively helps to contribute to addressing collective societal challenges, two tests need to be met. The first relates to intent and the second to process. For the first, the lobbying needs to be aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others. For the second, the lobbying process needs to be characterised by the three features of: inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability.

The first part of section one – chapter four – looks at the whether the lobbying in this case meets the criteria of the first part of the deliberative lobbying framework: whether what the companies were calling for can be judged to be aimed at the effective resolution of public issues. The second part of section one – chapter five – then looks at the whether the lobbying in this case meets the criteria of the second part of the deliberative lobbying framework: whether the process followed met the tests of inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability.

To examine whether the lobbying in this case meets the test of being aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others, chapter four reviews in detail what exactly the companies involved in the Post-2015 process were calling for and evaluates the significance of this in light of wider debates regarding what approach to the SDGs would be most effective for addressing global sustainable development challenges.

Chapter four is structured as follows. The chapter first presents an analysis of what the companies were calling for during the lobbying process. The analysis discusses the corporate lobbying in relation to three categories: the scope of the issues to be included in the goals, technical details regarding the framing of the goals, and the means of implementation of the goals. The chapter then discusses the extent to which what the companies were calling for in each of these areas can be judged to meet the criteria of aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aiming simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others. It does this by considering these lobbying positions in the context of debates regarding the SDGs and the MDGs, and also in the context of wider debates regarding international development theory, neo-liberal economic theory, and the merits of different kinds of policy instruments. The hermeneutical circle is employed to assist this analysis, re-evaluating the meaning of the phenomenon in light of wider context and from both trusting and critical perspectives. Chapter four draws on an analysis of the 12 public domain documents communicating private sector views about the development of the SDGs to policymakers were reviewed, the further 11 non-public domain documents communicating private sector views to policymakers, and the observations of nine meetings between business leaders and policymakers, as described in section 3.5.2.

Chapter five then looks at whether the lobbying process meets the criteria of the second part of the lobbying process. The details of how it does this are set out

at the beginning of chapter five. Chapter five concludes with a discussion reflecting on the research question in light of the findings from both chapters four and five. This discussion also reflects on how the application of the deliberative lobbying framework to this case helps advance deliberative lobbying and Political CSR theory.

4.2. Policy outcomes aimed at

A number of key debates informed the questions to be deliberated during the post-2015 development agenda process. These can broadly be delineated into three categories: the scope of the issues to be included within the goals, more technical issues about precisely how the goals should be formulated, and the means of implementation – how the goals should be achieved. These ‘initial categories’ were taken as a point of departure for an analysis of the documents reviewed here. All contributions made by companies in the documents looked at did align with one or more of these categories. Each of these areas is examined below. Each section begins with an overview of key themes in the corporate lobbying in that area, followed by a detailed examination of specific points made in different documents produced in different parts of the process.

4.2.1. Scope of issues to be included within the goals

Across all the documents and meetings examined, a number of consistent points were made about the scope of issues the private sector sought to see included in the SDGs.

These documents and meetings show that the companies involved in the process sought to see a continued focus on the core MDGs issues: poverty, hunger, gender, health, and education. In addition, they sought to see more prominence given to economic growth as a goal, with caveat that this economic growth should be equitable and inclusive. Further, they argued that environmental issues should have more prominence and specificity than in MDGs, specifically in relation to climate, ecosystems, water and the links these issues have with agriculture, energy production, transportation, and deforestation. These documents also mention a range of further specific issues

that the private sector sought to be given prominence in the SDGs: nutrition, sanitation, good governance, rule of law, anti-corruption and human rights.

| Debate category | Key themes in corporate lobbying |
|---|--|
| 1. Scope of issues to be included in SDGs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue focus on MDGs issues: Poverty, hunger, gender, health, education • Environmental issues should have more prominence and specificity than in MDGs: specifically climate, ecosystems, water; with links with agriculture, energy production, transportation, deforestation • Give more prominence to economic growth as a goal (as a means of achieving above), with caveat that should be equitable and inclusive • Also include more explicit direct focus on nutrition, sanitation, good governance / Rule of Law / anti-corruption, human rights |

Table 5: Scope of issues to be included in the SDGs – key themes in corporate lobbying

UN Global Compact

The main report from the UN Global Compact to the UN Secretary General in June 2013 emphasised that the SDGs should continue to focus on MDGs issues but should also add a more explicit and detailed focus on economic growth, climate and environment, and good governance and institutions. The graphic from this submission is reproduced in Figure 2.



Figure 2: UN Global Compact Post-2015 Issue Area Priorities

(United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 5)

The document summarises these ten areas as set out below, and goes on to offer a detailed description of each of the areas, as well as offering possible targets to include in each of the ten areas.

- “The Poverty Apex: An end to extreme poverty and a strong start on extending prosperity to the majority of the world’s people are now achievable. The hallmarks of this campaign should be sustained economic growth that is inclusive and more equitable; more and better jobs; and access to credit and entrepreneurship opportunities, especially among the poor.
- Human Needs and Capacities: Progress and unmet challenges in the core MDG areas of education, health and advances in the standing of women and girls need to continue past 2015 – all closely related to poverty and its eradication.
- The Resource Triad: The resource triad of water and sanitation, energy and climate, and agriculture and food bring together the three pillars of sustainable development. Each meets basic human needs, has the capacity to power sustainable economic growth and is directly related to climate change.
- Enabling Environment: Good governance and respect for human rights, settings of peace and stability, and more modern and greener digital and physical infrastructure are enabling factors important enough to be elevated to worldwide goals.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 2)

This passage clearly references a call for continued emphasis on core MDG areas of poverty, education, health and gender, but also includes calls for more explicit inclusion of goals on economic growth, noting that this should be equitable and inclusive, and calls for more detailed goals on interlinked social and environmental issues – discussing the need for goals addressing water and sanitation, energy and climate, and agriculture and food, and calls for greater focus on institutions, good governance and human rights.

In other places, the submission again emphasises continuing with the core MDGs themes, but with an increased focus on economic and environmental issues, as this quote illustrates.

“One very broad conclusion is that, for their notable successes, the MDGs underplay economic factors that are driving forces in achieving social well-being, while subsuming an important array of environmental and human-need challenges under the single MDG Goal 7. A post-2015 agenda, therefore, should finish the job of the MDGs in social priority areas of health, women’s empowerment and education, while expanding

the environmental goals and placing new emphasis on enabling environment.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 5)

On economic growth, the submission focuses on the need for economic growth to be inclusive, citing issues relating to more jobs, labour standards, social security, and equitable distribution:

“The effort will depend on economic growth based on equity and inclusiveness... At the centre of inclusive growth is the creation of more jobs, but these must be quality jobs that uphold international labour standards... There should be social protection for the jobless, and skills training that reaches out to women and vulnerable or marginalized groups.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 6)

The submission proposes expanding the MDG focus on environmental issues and taking a ‘nexus’ approach:

“Business leaders recognize that a sustainability agenda must have global aspirations – as climate change, volatile weather, crises related to food and water availability, and limits on mineral and biodiversity resources all have planetary settings. Three areas that come to the fore in business discussions are water/sanitation, energy, and food/agriculture. Each meets a primal human need; provides critical resources for economies, especially in the developing world; and overlaps with the others in terms of management and impact. All are integrally tied to the causes and effects of climate change. As all three issues are interconnected, a “nexus” approach will be required in addition to addressing each issue independently.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 9)

The submission also emphasises including an explicit focus on good governance, referencing peace and stability, the rule of law, human rights and anti-corruption measures.

All subsequent UN Global Compact submissions to the Post 2015 process reference this pyramid framework in relation to scope of issues to be included in the goals.

The 19 September 2014 document *UN Global Compact and UNIDO: Engaging with the Private Sector in the Post-2015 Agenda – Consolidated Report on 2014 Consultations* includes a restatement of the ten priority issues included in previous submissions made by the UN Global Compact. It stresses maintaining

the focus on MDGs issues as well as increasing the focus on economic growth and natural resources. It additionally stresses the importance of including a focus on inequality in the SDGs.

“While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide a framework for tackling some of the world’s most pressing social challenges, they are very much concentrated on meeting basic human needs. The future Sustainable Development Goals framework should go beyond the conceptualization of the MDGs. In addition to eliminating poverty, the new framework will need to address the drivers of change, such as economic growth, job creation, reduced inequality and innovation that makes better and more careful use of natural resources.” (United Nations Global Compact / UNIDO, 2014, p. 4)

Unilever’s business consultation for the High Level Panel

Similar themes are clear in the documentation Unilever produced to summarise the business consultation led on behalf of Paul Polman for the High Level Panel. The consultation summary document states that the most important focus areas for the SDGs should be maintaining the focus on MDGs human development issues while adding a more explicit focus on economic growth, and also improved focus on environmental issues:

“There was strong support for the vision of “eradicating poverty”. Not surprisingly many companies felt that the best way of achieving this was through economic development and job creation. There was a unanimous view that we should have only one set of targets. No company wanted to separate poverty goals from environmental ones. All wanted the goals to cover the three dimensions of sustainability – the social, the economic and the environmental.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 3)

More detail is offered in the document in the summaries of the thematic and country consultations. The water thematic consultation called for an explicit goal on water and offered various possible targets. The food and nutrition thematic consultations both called for an explicit inclusion of nutrition within the goals. The health thematic consultation called for: “an integrated health goal that builds on the progress made by MDGs 4, 5 and 6” (Unilever, 2013, p. 9). The infrastructure thematic consultation called for an explicit goal on infrastructure that would reference energy, ICT, transportation health and housing. The forests thematic consultation called for an explicit goal on deforestation. The

finance thematic consultation called for an explicit reference to financial inclusion in the goals. The energy thematic consultation called for an explicit goal on access to energy: “Universal access to modern energy by 2030” (Unilever, 2013, p. 13). The education thematic consultation called for an education goal and made suggestions for specific targets. A number of references to specific goals areas are also featured in the summaries of the country consultation roundtables, including calls to maintain the focus on the core MDGs areas, and adding explicit references to cities, water and sanitation, climate change, governance and corruption, inequality, access to energy, nutrition, financial inclusion, and sustainable consumption and production.

Unilever’s direct inputs to the OWG

In his meeting with the OWG in December 2013, Polman stressed the importance of continuing with the focus on the issues included in the MDGs, but also expanding to include economic, environmental and governance issues, and noting the need to tackle inequality and to be ambitious.

“Ambition must be the key word here. The vision must show that governments, business leaders and civil society are ready to commit to radical actions to tackle the gross inequalities that are still plaguing this world. The vision must be captured in a new set, a single set, of integrated goals, goals that reflect all dimensions of sustainability: the social, the economical, the sustainable as well as the governance principles, and goals must without any doubt be measurable, time-bound and have clear accountabilities, and goals which finish the unfinished business of the MDGs as a starting point, and then importantly, as we had recommended, go well beyond that.”

Business Manifesto

The September 2014 *Business Manifesto* welcomed the OWG focus on core MDG issues as well as the addition of more explicit focus on food and nutrition, public health, water, sanitation, and hygiene, environmental protection in general and climate change in particular, financial inclusion, and good governance:

“Recognizing the breadth of the Open Working Groups recommended goals, we think the UN High Level Panel’s proposed goals are still

resonant. We would welcome goals on food and nutrition; public health, water, sanitation, and hygiene; environmental protection and financial inclusion. And we think goals on gender equity, education, and governance are key elements of any enabling environment. We are pleased that Climate Change is now on the agenda. True, global climate policy has its own process but we believe that it is essential to recognise the climate change will have potentially significant impacts on poverty alleviation and reduction goals.” (Multiple Business Organisations, 2014, p. 3)

At the September 2014 UN General Assembly side event meeting between business leaders and policymakers to discuss the Business Manifesto, Unilever CEO Paul Polman stressed the importance of the SDGs address climate as well as poverty:

“It is very clear now that for the majority of the businesses, I would really say, that if we don't attack for example the fact of climate change we will not have development either. The good thing about the report that Felipe Calderon did on the new climate economy, which I had the honour to be part of, was that for once and for all it dispels this notion that you cannot do both; you cannot fight climate change and have growth. This report says very clearly that if you don't fight climate change you don't have growth.”

4.2.2. Technical framing of the SDGs

In relation to debates about the format the SDGs should take, again, private sector advocacy is consistent across all the documents and meetings examined. The private sector sought for the SDGs to apply globally, rather than just to developing countries. The private sector sought a 15-year time frame with five-year reviews, a limited number of goals, articulated in easy to understand language, and clearly measurable with clear accountabilities for delivery. The private sector also sought for the SDGs to take into account differences in different regions, formulating goals that would be both achievable and ambitious across countries at different levels of development. Furthermore, the private sector sought for the interconnections between goals to be emphasised as explicitly as possible.

| Debate category | Key themes in corporate lobbying |
|---|--|
| 2. Technical details on format of goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global • 15 year time frame with five year reviews • Limited number • Easy to understand • Measurable • Clear accountabilities for delivery • Take into account differences in different regions, so both achievable and ambitious • Be explicit about interconnections between goals |

Table 6: Technical details on format of goals – key themes in corporate lobbying

The following sections offer a detailed examination of specific points made in different documents produced in different parts of the process.

UN Global Compact

The June 2013 UN Global Compact report to the UN Secretary General argues that the new goals should apply globally, but allow for differentiation in different regions, be limited in number, be clear, measurable, and time-bound over a 15 year period with five year review periods. The document sets out the following list of proposed criteria for setting goals and targets:

- “Global in scope, and not pre-determining a North-South duality;
- Taking into account differences in the level of development of different countries or regions, allowing for achievability as well as ambition;
- Limited in number;
- Clear in theme and concept;
- Chosen with consideration of both intrinsic value and a multiplier effect;
- Balance between the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development;
- “SMART” targets: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. If not stated in quantitative terms, targets should be amenable to measurement on progress through statistical indicators; and
- Targets set for a 15-year period beginning in 2015, with check points every five years, and benchmarked to 2010.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 13)

Later UN Global Compact submissions welcome the focus on making the SDGs inspirational, limited in number, specific and measurable and further stress points regarding interconnection between different goals and reducing the overall number of goals.

Unilever's business consultation for the HLP

Unilever's consultation summary document stressed a number of points relating to the technical framing of the goals, including conciseness, clarity, measurability, monitoring and accountability:

“The MDGs were admired for their brevity, their clarity of purpose and the fact that they were, in most instances, measurable... companies were keen to have precise targets, regular milestones and clear accountability.” (Unilever, 2013, pp. 2–3)

The thematic and country consultations also called for a number of specific approaches regarding the technical framing of the SDGs. These included that they should be measurable, actionable, timebound, flexible to the situation in different countries rather than one-size-fits-all, regularly monitored with agreed milestone review points. For example, the health thematic consultation summary included: “Ensure goals are clear and have a common measurement framework. 15 year goals should be broken down into short-term milestones.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 9). The food thematic consultation summary included: “Targets should recognize that the challenges of food security vary greatly between different regions and countries. There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution. Targets should have sufficient flexibility to reflect this.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 7).

The joint letter from nine business organisations called for a single set of global goals integrating social and environmental issues, precision, ease of understanding, measurability, monitoring, clear accountability, and clear distinction between aims and means of implementation. Their letter called for the High Level Panel to call for:

“Keeping the focus on delivery of the current MDG's and the integration of a set of Sustainable Development Goals which are easy to understand and measurable with a clear differentiation between WHAT we want to achieve and HOW we will deliver this; [and] the setting of precise targets, with regular milestones and clear accountabilities to evaluate progress.” (Business Organisations Group, 2013, p. 1)

Unilever's direct inputs to the OWG

In his meeting with the OWG in December 2013, Polman stressed the need for and value of clear targets:

“The international community and the business community share something very powerful which is a love for goals and targets. I don't think you can achieve anything if you don't set clear goals and targets. Business can't run without them. They provide the clarity, they provide the focus, they provide a mechanism to monitor progress and spur corrective action to ensure that we remain on track.”

Business Manifesto

The September 2014 *Business Manifesto* document welcomed the OWG focus on a universal global approach and called for the format of the goals to focus on simplicity and clarity, language that will engage, formulating targets which are measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound and have a clear delivery plan.

“Universality is the right principle to underpin the new goals. Ours is a world increasingly defined by shared challenges – we need to get much more serious about shared approaches to tackling them. The goals must be simple, resonant, clear, and make intuitive sense to real people – not just to negotiators, policymakers and experts. All goals need to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound - SMART. Goals with no clear delivery plan are worse than no Goals at all.”
(Multiple Business Organisations, 2014, p. 3)

4.2.3. Means of implementation

In terms of discussions about how the goals should be achieved, private sector positions were consistent but nuanced, with more detail in some documents than others. Much of what the companies involved in the Post-2015 process sought was government policy consistent with the aim of creating an ‘enabling environment’ for business to flourish, coupled with advocacy for continued pursuit of voluntary initiatives, soft-law standards and private governance arrangements. But in addition to this, the private sector also consistently called for increased use of more interventionist public policy action.

| Debate category | Key themes in corporate lobbying |
|---|---|
| 3a. Policies to create an “Enabling Environment” for business | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster economic growth, trade and investment, entrepreneurship, new enterprises, industrialisation, job creation • Stable macro-economic policies, low inflation, low interest rates, predictable tax rates • Property and land rights, IP rights • Public investment in health, education, infrastructure • Good governance and rule of law, institutions, tackle corruption • Promote free markets and eliminate trade barriers, make inward investment easier • Reduce barriers to setting up SMEs / regulatory burden on SMEs |
| 3b. Soft law / voluntary initiatives / private governance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business contribution through economic growth, jobs, taxes, innovation • Corporate Sustainability – voluntary compliance with UN Global Compact principles, innovation to offer new products and services • Governments to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Corporate Sustainability • Support multi-stakeholder platforms / issue platforms / sector initiatives / regional networks / voluntary standards / sustainability reporting / certification schemes |
| 3c. Active intervention by the state | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price externalities so that will show up in corporate P&L and affect investment decisions, eg through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fiscal measures (eg carbon taxes) or market mechanisms (eg carbon trading schemes) • Minimum standards • Zoning/ planning regulations • Lower duties / tariffs on ‘green goods’ / greater access to export credits / loan guarantees • End subsidies for fossil fuels / increase subsidies for clean energy • Specifically: GHGs / carbon emissions, water, ecosystem services, fish, waste management, air pollution, community health, worker conditions, peace and stability • Mandate integrated / sustainability reporting, and standardise • Policies to encourage longer term horizon in capital markets, eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate all actors in investment value chain (asset owners, fund managers, investment consultants, investment banks etc) to consider ESG issues • Redefine fiduciary duty to include long term environmental and societal stewardship concerns • Partnerships / using public finance to catalyse private finance, innovation, and delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require Development Banks to direct their resources towards sustainable development • Integrate sustainability criteria into how award public procurement contracts • Require State-owned Enterprises and Sovereign Wealth Funds to be sustainability leaders |

Table 7: Means of implementation – key themes in corporate lobbying

4.2.3.1. Calls for policies to create an “Enabling Environment” for business

Across all the documents and meetings examined here, there is clear and consistent advocacy for public policy consistent with creating an ‘enabling environment’ for business. There are calls for governments to focus on fostering economic growth, trade and investment, entrepreneurship, new enterprises, industrialisation, job creation, emphasising stable macro-economic policies, low inflation, low interest rates, predictable tax rates, policies to strengthen property and land rights and IP rights, and policies to promote free markets and eliminate trade barriers, and make inward investment easier, and policies to reduce barriers to setting up SMEs and the overall regulatory burden on SMEs. The private sector consistently called for public investment in health, education, and infrastructure, and also for policy action to advance good governance and the rule of law, and to strengthen institutions and to tackle corruption.

4.2.3.2. Calls for government support for voluntary initiatives and private governance

Similarly, across all the documents and meetings examined here, there was advocacy for continued pursuit of voluntary initiatives, soft-law standards and private governance arrangements. The potential positive contribution of business to development is stressed – through economic growth, jobs provided and taxes contributed, but also through ‘Corporate Sustainability’, characterised as both voluntary compliance with global norms such as the UN Global Compact principles, as well as innovation to offer new products and services that help address global sustainability challenges.

The private sector sought to encourage governments to undertake efforts to support and promote Corporate Sustainability practices in the private sector generally, as well as to specifically to be supportive of a range of different kinds of voluntary initiatives and private governance arrangements, including: multi-stakeholder platforms, issue platforms, sector initiatives, regional networks, voluntary standards, sustainability reporting and certification schemes.

4.2.3.3. Calls for more active policy intervention by the state

However, in addition to this focus on creating an 'enabling environment' and voluntary initiatives, the private sector also consistently called for increased use of more interventionist public policy action.

A range of different specific policy interventions were called for by the companies involved. A mixture of market-based policy instruments and traditional command and control policy instruments were called for in order to tackle market failures and better price externalities so that they would feature more appropriately in corporate profit and loss statements and therefore affect investment decisions. Specific externalities focused on were greenhouse gas emissions, water, ecosystem services, fish, waste management, air pollution, community health, worker conditions, peace and stability. Specific market-based policy instruments called for included the following: fiscal measures such as carbon taxes, market mechanisms such as carbon trading schemes, as well as lower duties and tariffs and greater access to export credits and loan guarantees for products and services that addressed sustainability challenges or met higher criteria regarding sustainability impact. The companies involved also called for an end to subsidies for fossil fuels and increased use of subsidies for clean energy. Traditional command and control policy instruments called for included greater use of minimum standards and also greater use of zoning / planning regulations to require commercial activity to avoid certain negative impacts and require higher sustainability performance.

In addition to these specific policy interventions to address these specific issue areas, further additional policy intervention was called for in relation to the rules for general business conduct, particularly in relation to accounting rules and the rules governing the function of the capital markets aimed at encouraging investors to act differently. The companies involved consistently called for integrated reporting to become mandatory and standardised, with all companies required to publish a range of information regarding non-financial sustainability performance into the public domain alongside existing mandatory financial reporting. Additionally, the companies involved called for asset owners, fund managers, investment consultants, investment banks and other actors in the

investment value chain to be legally bound to consider environmental, social and governance issues when making investment decisions, and also for rules regarding fiduciary duty to be redefined to include long term environmental and societal stewardship concerns.

In addition to these specific policy interventions, the companies involved consistently called for greater public spending on tackling a range of sustainability challenges through increased use of 'partnerships', specifically seeking to use public finance to catalyse the investment of private finance to stimulate innovation to address sustainability challenges. These calls were aimed at influencing the allocation of donor government aid budgets, national government public spending, and also the lending priorities of multilateral development banks.

Furthermore, the companies involved called for increased integration of sustainability criteria into how governments awarded public procurement contracts, and also into the activities of state-owned enterprises and sovereign wealth funds.

The following sections offer a detailed examination of specific points made in different documents produced in different parts of the process.

UN Global Compact

The March 2013 joint letter to the High Level Panel from the UN Global Compact, WBCSD and WEF calls for business to be seen to have a central role in delivering the SDGs, increased government emphasis on voluntary initiatives, and also concrete policy interventions.

“As a beginning point, it will be important that any new global development strategy and framework recognizes the centrality of business in the triangle of economy, society, and government.” (United Nations Global Compact / WBCSD, 2013, p. 5)

On voluntary initiatives, the letter asks governments to lend their support to a number of specific activities that would increase the business contribution to achieving the SDGs on a voluntary basis, including supporting:

- “Widespread business adoption and implementation of corporate sustainability frameworks, especially the UN Global Compact and its ten principles.
- Expansion (and creation) of business-oriented initiatives that address specific sustainability issues – especially those that are values- and principles based, accountable, and multi-stakeholder in nature. Such initiatives have been developed in areas including climate change; meeting basic needs (access to energy, water, food, shelter, health services, etc.); water stewardship; sustainable agriculture; women’s empowerment; and anti-corruption.
- Further development of country-level business networks and efforts that are working to advance sustainable development and build capacity within a national context.
- A greater emphasis on sector-based best practices and approaches, including encouraging industry trade associations to adopt the tenets of corporate sustainability. Increasingly, cross-sector issues (like water, land use change) need to be recognized and addressed through collaborative approaches seeking multi-benefit, synergistic outcomes.
- Further development of promising implementation platforms such as: on-line match-making ‘project action hubs’; specialized sustainability funds; and social enterprise incubators.
- Wider corporate sustainability disclosure, including ‘integrated reporting’ and accounting frameworks that value financial, natural, and social capital.” (United Nations Global Compact / WBCSD, 2013, p. 5)

On policy interventions, the letter asks governments to make greater use of policy instruments to price externalities and use incentives:

“Create greater incentives – including donating ‘reputational capital’ through recognition and other efforts – for business to adopt and implement corporate sustainability commitments. Re-align markets by appropriately pricing negative externalities, and include these factors in measurement of economic growth and societal well-being.” (United Nations Global Compact / WBCSD, 2013, p. 5)

The letter asks for increased government action on integrated reporting:

“Promote more widespread and comprehensive corporate sustainability disclosure.” (United Nations Global Compact / WBCSD, 2013, p. 5). And the

letter encourages greater government use of public private partnerships:

“Pursue international and national strategies that incorporate business through

enhanced public-private partnerships and other collaborative arrangements.”
(United Nations Global Compact / WBCSD, 2013, p. 5)

The letter also calls for governments to integrate sustainability criteria into public procurement decisions: “Reformulate procurement and investment policies to align with corporate sustainability practices, while requiring that all such policies and related contracts between government and business be transparent.” (United Nations Global Compact / WBCSD, 2013, p. 5)

The June 2013 UN Global Compact report to the UN Secretary General repeats and expands on the same themes. The submission argues that business should be considered central to the delivery of the SDGs, and suggests there is much the private sector can contribute on a voluntary basis. In terms of policy interventions by governments, the submission argues there is much that governments can do to support and scale up voluntary contributions from business. The submission also argues for several policy measures that are consistent with the Washington Consensus neo-liberal economic orthodoxy on creating an ‘enabling environment’ for business. But there are also many calls for policy interventions that go beyond the conventions of neo-liberal orthodoxy.

Much of what the submission calls for on means of implementation is consistent with neo-liberal economic orthodoxy on the ‘enabling environment’, focusing on stability, the rule of law, digital, transportation and energy infrastructure, reduced trade barriers, as well as good governance and healthy institutions:

“Business can best carry out its functions and contribute to society in enabling conditions, which include a level playing field, rule of law, dependable infrastructure, and a stable social and political environment.”
(United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 12)

“Market interdependencies bring people and nations closer together, and offer the best opportunity for the movement of capital and to rapidly diffuse technology and technological solutions. Governments should continue the trend toward lower tariff rates, and preferences for the Least Developed Countries, but also take action on other types of barriers that are serving as impediments to trade.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 23)

“Bribery and graft exert a corrosive effect on society, place the poor and middle classes at a disadvantage and impose added transaction costs

that deplete competitiveness and productivity... Given all that is at stake, fighting corruption should be a central component of the post-2015 agenda.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 13)

The submission argues in several places that the contribution the private sector makes towards sustainable development objectives can be increased through greater government support for voluntary initiatives. This quote is indicative:

“Governments, as a complement to regulation, are increasingly recognizing that voluntary corporate sustainability practices – defined as a company’s delivery of long-term value in financial, social, environmental and ethical terms – are a fundamental contribution to the common good. Governments are asked to support private sector engagement in voluntary initiatives that promote universal values, such as the UN Global Compact, through actions that include awareness raising, developing tools and incentives, and funding.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 25)

However, there is much specific policy action that the submission calls for which is not consistent with neo-liberal economic orthodoxy, running counter to its emphasis on deregulation and the minimal state. The submission calls for government action on regulation on human rights and curbing the worst aspects of private sector behaviour, while at the same time noting the Washington Consensus emphasis on minimising bureaucracy that serve no purpose other than to raise transaction costs for business:

“From the business view, the requisites of governance include rule of law, an enabling political environment for economic development, smart regulation with a minimum of bureaucracy, and transparency. Respect for human rights figures among these qualities. While maintaining a level playing field for businesses, Governments can also raise the level of the field, by maintaining even-handed rules that sanction socially-corrosive action by businesses.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, pp. 12–13)

The submission argues that governments can play a key role in creating more inclusive and sustainable markets through specific policy actions. A key area the submission focuses on is calling for government action use of policy to ensure prices more accurately reflect social and environmental costs and benefits. The report specifically mentions policy actions on pricing for carbon and water:

“One of the key sustainability challenges moving forward is to adopt smart regulatory and incentive structures so that environmental costs and benefits are more fully reflected in prices, as well as to provide greater incentives to strive for long-term value creation over short-term profit maximization. For example, Governments should establish a stable price for carbon through internationally coordinated measures. The price of fossil fuels should reflect and incorporate the cost of externalities such as pollution, impairment of human health and climate change impact, through systems such as a tax on carbon or a cap-and-trade system.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 23)

“Similarly, a system of fair pricing needs to be established for water on a local or national basis, in order to encourage efficiency and conservation. Governments have the best means to establish accepted and equitable price levels and mechanisms, and to ensure that price is not an obstacle to access fresh, safe water – consistent with the established human right to water.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 23)

The report also calls for other policy interventions that would help achieve similar ends, including tax incentives and penalties, planning or zoning regulation, loan guarantees, duties and tariffs, and ending subsidies on fossil fuels and targeting them instead on clean energy:

“There should be an array of inducements for business to take high-sustainability paths, such as tax and procurement benefits, and zoning regulations. Ending producer subsidies on fossil fuels and a reorientation of subsidies towards clean and renewable energy should be a priority. This can be accomplished through activities such as loan guarantees and R&D on low-carbon or no-carbon solutions. It would be best to phase out consumption subsidies on fossil fuels, but taking care to carry out public education to explain the rationale and instituting targeted benefits such as coupons or income support for the poor.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 23)

“Rather than stressing standards that act as barriers to countries seeking to trade their way out of poverty, there should be lessened restrictions and duties and tariffs on green goods and services.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 23)

As well as policy action aimed at influencing market behaviour through pricing and incentives, the submission also calls for increased regulation around corporate reporting:

“As well, Governments should ask companies to enhance accountability and transparency through publicly disclosing sustainability practices – especially in an integrated fashion that recognizes financial, natural and

social capital – and through frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 25)

The submission furthermore calls for increased government regulation of stock exchanges and investors:

“Governments should also encourage stock exchanges and their regulators to promote responsible investment and corporate sustainability. They can advance the concept of environmental-social-governance policy and action by investors, for example by requiring all public and private investment funds – including sovereign funds – to include such policies in their risk management criteria and include these considerations into their operations.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 24)

In addition these specific policy interventions, the submission also calls for increased use of public funding to achieve the SDGs through both public-private partnerships and blended finance, with, for example, calls for: “New global funds dedicated to solving global problems and drawing on both public and private contributions” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 24)

Finally, the submission further calls for government action through public procurement and the activities of state-owned enterprises and sovereign wealth funds.

The September 2013 document *Architects of a Better World: Building the Post-2015 Business Engagement Architecture* makes many similar points. It calls for a blend of voluntary initiatives and active policy intervention from governments, including mechanisms to better incorporate externalities through pricing and requirements for integrated reporting. It also calls for more partnerships and more integration of sustainability criteria into public procurement.

The document makes many references to different kinds of policy instruments that governments could utilise. This quote welcomes the trend toward increased government use of a range of different policy interventions:

“One of the most significant trends in relation to corporate sustainability is the increasing involvement of the public sector, both in terms of regulation and soft policies to require or encourage better business

practices. These actions include national laws requiring sustainability disclosure and incorporating international instruments on corporate conduct; retooling procurement and investment policies; embarking on new forms of public-private partnerships; and encouraging and recognizing enlightened business practices. As well, Governments are increasingly adopting or considering pricing and other policies – especially in relation to natural capital – to create incentives for more responsible corporate behaviour.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013a, p. 7)

And this quote notes that the agreement of the SDGs agenda represents an opportunity for increased adoption of these kinds of public policy intervention:

“The Post-2015 development agenda... may, for example, provide a timely opportunity for Governments to further spread policies that create positive incentives for companies to become more sustainable.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013a, p. 6)

The document specifically calls for governments to pursue policy to protect human rights, incentivise the right kind of business behaviour through the use of a range of policy instruments, and particularly with regard to integrated reporting. The document calls for governments to:

“Build effective policy frameworks and incentives to support and accelerate solutions towards sustainability. Create an enabling environment for corporate sustainability, incentivizing the right kind of behaviour through different various policies and mechanisms. (United Nations Global Compact, 2013a, p. 17)

The July 2014 document *UN Global Compact White Paper: The role of business and finance in supporting the Post-2015 Agenda* similarly emphasises the importance of a central role for business in delivering the SDGs, policy action to strengthen the ‘enabling environment’ for business and support voluntary initiatives on sustainable development, and also repeats calls for more interventionist public policy to achieve the SDGs.

The following quote is illustrative of the document’s call for governments to pursue interventionist public policies to integrate externalities into pricing:

“Government assistance in setting prices that reflect their true costs and benefits can improve the functioning of markets, while providing a tool to advance sustainability and tackle threats such as climate change. Many

environmentalists and economists, for example, contend that the most salient measure to limit greenhouse gas emissions and get ahead of the climate change crisis, rather than continue to lag behind, is to set a price on carbon that reflects the toll that fossil fuels are taking on the planet and its inhabitants. The same principle increasingly is being applied to a wide range of environmental public goods: not only clean air, but clean water, biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and stocks of fish in open seas. It can also be applied to social capital valuation – eg community health, worker conditions, peace and stability.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2014d, p. 8)

In August 2014, the UN Global Compact produced three ‘implementation briefs’ on the topics of government policies, partnerships, and private sector finance. The implementation brief on government policies expands on the main points communicated in previous documents produced by the UN Global Compact. It argues for an ‘enabling environment’ and government support for voluntary initiatives, but also for increased policy action on pricing and integrated reporting, as well as partnerships and public procurement.

The implementation brief on private sector finance restates and expands points made in previous documents on voluntary initiatives, emphasising the potential of finance institutions voluntarily adopting longer term time horizons and greater interest in environmental, social and governance factors. It also restates and expands points regarding policy interventions that can help markets function more effectively, such as pricing externalities, and mandating minimum standards and integrated reporting. The document also restates and expands points regarding blended finance. For example:

“Capitalize on partnerships and scale. Investors are looking for opportunities to collaborate with other categories of investors with different risk/return requirements in order to mitigate or share risks. International development banks, development finance institutions and foundations, for instance, can co-invest with institutional investors by offering to offset potential losses or insure against currency and country risks... Governments and multilateral organizations can direct private investment to where it is most needed by supplying catalytic finance to create risk adjusted returns. These make investments attractive for private actors in areas that they otherwise shy away from.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2014b, p. 3)

Unilever's business consultation for the High Level Panel

A similar pattern can be seen in Unilever's document summarising the private sector consultation conducted for the High Level Panel on behalf of Paul Polman.

In terms of action by government, the introductory summary devotes most attention to actions policy initiatives associated with the Washington Consensus 'enabling environment'. This quote, for example, notes the importance of rule of law, effective institutions, property rights, stable macro-economic policies, infrastructure, education and free markets:

"What Government needs to deliver? If the private sector is to succeed, governments need to set an enabling environment which is favourable to business and enterprise. The key elements of this are:

- The establishment of peace, security, the rule of law, efficient and accountable systems of public administration, as well as property, land, and gender rights.
- Set stable macro-economic policies with low inflation, low interest levels and predictable tax rates.
- Build good infrastructure (both physical and digital).
- Invest in education, training and human capital of all kinds.
- Ensure that markets are open to all and not distorted by trade barriers and subsidies." (Unilever, 2013, p. 3)

The document argues there is much the private sector can contribute to sustainable development on a voluntary basis:

"By looking at their activities through the lens of sustainable development there is much that business can contribute:

- They can create jobs and build livelihoods.
- Use their geographic reach to help billions of people adapt to climate change.
- Eliminate harmful practices in their extended supply chains by:
 - promoting sustainable agricultural practices;
 - purchasing only "deforestation free" commodity crops; and
 - tackling issues of human rights and labour rights.
- Develop good data collection and reporting methods to facilitate decision-making and accountability.
- However, companies recognise that, if they are to be trusted partners of governments and NGOs, they need to strengthen their own governance mechanisms and work towards the adoption of "integrated reporting" where they would provide data not just on

their financial performance but also their social and environmental impacts.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 3)

And the introductory summary also devotes attention to the importance of governments intervention through public-private partnerships:

“Many companies highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships as a delivery mechanism for the Post-2015 Goals. CEOs felt these were important because:

- It was a way of achieving scale.
- It opened up the possibility of developing innovative finance mechanisms where public institutions were able to leverage private capital.
- It brought together different skill sets – the policy making and diplomatic expertise of the public sector with the delivery capabilities and supply chain knowledge of private companies.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 3)

The introductory summary also stressed the value of governments integrating sustainability criteria into their public procurement processes: “Make their own procurement policies a model of best practice in terms of the standards they demand on both environmental and social issues.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 3).

However, the introductory summary made no specific mention of more interventionist public policy actions by governments.

More detail is offered in the summaries of the thematic and country consultations. The themes of policy action to create an ‘enabling environment’ for business to thrive, and government support for voluntary initiatives, were stressed in many of the summaries of the thematic consultations and country consultations. The importance of reducing barriers to trade, as well as healthy institutions, good governance and transparency and tackling corruption, were all frequently referenced.

However, many of the summaries of the different parts of the thematic and country consultations went beyond calls for policymakers to focus on the conventional ‘enabling environment’, and called for more interventionist policy action.

The food thematic consultation summary called for increased government investment in agriculture, and for governments to “Address trade barriers and tariffs that distort agricultural markets.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 7). The nutrition thematic consultation summary called for regulation to help promote better nutrition: “The role of government is to create an enabling and regulatory environment where nutritious food becomes the norm rather than the exception” (Unilever, 2013, p. 8).

The health thematic consultation summary called for more policies that would create incentives for innovation to create more research and development investment: “Create incentives for innovation – such as the Priority Review Voucher System developed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to encourage investment in the treatment of neglected diseases.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 9).

The Netherlands country consultation summary called for more government policy intervention on minimum standards and pricing, with a call for governments: “To set the standards for sustainable production and consumption... Products should be sold for the “true price”, reflecting the social and environmental costs incurred in production, distribution, selling and consumption... [government should support] hubs of “circular economy companies”, rewarded by tax-incentives (governments) and interest-incentives (banks).” (Unilever, 2013, pp. 28–29).

The Colombia country consultation summary noted calls for governments to make greater use a range of policy instruments such as tax incentives and product labelling:

- “Government should provide tax incentives that encourage green products, green factories and green logistics.”
- “Incentives for innovations that deliver nutritional improvements.”
- “Incentives for products, production processes and agriculture which use less water.”
- “Labelling of a products’ water consumption.”
- “Tax incentives for households which consume less energy.”
- “Incentives to develop transportation and distribution systems with lower emissions of CO₂” (Unilever, 2013, pp. 32–33)

Similarly, the Brazil country consultation summary noted calls for greater use of a range of policy instruments including minimum standards, taxes and incentives, to achieve better pricing for a range of externalities, as well as calling for the government to do more to fight powerful industry lobbies opposed to action on sustainable development. The document calls on government to:

- “Make Sustainable Development a key piece of Brazil’s strategic agenda and an essential feature of the “Brazil Brand”.
- Fight the powerful lobbies that are resisting “sustainability” (eg deforestation)...
- Establish new Indicators where the social impact of “Sustainable Development” practices are clearly measured, where “externalities” can be properly accounted, [and] where “Social Well-Being” can be assessed...
- Set the Right Policies: Regulation (eg concentrated products); Establish “Incentives/Taxes” to encourage the right behaviour (“tobacco taxation as an example of how to price negative externalities”).” (Unilever, 2013, p. 35)

Calls for regulation to require integrated corporate reporting also featured. For example, the summary of the India country consultation called for governments to “Mandate public reporting on the work done to reduce carbon footprint and to enhance natural resources.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 22).

In addition to these calls for intervention through this kind of range of policy instruments, there were also many calls for government action through public spending using the mechanisms of public-private partnerships and blended finance. For example, the summary of the health thematic consultation called for governments to:

“Establish more multi-sector partnerships (incorporating local business and SMEs not just Multi Nationals)... Fill funding gaps – more can be done to find different ways of raising money using international capital markets and new financial products. For example the International Financial Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm) which raises funds backed by 20-year donor commitments.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 9)

Finally, the summaries of the thematic and country consultations contain many calls for government action through public procurement. For example, the Netherlands country consultation summary argued that: “Government procurement policies should set an example for others to follow” (Unilever,

2013, p. 28) and the Brazil country consultation summary called for governments to “Set an example as a producer and as a buyer: Clear and strict procurement policies; “Sustainability benchmarks” for every public company where government has a significant holding (Petrobras)” (Unilever, 2013, p. 35).

Unilever’s summary of the business consultation conducted on behalf of Paul Polman for the High Level Panel included a copy of the March 2013 letter to the High Level Panel co-signed by nine business organisations: Business Action for Africa, Business Fights Poverty, BIAC, Business in the Community, International Business Leaders Forum, International Chamber of Commerce, International Organisation of Employers, United Nations Global Compact, World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

This letter stresses the importance of a central role for business, public policy action to create an ‘enabling environment’ for business to thrive, and voluntary initiatives. This letter does not contain calls for more interventionist public policy from governments.

This quote illustrates calls for business to be seen to have a central role as part of the means of achieving the SDGs:

“As international business organisations representing companies of all sizes globally we firmly believe that business has a critical role to play in the design and delivery of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.”
(Business Organisations Group, 2013, p. 1)

The joint letter calls for the High Level Panel to call for governments to use policy to further establish an ‘enabling environment’ for business, calling for governments to recognise:

“The need for good governance, rule of law and well functioning national institutions notably to protect real and intellectual property and land rights as well as reducing corruption and informality; The need to foster economic growth and trade and investment, promote entrepreneurship and the establishment of new enterprises; The importance of access to finance (particularly for SMEs), transport, water, energy and healthcare infrastructures as well as to information and communications technologies; The critical need to invest in ‘education for all’ and to build human capital.” (Business Organisations Group, 2013, p. 2)

The joint letter also calls for governments to further pursue public-private partnerships and blended finance, calling for: “The promotion of scalable and ‘transformational’ partnerships for development as a critical enabler” (Business Organisations Group, 2013, p. 1), and that: “The report should also highlight the complementary roles of public and private financing for development - recognising the catalytic role played by official development assistance (ODA) for triggering private investment into what would otherwise be “non-commercially viable” projects.” (Business Organisations Group, 2013, p. 2). The joint letter made no call for more active policy interventions.

Several of these business organisations appended their own letters to this joint letter, and emphasised a number of similar points. BIAC – the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD – stressed the importance of governments focusing on creating the right enabling environment for business to flourish, citing the joint public-private statement submitted to the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, 2011:

“Governments should consult closely with the domestic and foreign private sectors in order to create an enabling environment for development which promotes peace and stability, the rule of law, enforcement of human rights, good governance with accountability and transparency, the absence of corruption, adequate economic and social infrastructure, stable economic policy, an educated workforce, clear property rights and enforceable contracts, enhances the competitiveness of the local private sector and promotes equitable growth.” (BIAC, 2013, p. 7)

The letter from the International Chamber of Commerce similarly stresses the importance of governments creating the right enabling environment for business to flourish, similarly focusing on the same elements stressed in the BIAC letter, as well as stressing policies to enable international trade and investment. The ICC letter also stresses the importance of governments enacting policies to promote and protect human rights.

The letter from the Institute of Employers likewise focused on policy to create the right enabling environment and partnerships. It also stressed the importance of government support for voluntary initiatives. The letter from the International

Business Leaders Forum and The Partnering Initiative focused on the importance of government support for partnerships.

The letter from the Business Action for Africa network stressed that means of implementation should focus on a central role for the private sector, and that governments should focus policy action on creating the right 'enabling environment': infrastructure (especially energy, technology and transportation), effective legal and regulatory frameworks and greater access to finance. Voluntary initiatives and public-private partnerships were also stressed.

The letter from Business in the Community similarly focused on policy to create the right enabling environment, voluntary initiatives and partnerships. It was also the only letter from any organisation in this group to make any calls for more active policy interventions, making a short passing reference to the need for specific policy interventions on pricing externalities and focusing on tackling corruption:

“Governments can support the contributions of businesses through proper pricing, effective investment, trade, legal and regulatory frameworks and effective governance, including elimination of corruption and risk sharing.” (Business in the Community, 2013, p. 2)

Unilever's direct contributions to the OWG

In his meeting with the OWG in December 2013, Polman devoted much time to the importance of partnerships, citing many successful examples, and arguing that each SDG should be supported by a specific partnership mechanism as part of the means of implementation:

“I strongly believe in the power of partnerships... I support the High-level Panel's recommendation that every future sustainable development goal should be supported by a partnership mechanism. We shouldn't put these goals out there without talking about the partnership mechanism that brings all these stakeholders together for delivery. This might mean a coalition of actors focused on sustainable agriculture or energy or education or health, whatever the goals are that you come up with.”

On policy interventions by government, Polman emphasised the importance of creating the right kind of 'enabling environment':

“Governments need to be in the driving seat to create the enabling environment for business to unlock its full potential for change. That means that government's putting in place the enabling conditions for productive and stable investments, committing to fight corruption, to be transparent, to implement a robust regulatory and legal framework. Without that it won't function. It's a direct correlation if you go across the world... we all know that if governments have an access to legal systems, rule of law, transparency, if the institutions function, that's a climate that everybody could function better than if some of these things are absent. I think that is well documented. There are enough reports around that.”

Polman stressed the importance and value of government acting as a confident regulator:

“Now on regulation, we are actually very happy with regulation. The world can't function without regulation. You need regulation in many different areas. In fact for responsible companies we would always advocate regulation because it gets rid of the free riders, it moves the platforms up. The thing that people think that business doesn't want regulation – I've never ever experienced that. Responsible business would love to know what is the quality of food standards so that we don't get free riders. What is the quality of pollution that we accept? What is the quality of resource use that we accept? How do we have regulation about land or land rights? Regulation is equally about the rights of different genders or different people, different opinions to participate in the workforce. These are all types of regulations that we need, and in fact I am not advocating that we have more, I'm advocating that we have responsible ones, so again we need to develop these together. But I don't think you will find many businesses – a few exceptions perhaps that again get a disproportionate share of voice – many businesses that are advocating against regulation. We just have to find the smart regulation.”

Polman echoed the calls made in many of the written submissions for policy interventions to price externalities, particularly carbon:

“A lot of businesses would like a price on carbon or they would like frameworks to come from governments which would help them tremendously to make the right decisions.”

Similarly, Polman argued for using tariffs as a policy instrument for addressing the proper pricing of externalities:

“If we want to get rid of unsustainable palm oil then the biggest demand right now in the world comes from India and China. We understand that.

But we need the Indian government – I was with the prime minister a few weeks ago telling him: put differential tariffs in place for sustainable palm oil and non-sustainable palm oil. So that at least people can make a choice. How do you change consumer habits? We'd be happy to do that, it's an example of regulation, it's an example of partnership, it's an example of responsible behaviour, and if the government is looking for more revenue, then, yes, make unsustainable palm oil a little bit more expensive.”

Polman also spoke about the importance of linking different SDG areas to regulating for minimum standards, and in particular noted the importance of regulating for integrated reporting:

“I think in the goals that you're putting out there, again, some of the minimal requirements that you suggest there will be very helpful. That is why we put in the High-level Panel report that you need to move beyond the simple P&L accounting. It's a very narrow definition we've created that results in a very narrow behaviour that gives us a lot of the challenges that we're facing. If you broaden that definition and require companies to report on social capital once more, or environmental capital, that would be a very important help in terms of optimizing the balance between social, economic and environmental.”

Polman also called for governments to broaden the definition of GDP and growth:

“We have to define differently what growth means. Growth cannot be simply defined in using more of our resources. It has to be defined in using our resources smarter, in some cases using less resources, and broadening the definition of what growth means. If growth only means how many materials we pump out of the ground and package them in boxes and sell them, that's a too-narrow definition of growth that will never get us there. I hope we all agree on that. But we can have a little bit broader definition of growth just like we can have a little bit broader definition of GDP.”

Business Manifesto

The September 2014 *Business Manifesto* argued for a central role for the private sector in achieving the SDGs:

“There must be clarity about how the SDGs will be delivered as well as what is to be achieved. We concur that there needs to be specificity about ‘means of implementation’ – including recognition that the SDGs

will only be achieved with business as part of the solution.” (Multiple Business Organisations, 2014, p. 3)

It called for governments to enact policies that help improve the ‘enabling environment’ for business:

“We can do much more when there’s a real enabling environment. It starts with getting the nuts and bolts right. Contracts need to be enforced. Customs systems need to function. Workforces need to be educated. Infrastructures from roads to electricity, financial infrastructure and communications networks have to be dependable.” (Multiple Business Organisations, 2014, p. 3)

The Manifesto also emphasised partnerships, specifically calling for a global multi-stakeholder partnership for each SDG:

“We think there should be a global multi-stakeholder partnership for each and every goal. While much of the SDG delivery effort will need to be adapted at national, regional and local levels it makes sense to look at how different sectors and value chains map on to the goals at global level.” (Multiple Business Organisations, 2014, p. 3)

As with other submissions, the Manifesto also called for active policy intervention from governments to help markets function more effectively to incorporate social and environmental externalities, stressing climate policy, trade policy, tackling perverse subsidies, and reform capital market rules and accounting standards:

“And it’s also about making markets work better. Markets aren’t perfect – as where there are perverse subsidies, or where investors lack the information they need. Governments can help markets work more effectively. That’s why we need them to create long term predictability in climate policy. And to agree to new trade rules to prevent food import and export bans that make food spikes worse. Above all, we need to leverage the power of the financial markets. With \$62 trillion in global equity markets, small changes to investment allocations can trigger huge progress. But that will only happen if financial rules, accounting standards, and investor information take more account of social and environmental impacts.” (Multiple Business Organisations, 2014, p. 3)

At the September 2014 UN General Assembly side event, Polman stressed again the importance of creating global partnership platforms for each SDG, as well as calling for fewer goals overall:

“What we have specifically asked for in the goals that are now being developed – and I agree with you, Henry, I hope it's not 17 – but let's say we come out at somewhere at ten, then for each of these goals we actually include examples of transformative partnerships.”

Another CEO, Feike Sijbesma of DSM, called for governments to use policy instruments for carbon pricing and other market-based instruments to create the market incentives to encourage businesses to do the right things:

“Let's stop lobbying against the obvious – still there are forces against, still there are lobbies against the right things, against carbon pricing, which is a logical tool to address climate change. So that is the first goal I make: stop lobbying against the obvious, stop lobbying against the goods which we want to achieve. Secondly, for government, try to make an environment, try to put all the incentives there, to trigger business to innovate faster and more.”

4.3. Discussion: Considering the significance of the policy outcomes aimed at

At face value, these policy outcomes aimed at all appear as though they will meet the test of aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aiming simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others. But is this confirmed to be the case if we consider in light of wider debates at the time about what should be in the SDGs and how they should be framed, using the hermeneutical circle to consider meaning in light of wider context?

As noted above, three principle areas of wider debate surrounded the development of the SDGs, and contributions made by companies mapped neatly on to these three areas. The next three sections consider the significance of the policy outcomes called for by the private sector in light of wider debates about each of these three areas.

4.3.1. Scope of issues

Regarding debates on scope of issues to be included in the goals, the positions advocated by companies can be broadly judged to be aligned with those pushing for the most ambitious kind of policy framework for addressing global sustainability challenges, although with some caveats.

A key issue in debates about the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs was about which global challenges should feature among the goals. Some commentators and governments called to just broadly continue the MDG focus on human development, others wanted the global development agenda to deprioritise the human development focus of the MDGs and instead focus on economic development, and a third group wanted to retain and broaden the MDG focus, principally to more directly put environmental issues at the centre of the goals, as well as issues such as good governance and inequality. One of the areas judged to be one of the successes of the MDGs was the focus on the human aspects of poverty (hunger, health, education, gender), as opposed to a narrow focus on economic measures in earlier approaches to international development. Many were keen to retain the focus on these human aspects of poverty, whilst some felt greater prominence needed to be returned to economic growth, and others felt greater prominence needed to be given to climate change and other environmental issues than had featured in the MDGs. Many were also calling for a stronger focus in the SDGs than had featured in the MDGs on tackling inequality, and also on good governance – in particular for institutional reform, anti-corruption, human rights and the rule of law (Chibba, 2011; Devarajan Margaret J. Swanson, Eric V., 2002; Koehler, 2016; Kwon & Kim, 2014; Lomazzi et al., 2014; Manning, 2009; Roberts, 2005; Rosenbaum, 2016; Sachs, 2012; Vandemoortele, 2011; Waage et al., 2017). Debates about whether the SDGs should or should not be widened to include additional issues beyond what featured in the MDGs, such as greater focus on environmental issues, economic growth, and good governance and institutions, were particularly pointed in the earlier stages of the Post-2015 Development Agenda process, with some countries and commentators resisting calls for the focus of the global development agenda to be widened.

In this period, corporate lobbying in favour of the broader approach was clear, with (as documented above) unequivocal advocacy for retaining the MDG issues, more ambitious inclusion of climate and other environmental issues, more explicit focus on good governance and rule of law, and more prominence to economic growth, with the caveat that it should be inclusive and equitable.

In pushing for more ambitious inclusion of climate and other environmental issues, and more explicit focus on good governance and rule of law, it can be judged that what these companies were calling for in terms was clearly aligned with those pushing for the most ambitious kind of policy framework for addressing global sustainability challenges.

In calling for more prominence to economic growth as part of the scope of issues to be included in the goals, albeit with the caveat that it should be inclusive and equitable, the significance of the private sector lobbying is more ambiguous, with many critics arguing that privileging the pursuit of economic growth is at odds with the effective resolution of global sustainability challenges, and that aiming for the pursuit of economic growth furthers elite and corporate interests at the expense of collective interests (Hickel, 2015; Weber, 2017). The significance of corporate lobbying for the inclusion of economic growth among the scope of issues is discussed in further detail below in the section on means of implementation.

4.3.2. Technical framing

In terms of technical issues about precisely how the goals should be formulated, key debates were around the timespan of the goals period, how many there should be, whether they should be global in scope rather than focused solely on developing countries, the kind of language they should be couched in to make them most accessible, how clear to be about accountabilities for delivery, how differentiated to be in order to take into account differences between different regions and remain both achievable and ambitious, and how explicit to be about interconnections between different goals and issues. Reviews of the MDGs had identified a number of their characteristics as particular strengths and many commentators called for these to be retained in the new framework. These

included their conciseness, their accessible language, the use of quantified, time-bound targets that could be monitored, the relatively long 15-year timespan, and that their achievement was plausible. Early in the process there were some debates about whether to repeat the MDGs timespan of 15 years, or have a longer or shorter timespan. One of the strengths of the MDGs had been judged to be their relatively concise set of goals, and many argued that this feature should be retained by the SDGs, although others argued that a weakness of this conciseness was missing issues as discussed in the section on scope of issues. Some argued the SDGs should retain their primary focus on developing countries, but others argued that the impact of a goals-based framework could be increased by applying it globally (Chibba, 2011; Devarajan Margaret J. Swanson, Eric V., 2002; Kwon & Kim, 2014; Le Blanc, 2015; Lomazzi et al., 2014; Manning, 2009; McArthur, 2013; Roberts, 2005; Rosenbaum, 2016; Sachs, 2012; Vandemoortele, 2011; Waage et al., 2017). One long-running debate about the MDGs which informed debates about how to structure the SDGs was about how far to pursue globally consistent versus country-specific goals. Some had criticised the MDGs as being unfair to the poorest countries as they have the furthest to go to meet the targets – a fairer approach would be to introduce differentiation to take account of different starting points (Chibba, 2011; McArthur, 2013).

As noted in the previous section, the companies involved in this lobbying were pushing for the SDGs to be global in scope, have a 15-year timespan, be limited in number, easy to understand, measurable with clear accountabilities for delivery, take into account differences in different regions so to be both achievable and ambitious, and be explicit about interconnections. Considering these lobbying positions in light of these wider debates, it can be judged that what the private sector was calling for in terms of technical framing was clearly aligned with the learnings about what had been the strengths and weaknesses of the technical framing of the MDGs and the positions of those pushing for the most ambitious kind of policy framework for addressing global sustainability challenges.

4.3.3. Means of implementation

How the goals should be achieved was perhaps one of the most contentious areas in debates around the SDGs, and there is more ambiguity here in judging whether the corporate lobbying on this topic meets the test of aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aiming simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others.

A central issue in wider debates about the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs was the relative roles of states versus markets and the private sector, and how much the emphasis should be maintaining the Washington Consensus focus on creating an 'enabling environment' for the private sector to generate economic growth that would lead to poverty alleviation, versus alternatives including a more interventionist approach from states (Altenburg & von Drachenfels, 2008; Bello, 2013; Chibba, 2011; Edward & Tallontire, 2009; Fukuda-Parr, 2011, 2016; Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011; Grieg-Gran, 2003; Kwon & Kim, 2014; Lomazzi et al., 2014; Manning, 2009; Vandemoortele, 2011; Waage et al., 2017; Ziai, 2011).

These debates about the strengths and weaknesses of the MDGs and what should be the same or different about the SDGs were founded in much longer running debates about different approaches to international development and tackling poverty and global economic policy running since the 1940s. These debates also link to the point raised in the scope of issues section above about whether to retain the MDGs focus on human development or revert back to the previous focus in international development of focusing directly on economic development.

Development theorists tend to agree that the project of 'international development' originated in the late 1940s following the Second World War and the establishment of the United Nations and Bretton Woods international economic architecture (Escobar, 1995). During the 1950s and 1960s, as more and more previously colonised countries achieved their independence and in

the context of the Cold War battle for influence between West and East, development economists based in the West developed theories aimed at identifying the most effective approaches to improving the quality of life of people living in 'underdeveloped' nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. This was in the context of approaches based on state socialism promoted by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries of the East. In this period, Western development theorists advocated the state and public policy intervention as the engine of development. The overall goal was increased economic growth, based on the premise that increased national financial wealth would lead to increased individual financial wealth and overall wellbeing. Such economic growth would be achieved through government action – coordinated state-led investment in the economy to achieve industrialisation, state-owned enterprises, and relatively high barriers to global trade to enable domestic enterprises to become established without threat of competition from more established and therefore more efficient companies based in industrialised countries. To achieve these aims governments of developing countries would use policy instruments including tariffs, monopoly grants, cheap loans, subsidies, import quotas, voluntary export restraints, and export subsidies (Escobar, 1995; Harvey, 2005; Todaro & Smith, 2009).

Following, first, prolonged financial crisis precipitated by the oil shocks in the 1970s, then the rise of neo-liberal economic thinking and its application by the Pinochet administration in Chile, the Reagan administration in the USA, the Thatcher administration in the UK and the Deng administration in China in the 1970s and 1980s, and then the waning and fall of the USSR at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, international development orthodoxy radically shifted direction (Harvey, 2005). Global development policy in the 1980s and 1990s became heavily influenced by neo-liberal economic principles, and was christened 'the Washington Consensus', which, as noted previously, promoted the principles of deregulation, privatization and a minimalist state that rejects state intervention in the economy (Broad, 2004; Williamson, 1990).

In contrast to a focus on the state as the engine of development in the 1950s and 1960s, in the 1980s and 1990s development policy championed the role of the private sector and multi-national companies in delivering development. The

state should retreat from an active role, hence the focus on deregulation and privatization, and instead focus on creating the right 'enabling environment' for business to flourish and deliver economic growth. State-led approaches to development were perceived to lead to bureaucratic obstacles to enterprise, low tax receipts, economic stagnation and increasing poverty, with regulation specifically contributing to bureaucratic obstacles to enterprise, raising the costs of doing business, promoting corruption and keeping large numbers out of the formal economy (Bannock et al., 2003). The state should instead focus on pursuing only public policy interventions aimed at creating the right 'enabling environment' for business: providing fiscal policy discipline, avoiding large fiscal deficits relative to GDP, keeping interest rates low, and broadening the tax base and adopting moderate marginal tax rates; minimising public spending and eliminating subsidies; promoting free trade by removing barriers to cross-border trade in goods and services, and cross-border movement of capital, enabling foreign direct investment; strengthening protections for property rights and intellectual property rights; privatising state-owned enterprises, but continuing to invest in health, education and infrastructure; deregulating on the basis of reducing costs of doing business (Altenburg & von Drachenfels, 2008; Bannock et al., 2003; Broad, 2004; Williamson, 1990).

In turn, the so-called 'Washington Consensus' approach was criticised as furthering elite corporate interests at the expense of collective social welfare. As noted earlier, while proponents of the neo-liberal approach have championed it as the most effective approach to improving societal welfare for all, the more critical interpretation that is made is that neo-liberal approaches serve principally to further elite interests, including those of MNCs and global capital, at the expense of the poor and vulnerable, exacerbating inequality through unequal distribution of the gains from the neo-liberal approach, and allowing social and environmental harms through making public policy interventions to protect the vulnerable more difficult. MNCs have been characterised as cheerleaders for the neo-liberal Washington Consensus model (Banerjee, 2009; Harvey, 2005).

Many commentators argued that the MDGs, agreed in 2000, represented a compromise approach that increased the focus on multi-dimensional human

development (eg health, education, gender), while maintaining the Washington Consensus neo-liberal approach of promoting economic growth through increased emphasis on free trade and markets and public policy focused on the creation of the kind of 'enabling environment' described above (Bello, 2013; Chibba, 2011; Fukuda-Parr, 2011; Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011; Grieg-Gran, 2003; Vandemoortele, 2011; Waage et al., 2017).

Whether or not to continue prioritising this neo-liberal aspect of the MDGs in the SDGs framework, or to seek alternatives that dealt with some of the criticisms of this approach, such as welcoming state intervention in certain areas to deal with perceived 'market failures', thus constitutes the third key area of debate informing the questions to be deliberated during the post-2015 development agenda process, and one of the most contentious (Altenburg & von Drachenfels, 2008; Bello, 2013; Chibba, 2011; Fukuda-Parr, 2011; Fukuda-Parr & Hulme, 2011; Waage et al., 2017).

In light of this context, how should we interpret the significance of this corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy on sustainable development? In the context of these wider debates, the activist interventionist policy outcomes called for in this corporate lobbying appear to run counter to prevailing norms and assumptions of deregulation, privatization and a minimalist state that rejects state intervention in the economy. There was much that these companies were calling for that was clearly not consistent with this orthodoxy, with repeated calls for more active state intervention in markets to address market failures relating to sustainability issues, using a range of different kinds of policy instruments to seek to constrain and shape corporate behaviours in certain ways to increase their positive contribution to tackling sustainability challenges.

If some companies are now lobbying for more ambitious public policy to tackle sustainable development challenges, this must be considered to represent a tempering of corporate commitment to neo-liberal economic principles, at least to some extent. To those that have long argued that market-based solutions alone are not sufficient for tackling collective sustainability challenges but that public policy intervention is required, and that it has been excessive corporate

power exercised through lobbying that has contributed to not advancing such public policy intervention in the past, such apparent corporate lobbying must be a welcome phenomenon and capable of meeting the test of aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aiming simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others.

However, a more critical interpretation is also possible, on three counts. Firstly, a core theme running through every aspect of this corporate lobbying is that policymakers must consider business as a central delivery mechanism in how the SDGs are to be achieved. A number of scholars, including Nyberg *et al* for example, have argued that corporate actions to engage in citizenship activities can be critically interpreted as activity aimed at maintaining corporate hegemony. In the context of societal pressure for change, corporations can take steps to achieve some limited accommodation of the interests of wider society so as to maintain their overall privileged position in society, to pre-empt and stave off more radical demands which may result in corporate interests being damaged more seriously (Nyberg et al., 2013). This lens could be brought to bear in the interpretation of the corporate lobbying observed in this case. The simultaneous emphasis on the openness to activist policy interventions and the indispensability of business to the achievement of the goals could be interpreted as action that makes a limited accommodation of the interests of others (the openness to more activist policy intervention) in order to protect more fundamental corporate interests (the emphasis on the importance of the centrality of business to achieving the goals) in the context of pressure for more radical action that could threaten corporate interests more fundamentally (policy action that could weaken the centrality and power of private sector enterprise in society more generally). Are corporations lobbying for more activist public policy intervention merely as a means of furthering their own more fundamental interests, making limited accommodations in order to shore up and preserve their privileged status? Is it more valid to interpret this lobbying as action aimed at ensuring corporate interests prevail rather than aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders?

Second, notwithstanding the more activist policy interventions called for discussed above, much of what the private sector was lobbying for during the SDGs process remained entirely consistent with the Washington Consensus policy prescription of promoting free markets and reducing barriers to global trade, stable macro-economic policies, strengthening property rights, public investment in infrastructure, health and education, action to strengthen good governance and public institutions, and reducing regulation and bureaucracy and enhancing competitiveness. All these policy outcomes called for are entirely consistent with the Washington Consensus policy prescription, although notably there are far fewer direct references to the most contentious parts of the Washington Consensus: deregulation, privatization and the minimal state (Broad, 2004; Williamson, 1990). To this extent, again this could be argued to be lobbying action aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, perhaps at the expense of others, therefore not meeting the test of aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders.

Thirdly, the corporate lobbying for more activist public policy intervention could itself be interpreted as corporate action to further embed the principles of neo-liberal economic theory within the heart of the state. Scholarship has developed over several years charting the rise of 'new policy instruments', noting how traditional 'command and control' policy instruments, generally involving regulation prohibiting certain actions (eg mandatory standards), and based on coercion and authoritative force, have gradually given way to a preference for 'new policy instruments' which include 'market-based policy instruments' (such as fiscal policies such as taxes and subsidies, and emissions trading schemes), and policy instruments based on persuasion through the provision of information and communication-based instruments, as well as increased use of private governance instruments such as voluntary standards and product labelling schemes (Jordan, Wurzel, & Zito, 2003; Le Gales, 2011; Mylonadis, 2002; Pirard, 2012; Stavins, 2003; Vedung, 1998). Many have discussed this trend from command and control approaches to regulation toward market-based policy instruments in the context of the rise of neo-liberal economic principles and changing dynamics of state intervention – market-based policy instruments,

for example, are informed by the principles of rational choice and micro-economics assumptions where actors are assumed to be egoistic rational actors that respond to rewards and penalties (Jordan et al., 2003; Le Gales, 2011). If the kind of public policy action that the private sector is calling for is primarily in the vein of market-based policy instruments, a more critical interpretation could be to see this kind of lobbying as a push for further embedding principles of 'corporate neo-liberalism' within the state, furthering elite corporate interests at the expense of others, again therefore not meeting the test of aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders.

The interpretation argued for here contends that each of these interpretations is valid and they are not mutually exclusive. Corporate lobbying regarding the means of implementation for the SDGs does propose a central role for business and for the continuation of many aspects of the neo-liberal Washington Consensus that has been widely criticised as furthering corporate interests at the expense of others. And in looking at the more activist policy interventions called for, there is significant emphasis on market-based policy instruments which some have criticised as further embedding 'corporate neo-liberalism' at the heart of the state. All these calls can be judged as action aimed at reproducing existing power relations and the status quo. At the same time, the corporate lobbying on means of implementation has made a clear departure from neo-liberal norms in its calls for more activist policy interventions to address market failures and more appropriately price things like carbon emissions, water, ecosystems services, community health, and worker conditions through the use of policy instruments like fiscal measures including taxes, subsidies and trading schemes, minimum standards, planning and zoning regulations, tariffs, duties, export credits and so on, as well as calls for changes to accounting and capital market rules and for making social and environmental reporting a mandatory requirement. These calls are not consistent with prevailing neo-liberal norms, align with what wider constituencies have been calling for in order to tackle global sustainable development challenges, and challenge the prevailing status quo. Thus, this aspect of the corporate lobbying for the SDGs can be judged a somewhat

counter-intuitive combination of a simultaneous reproduction of and challenging of prevailing power relations at the same time.

Considering these lobbying positions on means of implementation in light of these wider debates, it is therefore a less straightforward task to judge whether or not this aspect of the corporate action meets the criteria of deliberative lobbying – that it was aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aiming simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others. A critical interpretation suggests there is much in what these companies were calling for that resembles an extension and repetition of the corporate promotion of neo-liberalism that has been so roundly criticised as furthering corporate interests at the expense of others. However, while noting this, this thesis reaches the conclusion that the corporate lobbying for more activist and interventionist public policy does mark a departure from the neo-liberal norms with which MNC lobbying is conventionally associated, and on that basis can be judged as on balance meeting the test of aiming at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, but not unambiguously so. There is plenty in what the companies are calling for that still raises concerns, but the specific calls for more interventionist public policy action are enough to make it valid to consider this corporate lobbying as meeting the test of deliberative lobbying.

4.4. Conclusion

Section one, comprising chapters four and five, set out to address the research question: can such lobbying be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development? To do this, these two chapters examine whether the lobbying action can be judged to meet the criteria of the deliberative lobbying framework, which is in two parts. Chapter four has examined the corporate lobbying action in relation to the first part of the Deliberative Lobbying framework: can the action be judged to be aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy

outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others? Chapter five will examine the corporate lobbying action in relation to the second part of the framework: can the action be judged to be characterised by the three features of: inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability?

This chapter has reviewed what policy outcomes the private sector was lobbying for during the Post-2015 process and considered these in relation to three sets of wider debates surrounding the development of the SDGs. The chapter has employed the hermeneutical circle to assist this analysis, re-evaluating the meaning of the phenomenon in light of wider context and from both trusting and critical perspectives.

This analysis has concluded that on balance, the corporate lobbying can be judged to have met the first test of the deliberative lobbying framework: that the action is aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others. However, it also acknowledges some ambiguity about this, particularly in relation to means of implementation. On scope of issues and technical framing, the lobbying positions taken by the private sector were largely aligned with the positions of others pushing for the most ambitious and effective SDGs framework possible, pushing for a broadening of the scope of issues to include climate change and other environmental issues, good governance, strong institutions, human rights and rule of law, and inequality. On technical framing, corporate lobbying was aligned with the positions of others that draw on learning from the MDGs regarding those aspects of the framing that had been judged particular strengths and those areas that should be different. Corporate lobbying on means of implementation is judged to be more ambiguous, simultaneously lobbying to reproduce and challenge existing power relations at the same time. On balance this is judged to meet the test of the deliberative lobbying framework, but with the caveat of noting this ambiguity. Much of what the private sector was calling for in terms of means of implementation can be judged to be consistent with the widely criticised Washington Consensus, with its emphasis as the private sector as the primary engine of development and

the need to governments to prioritise policy interventions that create an 'enabling environment' that maximise the opportunities for business to create financial wealth. To this extent, this action can be judged to be a continuation of the corporate lobbying for neo-liberalism that has been so widely criticised. But at the same time, much of what the private sector was calling for was more activist government policy intervention in the economy to address market failures in ways that could expose MNCs to more regulation and increase costs. This corporate action marks a departure from the neo-liberal focus on deregulation and minimal state that has been widely criticised, and it is this aspect of the corporate lobbying that is judged here to mean that on balance the corporate lobbying can be judged to have met the first test of the deliberative lobbying framework: that the action is aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others.

Chapter five will examine the corporate lobbying action in relation to the second part of the framework (can the action be judged to be characterised by the three features of: inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability?) before returning to the research question and discussing both parts of the analysis together.

5. Empirical Findings Section 1 – Part 2: Lobbying process

5.1. Introduction

Using the Deliberative Lobbying framework, chapters four and five set out to address the research question: can such lobbying be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development? Chapter four examined the corporate lobbying action in relation to the first part of the Deliberative Lobbying framework: can the action be judged to be aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others? Chapter five examines the corporate lobbying action in relation to the second part of the framework: can the action be judged to be characterised by the three features of: inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability?

To examine whether the corporate lobbying in the process to develop the SDGs meets the tests of the second part of the Deliberative Lobbying process, the corporate action will be examined in relation to each of the three features of inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability in turn. The first category, inclusive discourse, is further broken down into the features of inclusivity, truthfulness, sincerity, appropriateness and understandability, based on Lock and Seele's argument that the discourse needs to be inclusive and also that participants need to adhere to Habermas's four validity claims of ideal speech: truth, sincerity, appropriateness, and understandability (Lock & Seele, 2016).

Thus, overall, seven features are considered in judging whether the corporate lobbying action meets the tests of the second part of the Deliberative Lobbying framework. From Lock and Seele's articulation of their framework, this thesis develops the following questions to consider in relation to the empirical material:

1. **Inclusivity:** How broad is participation in the discourse? Are certain voices deliberately excluded? What steps are taken to involve minority

voices? Are discussions bilateral between policymakers and companies or their intermediaries, or are others able to be involved? How broad was the private sector input? Are the contributions based on a broad range of inputs from different companies or on inputs from a small group of companies? Are all contributions to the discourse open to challenge? Can additional information and counter-arguments be presented at any stage?

2. **Honesty and truthfulness:** Are the companies calling for the same things in public and private? Do the positions articulated to policymakers broadly correspond to the themes discussed by companies regarding what positions should be taken in collective statements? Are the contributions truthful, or is mis-information actively promoted?
3. **Sincerity:** Are the publicly stated intents of the companies the same as what they were stating in private as their objectives?
4. **Appropriateness:** Are the corporate contributions focused on appropriate issues and discussion points? Do they ignore any salient topics?
5. **Understandability:** Are the corporate contributions clear or confusing? Do they risk misleading?
6. **Transparency of the process:** Is the discourse process transparent to all stakeholders? Are the corporate contributions public and easily accessible, or not in the public domain and not accessible?
7. **Accountability of the actors:** Is it clear who the actors in the discourse are? If it is known which actors are responsible for which contributions, they can be held accountable for those contributions. If contributions are made to the process by intermediaries, is it clear which corporations have backed them or funded them?

Chapter five is structured as follows. Section 5.2 examines the corporate lobbying in relation to the first five of these features under the broad heading of inclusive discourse, while sections 5.3 and 5.4 examine transparency and accountability respectively. Section 5.5 summarises the findings in relation to the second part of the Deliberative Lobbying framework overall. Section 5.6 returns to the research question and discusses both parts of the analysis from chapters four and five together. Chapter five draws on an analysis, as described

in section 3.5.2, of the 12 public domain documents communicating private sector views about the development of the SDGs to policymakers were reviewed, the further 13 non-public domain documents communicating private sector views to policymakers, the observations of nine meetings between business leaders and policymakers, and thirteen meetings between business executives discussing their approach to coordinating their lobbying activities, as well as extensive further non-public domain documentation including meeting invitations, ppts, briefing notes, minutes, emails and other documents (395 further documents in total).

5.2. Inclusive discourse

5.2.1. Inclusivity

The key questions to consider in relation to inclusivity are the following: How broad is participation in the discourse? Are certain voices deliberately excluded? What steps are taken to involve minority voices? Are discussions bilateral between policymakers and companies or their intermediaries, or are others able to be involved? How broad was the private sector input? Are the contributions based on a broad range of inputs from different companies or on inputs from a small group of companies? Are all contributions to the discourse open to challenge? Can additional information and counter-arguments be presented at any stage? Section 5.2.1.1. looks at the question of inclusion of non-business voices and section 5.2.1.2. looks at how inclusive and representative the inclusion of business voices was in the process to develop business inputs.

5.2.1.1. *Inclusion of non-business voices*

Where conventional lobbying typically occurs in a bilateral mode, either between a government and a company, or between a government and a group of companies or industry association, a key characteristic of deliberative lobbying is that participation in the discourse is broad, with no voices deliberately excluded and steps taken to involve minority voices. As previously noted, the process to develop the SDGs has been described as the world's

largest ever public consultation programme, with significant steps taken to seek contributions from all voices (Ford, 2015). The private sector inputs reviewed in detail in this thesis were occurring in parallel with multiple inputs from multiple different groups from around the world, with an emphasis on seeking input from marginalised voices. Consultation norms had been established within the UN system to deliberately seek such inclusive discussions in 1992. An outcome of the 1992 UN Summit on Sustainable Development (The Rio Earth Summit) was to formalise nine sectors of society as the main channels through which broad participation would be facilitated in UN activities related to sustainable development, in addition to national governments. These were: women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organisations, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technical community, and farmers (UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, 2016). This system both ensured inclusivity in the process to develop the SDGs, although it could be argued to some extent also limited it – while the system ensured broad input from key groups, including many groups historically marginalised, the rigid divisions between the groups limited to some extent the ability of multiple major groups to make combined inputs to the process. Some companies, for example, at times lamented their only limited ability to make joint inputs to the SDGs process with civil society organisations.

Within the constraints of the major groups structure, a number of steps were taken to directly involve non-business voices within the processes to develop and communicate private sector inputs into the SDGs process.

UN Global Compact

The UN Global Compact contributions were primarily developed solely on the basis of discussions with private sector companies involved in the initiative. However, the UN Global Compact itself is a multi-stakeholder initiative. While business-focused, it is open to NGOs and other non-business participants, who shape overall discourse and direction within the initiative through a number of means. In 2019, the initiative counted over 9000 private sector companies participating in the initiative and a further 3000 non-business participants (United Nations Global Compact, 2019c). The UN Global Compact's governing

board comprises representation from four constituency groups: business, civil society, labour and the UN (United Nations Global Compact, 2019a). The 3000+ civil society and other non-business organisations can participate through a number of UN Global Compact engagement mechanisms, including policy dialogues, learning, Local Networks and partnership projects (United Nations Global Compact, 2019b).

The UN Global Compact LEAD group of companies (55 companies during this period) played a significant role in providing detailed input into the development of the UN Global Compact submissions. Within this aspect of the process there was no direct non-business input. However, the LEAD Post-2015 project group did strategise around how participating companies would partner with NGOs in different companies on joint lobbying to national governments around shaping the final SDGs framework.

Unilever's business consultation for the HLP

The business contributions to the High Level Panel process also took a number of steps to involve non-business voices. The business outreach meetings held as part of each High Level Panel meeting in London, Monrovia and Bali each involved a number of representatives from civil society organisations. The High Level Panel organised business outreach meetings as part of each of its main meetings, held in London, Monrovia and Bali. On each occasion HLP members met and held discussions directly with business representatives. Participant lists and seating plans reviewed as part of this analysis show that representatives from local and multi-national businesses joined representatives from business associations, international development banks, foundations and civil society organisations to meet with HLP members. Documents also show how Unilever pushed for these kinds of meetings to be held as part of each of the three meetings, and also how Unilever contacted representatives of civil society organisations asking them to participate alongside business representatives.

Similarly, the country consultation meetings held as part of the wider business consultation coordinated by Unilever for the High Level Panel also involved a number of representatives from civil society organisations. Each meeting was

chaired by the local Unilever CEO, or 'country chair', and the HLP member from that country was invited to participate, as well as government representatives. Participant lists and seating plans examined for the India, Netherlands and Johannesburg meetings show that representatives from local and multi-national businesses joined representatives from business associations, international development banks, foundations and civil society organisations to meet with HLP members. The meeting held in Delhi was chaired by the Unilever Country Chair for India, and attended by the HLP member for India, government representatives, representatives from business and business associations, as well as a few aid agencies, development banks, foundations and NGOs. The meeting in The Netherlands was held at the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs building, chaired by Paul Polman, HLP member for the Netherlands, and attended by the Dutch Prime Minister, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, HRH Princess Máxima, the UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development, as well as CEOs and senior executives from business, and representatives from business associations, as well as a few aid agencies, development banks, and NGOs.

In both cases it would be fair to say that the NGOs invited to participate in these discussions were those pursuing more constructive engagement with the private sector generally. There was not inclusion of those NGOs more critical and antagonistic towards business.

Business Manifesto

The advocacy process that led to the development of and lobbying around the Business Manifesto also included a number of non-business voices. Many NGOs were involved in the initial meetings to establish whether an advocacy coalition could be developed. These NGO partners principally participated in conversations to develop a campaign to raise public awareness of the SDGs once they were agreed, the text of the Business Manifesto itself was developed based on input from companies only. However, key meetings where the Business Manifesto was discussed with policymakers (the September 2014 UN General Assembly Side Event and the January 2015 Davos meeting) involved business, NGO and other non-business participants.

ICC Global Business Alliance

The ICC held 'top-level consultative status' with the UN between 1946 and 2016, at which point its status was upgraded to 'observer status', giving it a significant role in representing the voice of the Business and Industry Major Group during the process to develop the SDGs. The Global Business Alliance convened by the ICC to input private sector positions into the process to develop the SDGs involved no non-business organisations, so far as the limited documents available to review suggest.

5.2.1.2. Inclusion and representativeness of business voices

Both the UN Global Compact and the consultation processes coordinated by Unilever (the business input to the HLP and the Business Manifesto process) were explicit about being built on the input of 'Responsible Business' and businesses that had to some degree embraced the principles of Corporate Sustainability. Taking this base criteria for inclusion as their point of departure, the processes to develop their inputs were broadly inclusive of relevant business voices.

UN Global Compact

As noted above, over the period of the development of the SDGs from 2012-2015, the UN Global Compact in 2019 had over 7000 corporate participants. This makes the Global Compact one of the largest and most globally inclusive Corporate Sustainability initiatives, but this still represents only a small proportion of the total number of companies in the world. The inputs to the SDGs process submitted by the Global Compact were based on broad consultation with this constituency of companies.

The June 2013 report to the UN Secretary General states that its contents were based on wide consultation with UN Global Compact signatory companies, through consultations organised around the world by UN Global Compact Local Networks, through engagement from the 55 UN Global Compact LEAD

companies – members of its leadership group, and also through engagement with companies involved in Global Compact Issue Platforms on water and corruption, companies involved in its sister network focused on investment (the PRI), and also information gathered from its annual survey of all 7000+ signatory companies.

The document refers to engagement through multiple consultations organised through Global Compact Local Networks:

“From January to April 2013, country-based Local Networks carried out 43 consultations on the post-2015 agenda in five major regions. Over 500 corporate participants attended.”

It goes on to list the countries where consultations took place, listing Australia, three countries in Latin America, ten countries in Asia, 11 countries in Europe, four countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, and three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. It then goes on to also refer to engagement through the Global Compact LEAD group, two issue platforms, the Principles for Responsible Investment network, and its annual survey of all Global Compact signatories.

“A series of highly focused discussions within Global Compact LEAD – the UN Global Compact’s leadership platform comprised of 56 highly committed and engaged multinational corporations – have taken place since the 2012 Rio+20 summit and the aligned UN Global Compact-organized Corporate Sustainability Forum. In March 2013, companies participating in UN Global Compact issue platforms on water and on corruption devoted their annual meetings to discussion of their relation to a post-2015 agenda. Over 250 participants attended the meetings. Further, two webinars were held with signatories of the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment. Also feeding into the report are the views of 1,712 companies from over 100 countries in the most recent UN Global Compact Annual Implementation Survey, conducted from November - December 2012.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2013b, p. 2)

The September 2014 28-page joint report published by the UN Global Compact with UNIDO contains a four-page summary of the process used to develop its contents. This notes the consultations that informed the earlier documents and also describes a second round of engagement events around the world involving businesses, as well as governments, international organisations, civil

society organisations and academics between February-August 2014. These were organised by UN Global Compact Local Networks working with other local UN agencies, teams and coordinators.

Unilever's business consultation for the HLP

The business consultation coordinated by Unilever to input to the HLP similarly specifically sought input from business that had already demonstrated engagement in the Corporate Sustainability agenda. Through the multiple outreach activities organised, Unilever claimed that they had consulted with businesses representing over 10% of global GDP:

“We consulted with over 300 companies and worked closely with the UN Global Compact and all the major international business associations. The combined revenues of these businesses exceed 8 trillion dollars and represent over 10% of Global GDP (Unilever, 2013, p. 2).”

The document included a more description of the process used to conduct the consultation, emphasising the broad inclusion of business voices:

“We contacted companies who we knew to be active on specific issues of relevance to the High Level Panel (HLP). We asked these companies to provide input on 10 topics: Education, Energy, Finance, Food Security, Forests, Health, Infrastructure, Nutrition, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) and Water. We also organised roundtable meetings in 12 countries: Brazil, Colombia, France, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Mexico, Russia, Spain, South Africa, the Netherlands and the UK. These roundtables were often co-chaired by HLP members sitting alongside the local Unilever CEO. In all instances they included representatives from government and civil society as well as business. In China we solicited written opinions via a think tank. In Indonesia the event was hosted and facilitated by the local chapter of the UN Global Compact. In addition to Unilever's direct contact with individual companies (done at a CEO to CEO level), we also worked closely with a range of international business organisations (see Appendix 1), all of whom consulted with their members around the world. These organisations submitted a joint letter to the Panel – A Business Call to Action for the Post-2015 Development Agenda – which outlines recommendations as to the role of business in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.” (Unilever, 2013, p. 2)

Business Manifesto

The process to develop the Business Manifesto involved a much smaller scale group of companies. A wide invitation was made to companies to participate in the process, based on prior engagement in the HLP consultation, or engagement in other networks involved in Corporate Sustainability, and no companies were actively excluded. Twenty-one companies ultimately became signatories to the Manifesto.

ICC Global Business Alliance

The ICC-coordinated Global Business Alliance took a different approach. This lobbying coalition actively excluded participation by individual companies on the grounds that this could give unfair weight to the perspectives of a small group of individual companies. Instead, the Alliance developed its contributions to the SDGs process on the basis of inputs from national chambers of commerce around the world and also global industry sector-based business associations. A version of a concept note summarising the background to and operating principles of the coalition produced in October 2013 summarised its membership as follows:

“Composed of major international private sector organizations, the GBA [Global Business Alliance] will be a global business interface encompassing the views of global, regional, national and sectoral business organizations and associations, as well as, companies from multinational corporations to small and medium size enterprises from all geographic regions having a shared vision that market-based solutions are essential to move toward a more sustainable and equitable world. (ICC, 2013)”

Named organisations involved in the Global Business Alliance included: ICC, OIE, BIAC (the Business and Industry Advisory Council at the OECD), the UN Global Compact, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, Business Action for Africa, Business Fights Poverty, the American Sustainable Business Council, CIPE (the Center for International Private Enterprise, part of the US National Endowment for Democracy), AquaFed (the International Federation for Private Water Operators), CropLife International, The International AgriFood Network, IFPMA (The International Federation of

Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations), ICCA (the International Council of Chemical Associations), ICMM (the International Council on Mining and Metals), IPIECA (the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association), IRU (The International Road Transport Union), The International Fertiliser Industry Association, and the World Ocean Council. This in principle makes the Global Business Alliance very representative of businesses globally.

5.2.2. Truthfulness

The key questions to consider in relation to truthfulness are the following: Are the companies calling for the same things in public and private? Do the positions articulated to policymakers broadly correspond to the themes discussed by companies regarding what positions should be taken in collective statements? Are the contributions truthful, or is mis-information actively promoted?

Across all the submissions and communications between business leaders and policymakers reviewed in this study, there was broad consistency between the things being called for in public and in private. What is not known is if and how far there were further additional non-public communications, and what the content of any further non-public communications might have been.

5.2.2.1. *Consistency in public and private*

UN Global Compact

Many UN Global Compact submissions to the various parts of Post-2015 process were in the public domain. Some were not, and some of these have been reviewed as part of this analysis – including the May 2014 and June 2014 documents discussed in the previous chapter. The UN Global Compact also organised a number of side events where business representatives had the opportunity to meet with UN policymakers – the UN Global Compact's notes of some of these meetings have been reviewed, and one meeting, in March 2015, was observed as part of this study. Across all these documents and meetings

there was no material difference in the points raised by business representatives regarding scope of issues, technical framing, and means of implementation.

The May 2014 and June 2014 documents discussed in the previous chapter both emphasise the same key areas in terms of scope of issues already emphasised in other public domain documents, and in a few areas respond to the OWG's recent SDGs draft by encouraging policymakers to be more ambitious. Both documents, for example, reproduces the 'pyramid' image showing issue area priorities that first featured in the public June 2013 UN Global Compact report (see Figure 2 in chapter 4), and the June 2014 document notes:

“We welcome the “zero draft” of goals and targets released 2 June – notably including stand-alone goals on education, gender equality and women empowerment, water and sanitation, sustainable energy for all and climate change.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2014a, p. 1)

The May 2014 document, for example, echoes earlier public documents by seeking to push policymakers to be more ambitious regarding the nature of economic growth, arguing for a re-positioning and re-phasing to further emphasise that a particular kind of economic growth should be sought, one focused on inclusiveness and equity:

“We strongly support the inclusion of Focus Areas 1 on “Poverty eradication, building shared prosperity and promoting equality” and 8 on “Economic growth, employment and infrastructure” as core elements of sustainable development and their articulation in the Working Document is closely aligned with the suggestions for goals and targets provided by companies in the UN Global Compact. It would, however, be important for the post-2015 development agenda to acknowledge the interconnectedness between inclusive economic growth and poverty eradication, and combining Focus Area 1 and 8 into a single focus area / SDG would serve to further emphasize the importance of *inclusiveness* and *equity*, and position economic growth as a vehicle for poverty eradication and prosperity for all, rather than as a goal in itself.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2014c, p. 2)

Both documents re-iterate calls for more government intervention to increase corporate integration of sustainability principles into their operational practices and corporate reporting requirements:

“With respect to corporate governance, a broader Focus Area / SDG on governance could contain targets such as “increase by x percentage points the share of companies incorporating sustainable development principles in their business practices” (similar to the target currently included in Focus Area 11, but not limited to the financial sector) and “increase by x percentage point the share of companies reporting on corporate social and environmental responsibility, including through integrated reporting” (also currently in Focus Area 11).” (United Nations Global Compact, 2014c, p. 2)

“Proposed goal 12 on “Sustainable Consumption and Production” includes a number of very relevant targets, most importantly proposed targets 12.9 and 12.10 on sustainability reporting and the integration of sustainability principles into strategies and operations. But sustainable consumption and production is critical to the implementation of most of the SDGs, and targets on sustainable consumption and production therefore might better be featured as integral to proposed goal 17. Alternatively, such targets could be merged within proposed goal 16 into a broader focus on “good governance” that covers both public and private sectors.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2014a, p. 2)

The March 2015 ‘Brief’ document from the UN Global Compact to the OWG also emphasises the importance of increased government public policy intervention, alongside soft law, to change business behaviour in order to achieve the SDGs:

“A growing number of businesses are committed to integrating sustainability into their organizational DNA and long-term outlook. However, there is still a need for more companies to reach a new level of corporate performance to address global challenges and to deliver on the sustainability promise. By creating – both via legislation and soft law - an enabling environment that fosters corporate sustainability, Governments can play an important role in this transition. This could include taking account of corporate sustainability in public procurement policies; pricing policies and investment policies or ensuring state-owned companies become leaders in corporate sustainability, while supporting mechanisms that lead to disclosure and accountability” (United Nations Global Compact, 2015, p. 2)

At the May 2015 meeting between company representatives and policymakers, company representatives called for further action by governments to force companies to be more transparent on the tax they paid, to introduce carbon pricing, and to invest significant public financial resources in achieving the

SDGs, including through public-private partnerships, echoing calls made in public documents.

Unilever's business consultation for the HLP

A number of documents relating to Unilever's business consultation for the HLP have been reviewed as part of this study. Specifically, copies of six of the 19 replies received by Unilever as part of its thematic consultation were reviewed; Unilever's notes of each of the country consultation meetings were reviewed, and three of the country consultation meetings were observed – in the Netherlands, India and South Africa. In each case there was no material difference in the points raised by business representatives regarding scope of issues, technical framing, and means of implementation and the description included in Unilever's June 2013 summary of its consultation.

Unilever's own direct inputs to the HLP

The discussions between the members of the High Level Panel were deliberately confidential. As a result, it was not possible to review the nature of Paul Polman's own verbal contributions to the discussions. However, a few documents contributed to the High Level Panel on behalf of Unilever alone have been reviewed. These documents also show a high level of consistency between what Unilever was calling for in private and the positions articulated by groups of companies in the other documents already reviewed in the previous chapter.

Unilever's direct inputs to the OWG

Unilever also made a number of submissions direct to the OWG regarding scope of issues, technical framing and means of implementation. In addition to Paul Polman's public contribution to the OWG broadcast on the UN web platform, two further documents, from March and May 2014, were reviewed as part of this study. The themes in the two documents are broadly consistent with the things called for in all the public domain documents developed by the businesses looked at in this study. The themes in the two documents are

broadly consistent with the things called for in all the public domain documents developed by the businesses looked at in this study. Both documents, for example, stressed that they welcomed the OWG focus on the broad range of different issues in their draft SDGs proposals, and also called for increased emphasis on particular issues. The March 2014 document, for example, welcomed the scope of issues included in the OWG draft document:

“Unilever supports the OWG’s ambition to eradicate ‘poverty in all its forms’ and welcomes the inclusion of the three dimensions of sustainability - the social, the economic and the environmental - within the 19 Focus Areas... We welcome the comprehensive nature of the report - and in particular - specific Focus Areas on Food Security and Nutrition; Climate; and Water and Sanitation.” (Unilever, 2014b, p. 1)

This document also called for the OWG to go further on the scope of issues included:

“We hope a revised draft will highlight the critical role of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in making progress on Food security and Nutrition; Education; and Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. Further, as deforestation is a significant driver of climate change, we would like to see it clearly recognised in a goal on Climate.” (Unilever, 2014b, p. 1)

The May 2014 document also called for further specificity in the scope of issues to be included:

“We would ask that the OWG continues to highlight the interlinkages between the Focus Areas – and in particular – the need to recognise the critical role of WASH in making progress on poverty reduction; nutrition; public health; education and gender equality. For instance, we would like to see specific reference to eliminating open defecation as a critical indicator of ending extreme poverty.” (Unilever, 2014a, p. 1)

Business Manifesto

The process around the Business Manifesto was smaller in scale than the other processes reviewed here. Two events were held to discuss the contents of the Business Manifesto with policymakers: the September 2014 UN General Assembly Side Event between business leaders and UN policymakers to discuss the Manifesto, and also the January 2015 Davos meeting to discuss the

Business Manifesto and broader coordination of lobbying efforts between business leaders, NGOs and policymakers. Both were observed as part of this study. There was clear alignment between the themes of the Manifesto and the themes of discussion at these two meetings.

Although there was an aspiration that the Business Manifesto would form the basis for further lobbying activity by business leaders at both UN and national government levels, no other documents shared with policymakers or meetings between business leaders that may have been related to the Business Manifesto have been reviewed as part of this study.

ICC Global Business Alliance

None of the ICC Global Business Alliance's inputs to the SDGs process are available in the public domain, and none of its non-public domain inputs were shared with this study, so it is not possible to review whether there was any consistency between what was being said in public and private.

5.2.2.2. Consistency between collective documents and business inputs to internal consultation processes

A review of the notes of 'internal' meetings convened to seek business input to collective documents submitted by businesses to the SDGs process suggests that the final documents are a fair and reasonable reflection of the range of discussions held to develop them. The discussions of the UN Global Compact LEAD Post-2015 project group over the period 2012-2015 were observed as part of this study, as were the Unilever HLP country consultation meetings in India, the Netherlands and South Africa, and meetings regarding the development of the Business Manifesto. The letters received from a selection of the CEOs involved in the Unilever HLP thematic study, and various other documents and emails relating to the above meetings and events. There is nothing in the documents reviewed to suggest that the final documents submitted to policymakers are not a fair reflection of the wide range of views canvassed during their development. No documents were reviewed in relation to the ICC Global Business Alliance so no view could be formed in this case.

The following quotes from the summary notes of the November 2012 meeting of representatives of UN Global Compact LEAD companies, for example, illustrate the consistency between calls made in the final documents produced by companies communicated to policymakers, and the conversations among companies that led to their development. This comment summarises some initial discussions around scope of issues to be included in the SDGs, and echoes the comments found in final public documents:

“The MDGs and the central organizing principle of poverty eradication were felt to be a good starting point for follow-up action starting in 2015. A stronger or more specific environmental component will probably be needed, because otherwise the fight against poverty will be smothered by collapsing planetary boundaries. In this sense, the post-2015 agenda will be a continuation of the MDGs, but under the rubric of sustainable development. Hopefully, taking this route will avoid an artificial division or opposition between combating poverty and protecting environment. Another starting point idea emerging from the small group discussions was that the MDGs lacked an economic perspective or a human rights aspect either.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2012, pp. 4–5)

This comment summarises some initial discussions on means of implementation, and again echoes the comments found in final public documents:

“Two main principles applied to the overall discussion of how business can help to implement a new sustainable development agenda. One is that the effort is multi-sectoral and therefore will require linkage between efforts of the private and public sectors, including civil society/NGOs. The second is the importance of public policy frameworks to set incentives for business. At one end of the scale are sanctions on illegal or counter-productive behavior by business, at the other, inducements for exemplary behaviour, investments in sectors deemed to be of strategic value to the public good, tax breaks for a reduced carbon footprint, etc.” (United Nations Global Compact, 2012, p. 9)

5.2.3. Sincerity

The key question considered here in relation to sincerity is the following: Are the publicly stated intents of the companies the same as what they were stating in private as their objectives?

To consider this question, section 5.2.3.1. examines whether statements regarding the intention behind the corporate action were the same in private as in public, and finds that objectives stated in internal processes were broadly in line with those stated publicly. Section 5.2.3.2. then examines how far the companies involved in the process tried to change the language of final documents during the drafting process, and how far the nature of any changes they sought might contradict their publicly stated intents. This section finds that evidence both of some companies pushing for ambition to be tempered and toned down, and of some companies pushing for it to be more ambitious.

5.2.3.1. Publicly and privately stated intentions

As noted in chapter three, considerable internal documentation was reviewed as part of this analysis in relation to the processes to develop the UN Global Compact's submissions to the SDGs process, Unilever's business consultation as part of the HLP process, and the Business Manifesto process. While there must obviously be further substantial documentation in existence that has not been reviewed, particularly in relation to internal decision-making processes within companies, all the internal documentation that has been reviewed aligns with publicly stated aims of trying to advance social welfare by seeking more ambitious public policy outcomes for advancing sustainable development in the face of other contributors to the process that were seeking less ambitious outcomes. Across these internal documents, the two themes that dominate are that to advance social welfare requires both the recognition on the part of policymakers that business must have a central role in achieving the SDGs, and that for business to be able to play this role in achieving the SDGs will require public policy interventions that will force and encourage companies and investors to act differently.

UN Global Compact

Numerous briefing documents and meeting agenda and powerpoint decks relating to the work of the UN Global Compact LEAD Post-2015 project team were reviewed as part of this study, and a number of the meetings of the group

observed. All this documentation and discussion suggests a clear alignment between public and private statements of the objectives and intent of the lobbying work regarding seeking to advance social welfare through putting business at the heart of achieving the SDGs and using public policy interventions to direct markets and corporate behaviour to maximise the contribution to sustainable development that companies would make.

For example, in a March 2013 meeting of the LEAD Post-2015 project team (composed of representatives from LEAD member companies), meeting slides stated the objectives of the group as seeking to shape the SDGs so that the goals and means of implementation would be relevant to business:

“Objectives:

- Contribute to the shaping of the Post-2015 Development Agenda in a way that the goals are and implementation mechanisms are relevant to business and puts corporate sustainability at its core
- Shape the expectations to companies in realizing the goals and demonstrate how LEAD companies are prepared to go ahead
- Shape the specific implementation mechanisms, including measurement and accountability frameworks”

Similar objectives were stated in meetings slides of group over the period 2013-2015.

A briefing note for the March 2015 side event meeting between LEAD companies and policymakers developing the SDGs included the following comments regarding objectives and how company representatives could prepare:

“Objective: Co-hosted by the UN Global Compact Office and companies participating in Global Compact LEAD, this meeting will present how business is already advancing global development priorities through core business, strategic philanthropy and in partnership with others, and will highlight how Governments can use the momentum of the SDGs to take action that can support the further scaling up of these efforts.”

“How to Prepare

All LEAD companies attending this session are invited to prepare for the discussion by reflecting on the following guiding questions:

1. What, in your view, are the most important ways your company is currently advancing sustainable development (as defined by the upcoming SDGs)? When selecting examples, companies are

encouraged to emphasize activities that relate to core business. Examples of specific projects aimed to in significantly reduce the company's negative footprint and/or enhance its positive contribution to sustainable development are also appreciated.

2. How will the SDGs be important to your business and your efforts to further advance your contribution to sustainable development?

3. What do you think are the 2-3 most important things that governments should agree on in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and/or the Financing for Development debates that would enable and incentivize global business to become a more positive force for sustainable development over the next fifteen years?"

Unilever's business consultation for the HLP

Documentation reviewed in relation to Unilever's business consultation on behalf of Paul Polman in his capacity as a High Level Panel member suggests a clear alignment between public and private statements of the objectives and intent of the lobbying work. All this documentation and discussion suggests a clear alignment between public and private statements of the objectives and intent of the lobbying work regarding seeking to advance social welfare through putting business at the heart of achieving the SDGs and using public policy interventions to direct markets and corporate behaviour to maximise the contribution to sustainable development that companies would make.

The thematic part of Unilever's business consultation for the HLP involved Paul Polman writing to a selected group of CEOs to ask them directly for their suggestions for the Post-2015 process. These letters were all personalised but developed from a common template. Copies of these letters show that CEOs were asked to respond with opinions on how goals on particular issues should be framed, as well as what broad role for the private sector should be envisaged, and what they would request of governments. CEOs contacted were also asked to seek opinions from other business leaders in their sector. For example, Polman's letter to Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo and Daniel Servitje, CEO of Grupo Bimbo, on food security, states:

"The kinds of questions we are asking you to address are:

- Was the original MDG target (to reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger) helpful in focusing the minds of governments, business and civil society on the food crisis?

- On the assumption that you would like the Post-2015 goals still to include a target on food security, how would you frame it? What would be the key measures of progress and success?
- What role and responsibility should the private sector play in delivering these goals?
- What would you want governments to do?

We were hoping that, in addition to your respective company views, you might be able to ask other progressive businesses to submit an opinion.”

A similar story emerges from examination of documentation relating to Unilever’s country consultation. Internal documents show that the questions to be explored at each country consultation meeting were:

- “What existing MDGs would you like to keep in a new framework?
- What existing MDGs would you like to remove?
- What goals would you like to add to a Post-2015 framework?
- How should a new framework address environmental sustainability?
- How should the role of business be addressed in a Post-2015 framework?
- Should there be a specific goal on the role of business, or should business only be referenced as an enabler of the goals?
- How do we create an enabling environment in which the private sector can grow and flourish?
- What is the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in delivering the goals?
- How to achieve scale?”

Business Manifesto

Documentation reviewed in relation to the development of the Business Manifesto suggests a clear alignment between public and private statements of the objectives and intent of the lobbying work. Here, businesses were convened around the twin objectives of influencing policymakers involved in finalising the SDGs, and also of raising awareness about and encouraging positive acceptance of the SDGs with the general public. Again, documents suggest the overall aim of the work was to advance social welfare, and that doing so would involve policymakers recognising business had a central role in achieving the SDGs, and this contribution would be maximised by employing a range of public policy interventions. Public-private partnerships were particularly stressed in much of this documentation.

The invitation to companies to participate in an initial discussion in April 2014 framed the objectives of the action in terms of joint action between companies and civil society organisations engage with both citizens and governments to bring about a better future:

“The vision: a platform for joint action by leading companies and civil society organizations to involve your key stakeholders: citizens (your employees, customers, and community stakeholders), and the governments and partner organizations you work with in bringing about a better future. There are ways that business can uniquely drive that engagement, and we aim to present these opportunities and to hear how this opportunity fits with your company's strategic plans, capacity and desired area for impact, and to invite you to join us in shaping this platform for action.”

The briefing document for the meeting expanded, stating the explicit objective of bringing together companies leading on the sustainable development agenda with civil society organisations was to use their collective skills and reach to raise awareness of the SDGs with the general public, and to engage in collaborative lobbying activity to encourage governments to agree an ambitious SDGs agenda and means of implementation that would scale up the business contribution to sustainable development:

“The corporations that we are inviting to take part in this opportunity are already far ahead in thinking through what needs to be done within and outside their companies to achieve sustainable growth and development. Our vision is to provide a forum in which those corporations can be joined by influential global civil society organizations, members from the creative community, entrepreneurs and others, to create a powerful collective advocacy and communications capacity to support success of the new agenda for global development.”

The document expanded further:

“Collaborative Outreach to Decision Makers: The companies we are inviting to take part in this initiative already work closely with governments and in many cases NGOs in the markets where they operate globally. There is untapped opportunity for these established relationships to both support adoption of a successful post-2015 agenda, as well as to call for coordinated action to support the successful implementation of the agenda. Mechanisms to achieve this will be shaped with input from members of the companies taking part. But we envision companies aligning with partner NGOs on agendas they share and engaging in discussion with government leaders in order to align

their mutual contributions to a successful and actionable post-2015 agenda.”

As a follow up to the New York and London meetings, participants were subsequently sent in August 2014 materials setting out a menu of options for becoming further involved. On government engagement in particular, it stated:

- “Help to finalise and sign the business manifesto affirming the role and position of the private sector
- Contribute to evidence base in support of manifesto: provide thought leadership on specific goals; write articles, briefs, provide key data, commission case studies, co-convene strategic events on specific SDGs
- Share the experience of your company in terms of contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through reports, case studies, independent assessments etc
- Brief your CEO; engage her/him in lending their voice in support of business engagement on the SDGs
- Leverage strategic events and engage your CEO to participate and discuss the goals, for example, WEF events, UN events, CGI, regional economic organization events, other key events at which business and government intersect
- Advocate on pertinent issues: reach out to negotiators or key influencers (UN, NGOs, issue experts) to dialogue on Goals and Targets and share the private sector perspective
- Draft and sign petitions with other companies and organisations on particular goals (eg. Unilever and WASH goal)
- Engage in external business coalitions and networks for post 2015, eg UNGC, Global Business Alliance for post-2015, UNF network etc
- Join thematic groups to engage on particular goal/s
- Mentor companies and support knowledge transfer to engage more companies across markets”

ICC Global Business Alliance

Only a limited amount of documentation was available to review in relation to the ICC Global Business Alliance. To investigate statements about the objectives of the ICCGBA, this section looks three drafts of a concept note setting out the basis for establishing the coalition. Proposed objectives of the coalition stated in these documents included:

“The GBC [Global Business Coalition – later renamed Global Business Alliance] will be the vehicle for businesses to provide policy inputs into the full range of intergovernmental processes in the context of the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda”

“Demonstrate business’ commitment to delivering market-based solutions and showcase its active engagement in partnerships to promote sustainable development”

“Promote business solutions to sustainable development that deliver results and embrace poverty alleviation, job creation, environmental stewardship and social empowerment.”

The drafts of this document made no reference to active policy interventions from governments, stressing instead the intent to demonstrate that market-based solutions were sufficient to meet the challenges of sustainable development.

5.2.3.2. Changes sought during the drafting process

To help consider the sincerity of the intent of the companies involved in the processes to develop the SDGs, this section examines how far the companies involved in the process may have tried to change the language of final documents during the drafting process, and how far the nature of any changes they sought might contradict their publicly stated intents. This section finds evidence both of some companies pushing for ambition to be tempered and toned down, and of some companies pushing for it to be more ambitious.

UN Global Compact

The UN Global Compact sought feedback on drafts of several of its contributions to the Post-2015 process from companies involved in the LEAD Post-2015 project group. Where comments were received, these generally pushed for the drafts to become more ambitious in what they were calling for.

Feedback from LEAD companies on the first draft of the March 2013 joint letter to the HLP called for additional emphasis on several points. On scope of issues, the comments called for more emphasis on hunger, health, economic growth that is equitable, ecosystems and planetary boundaries. On technical framing, comments called for more emphasis on goals that would be global in scope, and targets for specific industry sectors. On means of implementation, comments called for more emphasis on public-private partnerships.

Comments provided by companies in the LEAD Post-2015 project group on two early drafts of the June 2013 report also generally pushed for the contents of the report to be more ambitious. Comments on the first draft called for additional points or stronger language on issues including bribery and corruption, health, inequality, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. On technical framing, comments called for more references to SMART targets, and for the goals to be global. On means of implementation, comments called for more ambitious language on promoting free trade in green goods and services, achieving robust carbon pricing, and ending inefficient subsidies and other forms of support for fossil fuels. Comments on the second draft called for more focus on issues including infrastructure, food and nutrition, climate change and food security, and gender. On technical framing there were calls for more language on the goals being global, and for specific targets for specific industry sectors. On means of implementation comments called for more language on public-private partnerships and market-based policy instruments for carbon.

Many of the later Global Compact submissions were also shared with the LEAD Post-2015 project group for feedback. The early draft of the implementation brief on government policies was examined as part of this study. A number of changes were made to the text but most were not substantive. A couple of references to the role of governments in specifying and mandating certain standards were toned down slightly.

[Unilever's business consultation for the HLP – letter from business organisations](#)

The document Unilever produced to summarise its business consultation was not shared with participants in advance in order for changes to be suggested. However, the letter to the HLP co-signed by the nine business organisations, contained within the summary document, did go through a significant drafting process with feedback sought from the nine organisations. Analysis documents suggests that in this part of the process, fairly strong feedback was received from two of the major mainstream business associations calling for some of the more ambitious language in the first draft of the joint letter to be toned down, and

the same two organisations also pushed for the letter to include stronger and more detailed emphasis on central role for business and enabling environment. Some of the smaller business associations which were specifically focused on sustainable and responsible business resisted these calls for the toning down of ambition.

Business Manifesto

Analysis of documents shows fairly strong push back was received on language in the first draft of the Business Manifesto, and many of the points made in the first draft in relation to the seriousness of the climate change challenge and the need for public policy interventions to correct market failures were toned down.

Among reactions to the language of the manifesto from companies in the room at an early meeting of companies held in London in July 2014, some expressed support for it as a tool for engaging companies on the SDGs and coordinating messaging, but opinion was also expressed that some senior business leaders might find the language on climate change too radical.

Two conference calls were held in September 2014 to discuss feedback on the manifesto. A number of comments were also received by email. As a result, a number of substantive changes to the text were made between the initial draft and the final version published in September 2014, toning down the language on climate change, and some references to market failures, flaws in capitalism, and the importance of the role of government.

ICC Global Business Alliance

No documentation was available to perform any analysis of what kind of feedback was received on ICC Global Business Alliance draft documents.

5.2.4. Appropriateness

The key questions to consider in relation to appropriateness are the following: Are the corporate contributions focused on appropriate issues and discussion points? Do they ignore any salient topics?

As discussed in Chapter four, a review of all documents submitted to policymakers and observations of meetings held between business leaders and policymakers suggest that corporate contributions to the SDGs process do all focus on the three broader areas of debate and discussion in the SDGs process – scope of issues, technical framing and means of implementation. There is no evidence to suggest that the private sector was deliberately ignoring any salient issues or trying to steer the focus of policymakers away from discussion of any salient issues.

5.2.5. Understandability

The key questions considered here in relation to understandability are the following: Are the corporate contributions clear or confusing? Do they risk misleading?

The corporate contributions examined in this thesis are broadly clear and not presented in such a way as to risk confusion. There is nothing to suggest any intent at misdirection, or anything to suggest that misdirection has occurred.

5.3. Transparency

The key questions considered here in relation to transparency are the following: Is the discourse process transparent to all stakeholders? Are the corporate contributions public and easily accessible, or not in the public domain and not accessible?

The analysis performed in this thesis shows that the corporate contributions to the process to develop the SDGs were largely characterised by high transparency, with the exception of the ICC process.

The most substantive contributions of the UN Global Compact to the SDGs process were all published in the public domain and available for scrutiny. In addition, transparency was increased through the Global Compact's decision to allow access as part of this study to observe internal meetings and review a wide range of documents and meetings between companies and policymakers.

Similarly, the main document produced to summarise the private sector consultations providing input to the HLP process was also published into the public domain. And again, in addition, transparency was increased through Unilever's decision to allow access as part of this study to internal meetings and a wide range of documents. The actual discussions within the HLP were not transparent, so it is not possible to examine the nature of direct contributions by corporate representatives within this process. This decision was made by the UN, based on the argument that confidential discussions would improve the quality of discourse. The lack of transparency affects all contributions to the HLP discussions, not just those inputs from the private sector.

The Business Manifesto similarly was published into the public domain, and the key meeting with policymakers to discuss its contents was broadcast live through the UN Web TV online platform, with a recording stored there. Again, transparency was further increased through Unilever's decision to allow access as part of this study to internal meetings and a wide range of documents relating to this process.

The ICC Global Business Alliance process conversely was not characterised by a high degree of transparency. Documents shared with policymakers as part of this process are not available in the public domain. While some initial access to documents and internal meetings was provided to this study, this was withdrawn at an early stage soon after the Alliance was formally established.

5.4. Accountability

The key questions considered here in relation to accountability are the following: Is it clear who the actors in the discourse are? If it is known which

actors are responsible for which contributions, they can be held accountable for those contributions. If contributions are made to the process by intermediaries, is it clear which corporations have backed them or funded them?

As with the discussion of transparency above, the analysis performed here shows that the corporate contributions to the process to develop the SDGs were largely characterised by high accountability, with the exception of the ICC process.

The companies involved in the UN Global Compact are all publicly listed on the initiative's website, as are the smaller group of companies directly involved in the initiative's LEAD group, which played a significant role in the development of the Global Compact submissions.

The business consultation coordinated by Unilever as an input to the HLP process was also characterised by a relatively high degree of accountability. Those companies contributing to the thematic aspect of the consultation are all publicly listed. The longer lists of companies participating in the country consultations are not public listed anywhere, but were shared with this study. The Business Manifesto included the names of all companies signing it.

Although the ICC Global Business Alliance inputs were not in the public domain and therefore not transparent, the inputs were clearly coordinated by the ICC and therefore a degree of accountability is associated with this process. As a very large business membership organisation, composed of multiple national business membership organisations, it is much less clear which organisations had most influence in determining whatever business positions the ICC was communicating – there was less accountability in this process.

5.5. Discussion: interpreting the lobbying process

Chapter five has set out to examine the corporate lobbying action in relation to the second part of the Deliberative Lobbying framework: can the corporate lobbying action be judged to be characterised by the three features of: inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability?

As with chapter four, this examination has looked at several parts of the corporate lobbying process in relation to the SDGs, reviewing substantial but nevertheless necessarily incomplete documentation. The chapter concludes that on balance the corporate lobbying examined here does meet the criteria of the second part of the Deliberative Lobbying framework, but with some caveats.

The lobbying activity associated with the UN Global Compact, the Unilever business consultation for the HLP, and the Business Manifesto processes all broadly meets the three criteria of inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability. For all three processes, the test of inclusivity was broadly met. The lobbying activities were conducted in the context of a wider process that sought inputs from all UN-designated Major Groups, and limited steps were taken to involve non-business voices in the discussions between policymakers and business leaders. These processes, while starting from the position that they deliberately wanted to represent the views of 'Responsible Business' – those that had demonstrated some prior engagement with the Corporate Sustainability agenda – then broadly sought to be inclusive of as wide as possible a range of business representatives, and there was no evidence of any attempt to exclude. The corporate contributions from these processes can be judged to meet the criteria of truthfulness, in that there was broad consistency between what the companies were saying to policymakers in public and private, so far as available documentation can show, and also that there is nothing in the available documentation to show that the corporate positions communicated to policymakers differed in any substantive way from the positions articulated by companies to each other during the processes to develop these common statements. The corporate contributions from these processes can also be judged to meet the criteria of sincerity, based on the available documentation. Objectives stated in private, so far as can be seen in available documentation, align with publicly stated objectives of seeking to act to achieve the most ambitious outcomes for social welfare, and to achieve the aim of recognition of a central role for business in achieving the goals, which would require public policy intervention. There is evidence of companies seeking to weaken and tone down some of the proposed language calling for more public policy intervention, which could raise questions about sincerity, but also evidence on other

documents of companies calling for the language to be more ambitious. The corporate contributions can also be judged to meet the tests of appropriateness and understandability: the contributions all appear to be focused on the key wider debates of scope of issues, technical framing and means of implementation and there is no obvious intent to avoid key issues or discuss topics not related to the process; and the corporate contributions are all broadly clear and not presented in a way than risks (or deliberately increases chances of) confusion or misdirection. Both processes are characterised by high transparency and accountability.

The lobbying activity associated with the ICC Global Business Alliance meets fewer of the tests of the Deliberative Lobbying framework. No documents are available in the public domain and few documents were shared with this study. From what materials are available, the process did not involve non-business voices nor individual companies, but was inclusive in the sense that it drew on input from business membership organisations around the world. Lack of documentation made it difficult to judge truthfulness, sincerity, appropriateness or understandability. What documents were available did raise some questions about sincerity. This process was not characterised by high transparency or accountability.

From a critical perspective, a question should always be raised regarding the potential disproportionate financial resources available to different groups and the extent to which this might influence the ability of different groups to have their voice heard. One would assume corporate actors would have relatively more financial resources available to facilitate their participation in lobbying processes than more marginalised groups, although the formal UN structures described above should help mitigate against any undue influence from this. Beyond this, this question is hard to reflect on in any further detail given the texts available that form the basis of this study.

5.6. Section one conclusion: can such lobbying be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development?

As noted in the introduction, this thesis seeks to investigate the phenomenon of private sector lobbying for more interventionist public policy on sustainable development. In the context of debates about the role of states versus markets in how to organise to meet global sustainable development challenges, and the history of corporate lobbying to weaken or prevent government action on sustainable development, the thesis asks the question: can emerging examples of corporate lobbying for more government policy intervention on sustainable development be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, and it uses the Deliberative Lobbying framework to help assess this.

Chapters four and five together have sought to address this research question. Chapter four looked at the whether the lobbying in this case meets the criteria of the first part of the deliberative lobbying framework: whether what the companies were calling for can be judged to be aimed at the effective resolution of public issues. Chapter five then looked at the whether the lobbying in this case meets the criteria of the second part of the deliberative lobbying framework: whether the process followed met the tests of inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability. This section draws together the findings in relation to both parts of the Deliberative Lobbying framework and discusses them in relation to the overall research question.

The analysis presented here concludes that on balance, such lobbying does meet the tests of the Deliberative Lobbying framework and can be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, but with some caveats.

The corporate lobbying activity has been looked at in relation to various parts of the SDGs process: the contributions of the UN Global Compact, the business consultation organised by Unilever as an input to the High Level Panel, the Business Manifesto process, and to a lesser extent the ICC Global Business Coalition.

The UN Global Compact, HLP business consultation and Business Manifesto processes all broadly meet the three process tests of inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability with a few minor caveats. The ICC Global Business Coalition does not. Due to lack of transparency, the policy outcomes aimed at in the ICC Global Business Coalition lobbying activity cannot be examined, but the policy outcomes aimed at in the other processes examined are judged to broadly meet the tests of the Deliberative Lobbying framework, although some ambiguity is acknowledged. The corporate lobbying conducted through the UN Global Compact, HLP and Business Manifesto processes broadly meet the tests of legitimacy (inclusive, truthful, sincere, appropriate, understandable, transparent and accountable), and can be judged to broadly have been aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others.

As discussed in the conclusion to chapter four, on scope of issues and technical framing, the lobbying positions taken by the private sector were largely aligned with the positions of others pushing for the most ambitious and effective SDGs framework possible, pushing for a broadening of the scope of issues to include climate change and other environmental issues, good governance, strong institutions, human rights and rule of law, and inequality. On technical framing, corporate lobbying was aligned with the positions of others that draw on learning from the MDGs regarding those aspects of the framing that had been judged particular strengths and those areas that should be different.

Corporate lobbying on means of implementation is judged here to be more ambiguous, simultaneously lobbying to reproduce and challenge existing power relations at the same time. On balance this is judged to meet the test of the deliberative lobbying framework, but with the caveat of noting this ambiguity. Much of what the private sector was calling for in terms of means of implementation can be judged to be consistent with the widely criticised Washington Consensus, with its emphasis as the private sector as the primary engine of development and the need to governments to prioritise policy

interventions that create an 'enabling environment' that maximise the opportunities for business to create financial wealth. To this extent, this action can be judged to be a continuation of the corporate lobbying for neo-liberalism that has been so widely criticised. But at the same time, much of what the private sector was calling for was more activist government policy intervention in the economy to address market failures in ways that could expose MNCs to more regulation and increase costs. This corporate action marks a departure from the neo-liberal focus on deregulation and minimal state that has been widely criticised, and it is this aspect of the corporate lobbying that is judged here to mean that on balance the corporate lobbying can be judged to have met the first test of the deliberative lobbying framework: that the action is aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others.

5.6.1. Reflections on the Deliberative Lobbying framework

In passing, this section will offer some reflections on the Deliberative Lobbying framework. The Deliberative Lobbying framework was developed by Lock and Seele partly in response from Political CSR scholars for the need to focus not just on corporate participation in processes to develop voluntary standards and private governance, or 'soft law', but also on the need to consider corporate participation in processes to develop more conventional government regulation, or 'hard law', in the context of macro-shifts in the configuration of national and global institutions and the relative roles of states and governments in the era of economic globalization. Lock and Seele noted, as many others have, that can frequently be a lack of alignment between a company's publicly stated Corporate Sustainability and CSR objectives and activities, and its lobbying and other Corporate Political Activities. Lock and Seele presented their framework as a tool for judging a company's lobbying activities, and illustrated it by looked at cases of non-aligned CSR and CPA activities and using the framework to illustrate how the lobbying activities could be different in order to align with the CSR activities and the aim of advancing social welfare.

This thesis applies the framework in a slightly different context. Rather than applying to cases of lobbying that do not meet the framework's tests and using the framework to show how the lobbying could be different, this thesis uses the framework to examine a case where the lobbying could potentially meet the tests of the framework, to judge whether it does or not. To do this, it takes themes set out in Lock and Seele's paper and develops them further to develop a set of questions with which to examine the empirical phenomenon. A contribution that can be made to the Deliberative Lobbying literature based on the application of the framework in this context is that while the framework can give a relatively unambiguous result when applied in the context of relatively conventional lobbying activity, it can give more ambiguous results in more complex cases such as the case examined here. Specifically, much conventional corporate lobbying makes no attempt to meet the kinds of requirements for legitimacy and advancement of social welfare advocated by the Deliberative Lobbying framework. But some corporate lobbying activities, such as the case examined here, do attempt to present themselves as meeting these kinds of legitimacy criteria. In such cases, the experience of the application of the framework in this case suggests that there can be more ambiguity as to whether or not such action is aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, or is aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others, particularly in the context of the notion of the maintenance of corporate hegemony through the accommodation of some demands of critics in order to help preserve underlying privileged status.

6. Empirical Findings Section 2 – Part 1: Executives' narratives of what accounts for their action

6.1. Introduction

As noted in the introduction, this thesis is located in the critical tradition and as such has a normative interest in how social practices might be transformed to advance social welfare. This interest guides the focus of the research questions: whether or not such corporate lobbying action can be considered a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, and what might account for the pursuit of such action by some organisations but not others. If such action can be judged helpful, understanding more about what accounts for its occurrence could help those who might be interested to try to encourage more of it.

The first empirical findings section, comprising chapters four and five, addressed the first research question at the core of this thesis: can the corporate lobbying that occurred during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals be seen as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development? To consider this question, chapters four and five performed an analysis of the lobbying activities of companies active in the process to develop the UN SDGs over the period 2012-2015 using the Deliberative Lobbying framework.

This second empirical findings section, comprising chapters six and seven, addresses the second research question: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities?

Chapter two has argued that existing theory in the literatures on CPA, PCSR and Responsible Leadership offers some useful points of departure for understanding how to account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in lobbying for more public policy intervention at the national and intergovernmental level to advance sustainable development, but this

literature does not offer a comprehensive account for the occurrence of this phenomenon, it remains under-theorised.

The CPA literature assumes that firms are motivated exclusively by their economic interests and engage with the political system only in order to gain economic benefits and/or to further their competitive positions, that regulation and government intervention increases costs, and therefore that firms would not lobby for it as it would not be in their economic interests.

The Political CSR literature argues that corporate engagement in communicative action to develop non-binding voluntary rules and private governance mechanisms (and perhaps by extension action to help develop binding conventional 'hard-law' public policy governance mechanisms) can be accounted for with reference to global governance shifts relating to economic globalization, and need for MNCs to retain legitimacy in absence of global regulator. But this literature acknowledges the question of why some organisations engage in such 'bright side' responses to the governance gaps created by globalization (communicative action), while others respond with 'dark side' exploitative responses (instrumental action) to the same phenomena is a question in need of further empirical research.

The Responsible Leadership literature explores this further. Maak *et al* have argued that 'bright side' responses to global governance gaps are more likely when senior executives display integrative Responsible Leadership styles, influenced by a 'Social Welfare' value orientation, and 'dark side' responses are more likely when senior executives display instrumental Responsible Leadership styles, influenced by a 'Fiduciary Duty' value orientation. Although connections have not previously been made in the literature, this thesis proposes that there is a useful connection to be made between Maak *et al*'s two categories of value orientation, and the literature on liberal and republican notions of citizenship.

The Deliberative Lobbying literature provides a framework with a set of criteria to judge how far any particular example of lobbying activity might be judged helpful in advancing social welfare, but does not offer further insight into the

question of what might account for the occurrence of this phenomenon, why some organisations might engage in deliberative lobbying rather than conventional lobbying, other than making reference to Scherer et al's existing arguments around the shift to globalization and the need to maintain legitimacy by alternative means.

Thus, this thesis argues that these literatures provide many useful points of departure for understanding this phenomenon, but do not offer a comprehensive account, it remains under-theorised. In this context, what can an examination of the empirical case of corporate lobbying for the SDGs contribute to constructing an understanding of how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities that builds on and further develops the multiple points of departure for understanding this already suggested in the existing literature? Following critical hermeneutical principles, this thesis aims to construct an understanding of what could account for this phenomenon that can be argued for, based on examination of a particular set of data, or texts, but that remains provisional and still open to doubt and critique. While some suspicion of the interpretation that will be advanced here must be retained, nevertheless, it is argued that it is useful in furthering theory and practice.

To address this second research question, the thesis will examine the narratives people involved in the action construct to account for it. Specifically, a number of sub-questions will be examined. Two principle sub-questions will be examined in chapters six and seven. First, chapter six will examine the sub-question: what narratives do people involved in the corporate lobbying activity construct to account for the action they are involved in? And second, chapter seven will examine the sub-question: what narratives do people involved construct to account for what influenced the action of senior executives?

Chapter six is focused on the question: what narratives do people involved in the corporate lobbying activity construct to make sense of the action they are involved in? In so doing, the chapter examines a range of further sub-questions: How far do individuals involved reference any of the themes in the literature, such as short-term profit-motive related organisational interests, governance

gaps stemming from globalization, longer-term legitimacy related organisational interests, the significance of senior executive Responsible Leadership style and themes relating to Fiduciary Duty or Social Welfare value orientations and liberal or republican notions of citizenship? To what extent do different senior executive value orientations, or intersubjectively-shaped constructions of the good aimed at, become articulated in their justifications for their involvement in the action? If participants in the process do attest to the significance of orientation of senior executives, in what particular ways is the role of senior executives significant?

Chapter seven will then focus on the question: what narratives do people involved construct to account for what influenced the action of senior executives? Drawing on Ricoeur's proposal that motivated action is guided, as far as a self is able, by the desire to act in alignment with life plans and an imaginative horizon of ideals of the good, itself in turn shaped by intersubjectively-shaped meanings encountered and critically appropriated by others and otherness over a lifetime (proposed in section 3.2 as a sixth principle of a critical hermeneutics approach – the operation of otherness through the self), chapter seven then deliberately seeks to examine narratives constructed to account for encounters with others and otherness which may have influenced what was being aimed at in the action performed by senior executives.

Chapter seven will conclude with a discussion reflecting on how we might interpret these narratives examined in chapters six and seven, and what meaning we might understand from them, using a critical hermeneutics approach to consider both trusting and critical interpretations.

To perform this analysis, chapters six and seven will analyse transcripts of interviews with individuals involved in the corporate lobbying activity representing companies. Specifically, the two chapters will draw on an analysis of the 57 interviews conducted as part of this study with executives involved in the corporate lobbying processes investigated here. These interviews comprised interviews with 45 individuals (some were interviewed more than once) representing 30 different companies, including 13 CEOs or chairpersons, seven Business Unit heads or equivalent senior executive, and 25 individuals

occupying government affairs, corporate sustainability or other equivalent roles. As discussed in chapter three, following Herda (Herda, 1999), data analysis was guided by the theoretical framework of 'initial categories' developed from pre-existing theory and literature. Areas of pre-existing theory that informed data analysis are those discussed above: the literature on CPA, the linked literatures of Political CSR and Responsible Leadership, the literature on liberal and republican concepts of citizenship, and Ricoeur's theory of what shapes the ethical intention in motivated action in general, and what shapes participation in the communicative mode in deliberative processes to develop collective rules in particular.

6.2. Accounting for corporate lobbying action for more activist public policy interventions to advance sustainable development: furthering collective and organisational interests at the same time

The narratives constructed by individuals involved in the corporate lobbying activities were marked by a number of repeating themes, many of which displayed some connection with the 'initial categories' identified in the existing theory on CPA, Political CSR, Responsible Leadership and liberal and republican notions of citizenship. These narratives exhibited many of the themes already offered in the various literatures discussed above as potential starting points for understanding how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities, but none of these narratives straightforwardly aligned with the accounts in one or other of these literatures. Rather, a feature of these narratives constructed by individuals involved was a complex interweaving of many of these themes at the same time. One notable feature of virtually all of the narratives constructed was the active combination of collective public interest and commercial self-interest (both short-term profit-related and longer-term legitimacy-related) arguments to account for the occurrence of the action, either in equal measure, or with one or other given greater precedence. Additional themes discussed in further detail below include the significance of the need to address governance gaps created by globalisation, the organisational benefits of constructive engagement in

policymaking processes generally, the organisational benefits of more activist public policy interventions in the economy by governments, and the significance of senior executive orientations in accounting for the occurrence of this lobbying activity. Across all these themes, the combination of furthering collective public interest and organisational interest can be seen.

6.2.1. The need to address governance gaps created by globalization

A pressing need to address governance gaps created by globalization formed a key theme in many of the narratives individuals involved in the corporate lobbying activity constructed in research interview situations to account for the occurrence of the action. The combination of collective public interest and commercial or organisational self-interest was a common feature of these narratives.

A number of the individuals involved cited public good arguments to justify the time they spent engaging in the process to develop the SDGs, constructing narratives arguing that economic globalization had led to a malfunctioning global governance system, which for everyone's benefit needed to be fixed. Many also combined these kinds of narratives with the requirement to address global governance gaps for the advancement of organisational interests. One such kind of narrative was that businesses could not thrive for long in societies that were failing. Another was that organisational benefits, such as improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy, could be achieved just from constructive engagement in policymaking processes. A third kind of narrative cited direct organisational requirements for and benefits from more activist public policy intervention in the economy, speaking of growth opportunities created, as well as both operational and competitive risks addressed. Thus, the narratives constructed by actors involved in the lobbying activity reference (to greater or lesser degrees) both a desire to advance profits for shareholders and a desire to advance the collective public interest and the interests of all stakeholders. If just the former were referenced, these narratives would be consistent with liberal citizenship assumptions that social welfare is best advanced through the pursuit of self-interest and Fiduciary Duty value orientation assumptions that self-interest is best pursued through advancing

shareholder interests. But interest in advancing shareholder interests alongside the interests of other stakeholders and other groups in society is more consistent with Social Welfare value orientation assumptions of the perceived duty to create long-term value for all stakeholders, and the republican citizenship assumptions that sometimes social welfare is best advanced through collective action through the state, and acting counter to one's own private interests and desires.

A number of quotes that illustrate these themes are discussed below.

6.2.1.1. The responsibility of business to help address governance gaps, because of its increased power

A number of the individuals involved cited public good arguments to justify the time they spent engaging in the process to develop the SDGs, constructing narratives arguing that economic globalization had led to a malfunctioning global governance system, which for everyone's benefit needed to be fixed. Some argued that businesses needed to participate in processes to develop policy responses because their increased power as a result of globalization meant that effective solutions could not be formulated without their engagement, and that made it their responsibility to participate to find effective solutions, even if that meant increased public policy intervention in the economy which could lead to increased costs.

The CEO of a Europe-based consumer goods multinational argued that the post-national constellation and global governance challenges required business leaders to engage in global governance processes for the public good:

“So what is important is, in my opinion, ... why I said yes [to participate in this process] was: the political system is broken, the institutional system is broken, and it's very difficult to get any agreements, meaningful agreements on a global level.” (Interviewee 3)

This CEO argued that the policy frameworks developed in the past for holding business accountable (such as shareholder value and financial accounting frameworks developed in the United States) were no longer fit for purpose, and

that the MDGs had provided a better kind of framework, and that was why they were participating in processes to develop a successor framework:

“What is the global framework that people can hold themselves accountable to? And the US has played historically a role by putting out a global framework of ways of doing business, and working up the financial markets. Some people are now starting to doubt if that was a good framework or a sustainable framework or not. So all these questions are good topic for a speech but at the end of day what is the glue that binds us together globally? That's the Millennium Development Goals. So that to me is a key driver and motivator and the reason that business needs to play a part... we're smack in the middle of that. That's why I'm doing this.” (Interviewee 3)

Another CEO argued that it was just the right thing to do for businesses to contribute to processes to develop global rules (as well as also noting that their participation was linked to the request of a peer in the context of a professional network):

“We believe it's good for [our company] to be a contributor to these kinds of initiatives. Private business has a role to play. It's an ambitious statement, but it's my inherent belief... I am linked to Paul Polman for two years in an initiative called the Dutch Sustainable Growth Coalition, that is formed of the eight top companies in the Netherlands. The eight top companies came together because they believe the world should change and that companies should be more sustainable, and they want to shape, share and stimulate. So that's the second reason, I have that connection to Paul, and he asked me to come.” (Interviewee 6)

A C-suite executive at a pharmaceutical company justified their engagement in public good terms, referencing the collective challenges arising from the combination of both the governance gaps and the increased MNC power created by the transition to globalisation and the post-national constellation, which combined to create a responsibility to act to advance the public good:

“In most of the cases if the company works according to law, legal regulations in Europe, that is 90% of the rent to be paid. But there are a lot of countries, in the developing world, where legality is far away from legitimacy and where voluntary rules and regulations come in, voluntary codes of conduct come in, in the sense of using standards that are okay at home, and I see no reason not to use the same standards abroad... it is the responsibility of those who know more, who have more and who have more power to get something done to help out and in this regard. And certainly, if you have a corporate engagement and if you make

money in those countries, to go grow their markets too, then your responsibility is higher than just selling products and staying with the law.” (Interviewee 43)

The CEO of a chemicals company similarly constructed a narrative justifying the investment of time and resources in the Post-2015 process in terms of the increased power of business created by the post-national constellation, and the responsibility that created to try to help address public issues:

“At the end of the day, it is responsibility. I mean, the business has the power nowadays... So once I became CEO ideas grow: you only work yourself? or you work for society? So this responsibility... And the other thing is, at the end of the day, a better world, which cannot be achieved in a year, a better world at the end of the day is also better for our company, and if we do not contribute to that, like many say: ‘well, let others make a better world and we profit from that’, er – no, we need to go do it. I have a strong responsibility feeling in this.” (Interviewee 44)

A corporate sustainability professional at the same company constructed a similar narrative regarding their CEO’s thinking:

“He feels very strongly about the role of business in society. He feels we have different responsibilities now, businesses have a bigger economic footprint than they did in the past. Take Apple for example, it has a footprint bigger than many countries. With that kind of greater influence comes responsibility, the present economic model was formed in a different era.” (Interviewee 13)

One government affairs representative similarly justified their time participating in the process to develop the Business Manifesto with the argument that the governance gaps and increased power of MNCs in the post-national constellation placed a responsibility on business to help shape the right kind of regulation:

“In my previous job I had worked with the Millennium Development Goals, but not in a business context... It’s funny because there was an intergovernmental organization where I thought I could make a change. And then I realized when I was there you can only make a change if you are at the power side. And I think the power side is the company itself, or the companies in general. So even at a government level... NGO [or] intergovernmental level... you can do as much as you can, but the real power, because there is economic power, is with the companies. So change the world – wanting to make the world a better place and to eradicate poverty etc., there is an enormous role for big multinationals.

And that is something that not all multinationals and not all people that work in multinationals do realize. Of course, we have an enormous influence when it comes to legislations, for example, if we want. Of course, as a company you choose whether you would, yes or no, like to influence any legislation, but in the end by having such a big economic power you will influence it in any case. So that is the reason why I said to my colleagues, we should participate in the Business Manifesto also to have courage to show that we want to participate and we want to make the world know that this is important to us and that also other companies could follow then, because they look at us, because we're a big player, that they can see, 'oh, it's important for [our company] so we should do the same'." (Interviewee 31)

6.2.1.2. The need for a healthy and stable operating environment for business to thrive in the long term

As noted above, a number of the individuals involved cited public good arguments to justify the time they spent engaging in the process to develop the SDGs, constructing narratives arguing that economic globalization had led to a malfunctioning global governance system, which for everyone's benefit needed to be fixed. But many also combined these kinds of narratives with narratives arguing that there were reasons why addressing global governance gaps helped advance organisational interests and therefore owner or shareholder interests. One such kind of narrative was that if governance gaps created by globalization in the long term led to widespread decline in quality of life, ultimately businesses could not thrive.

One C-suite executive, for example, heading a regional business unit of a consumer goods MNC justified their engagement in terms of the alignment of public interest and commercial interest, arguing that governance gaps created by globalisation that caused quality of life in wider society to decline were contrary to the long-term interests of businesses:

"Very simply, the assumption that business can continue to operate with callous regard to what happens in the rest of society is flawed. Business will not be able to remain in business, and one of our former chairmen, many, many decades ago, used a fabulous phrase. It says: 'You cannot have a successful business in a failing society.' Now, if you understand that and you believe in that then... you must see... it is in your business interests to make sure that this isn't the case, and therefore... for a variety of reasons this makes just good sense." (Interviewee 1)

One chairperson of a consumer goods multinational similarly linked public and organisational interests. Their narrative justified their engagement in the Post-2015 process to develop successor goals to the MDGs by arguing that the transition to a post-national constellation in the 1990s had meant that global challenges could not be resolved by governments alone, but required engagement by business leaders as well.

“I think globalisation which has accelerated, I mean, globalisation existed since human kind exists, but it has really accelerated in the 90's and then the first decade of the 21st Century, has also brought with it the globalisation of social issues and one of those issues is certainly water and that was the reason why... I'm chairing [a working group on water]... and what we came to the conclusion very early on is that a big global social issue like water, for example, cannot be really solved by anybody alone. It demands a concerted effort of everybody. It needs clearly Government, it needs NGO's, but it also needs the initiatives and the knowledge and also the financial support of the private sector... I think it's important that the private enterprises bring in the input to deal with this process... its input, its vision, how we feel that those millennium goals can become something, the treatment of which can be realised in a relatively fixed period, because that's really important when we have these goals, otherwise if these goals are not reachable, they soon become just a smokescreen, but I thought that the input of the private sector would help to make those goals achievable goals and that's basically it.” (Interviewee 16)

This individual went on to say that the public interest was aligned with commercial interest – key issues relating to the company, in this case water and nutrition, needed effective long-term public governance if the company were to thrive in the long term, referencing a sense of obligation to further shareholder interests was guiding their action:

“For a businessman that wherever he or she engages herself, it has to be relevant for the company. I mean you know this is not philanthropy. I mean if we get involved in those things it's because we also have a clear interest for the company we are representing. I mean I'm using my shareholders' remuneration for me in order to do this work, so I have also responsibility why I'm doing that. I am exposing my company also in public to certain issues, so there must be a clear interest also for the company that you are representing, that's the first thing, and not something which has nothing to do, I mean... I don't know what, in creating golf courses or something like this, okay, this has nothing to do. If I say rural development, water and nutrition, because those are areas where we have a direct interest from [our company] without any doubt and that allows me and justifies vis-à-vis this engagement, also time

engagement, money engagement that there is vis-à-vis my shareholders.” (Interviewee 16)

6.2.1.3. Organisational benefits of constructive engagement in policymaking processes: improved stakeholder relationships, reputation and legitimacy

A number of the narratives constructed by individuals involved in the process shared themes combining the importance of addressing collective challenges for public good reasons with the organisational benefits of constructive engagement with policymakers generally, regardless of the policy outcomes ultimately achieved. In these narratives, themes of the potential to strengthen trust in relations with key stakeholders, and improve reputation and legitimacy, toward the end of advancing owner or shareholder interests, all featured strongly.

A senior executive at a financial / professional services firm, for example, constructed a narrative justifying their engagement both in terms their personal desire to see the SDGs improve the situation in Africa, and the commercial brand and business development benefits of their company being associated with having played a role in having helped improve the situation in Africa. Commenting specifically on the outcomes they hope to see achieved as a result of the action they are participating in, they stated they would like to see both countries in Africa become more developed for the sake of the people who lived there, and the standing of the brand of their company improved in those countries:

“One is I see a lot of these markets, in Africa specifically because that's my background, become much stronger, much bigger, much more developed, because of this effort, or because this effort contributed to that. That would be very, very powerful. Number two, if [our company] is seen in the market as a leader in creating those markets – so what an opportunity for us to be the brand that has built those markets with our clients, that's also a huge success.” (Interviewee 27)

The chair of a European textiles company similarly constructed a narrative arguing that their participation in policy processes had a commercial goal which was about building the sustainability brand of their company with influential

stakeholders, as well as a public interest goal which was about inspiring other companies to engage in sustainability:

“We, ourselves, as a company, have put long-term objectives. We have said, in 2020, our whole company should be cradle-to-cradle. Cradle-to-cradle is the holy grail of the circular economy... This is a big agenda for us. I am getting a lot of speaking opportunities... in order to get as many CEOs to embrace this concept, right? Paul Polman is doing that as well. We believe, as I said, those companies who put sustainability, or better cradle-to-cradle, at the centre of the business values will be the winners of tomorrow. And I like to be seen by anybody – by governments, by NGOs, by other companies – as a front runner because it's good for my business, because if they need carpets, like this, they know where to get it... there is a business reason but there is also an inspiration reason.”
(Interviewee 4)

A corporate sustainability representative at an MNC in the education sector constructed a narrative justifying the company's investment of time and resources in the Post-2015 process in terms of the fact that the company's business – education – was a public good, and operating globally in the post-national constellation with associated governance gaps meant that brought sensitivities and in order to mitigate those sensitivities, the company needed to engage in global policy processes and build strong, trusting relationships with key stakeholders:

“We needed to have better relationships with Government, with NGO's, with research institutions and other stakeholders, and that we needed to think through how we did that... I think it was very much aligned with the story I just told you about the nature of the company changing, being more consumer-facing, growing as a company, becoming the biggest education company and some of the opportunities that presents, but also some of the challenges and risks. You know, we're not a BP, we don't have the same kind of exposure from a brand perspective, to you know risk, we're not extracting things out of the ground. But there are some issues when you are dealing with providing what many regard as a public goods. So those are real issues. I think they're going to grow as we become more known and so that was I think the real thinking behind why we needed to be more out there as a company, get more engaged, build these types of relationships and be more prepared.” (Interviewee 14)

The narrative they constructed also argued for the commercial value of the insight gained through participation in policymaking processes into the likely direction of future public policy:

“The other reality of it is that these are the areas – whatever we end up with as in SDGs – where governments are going to send their money... we work with governments in countries to improve education systems, we keep an eye out on what they're looking at to fund and how we can plug into that. So there's a real business insight into what the future of education could look like once these things get rolled out. And I think that's really valuable for us a company expanding into particularly emerging markets.” (Interviewee 14)

6.2.1.4. Organisational benefits of more activist public policy intervention in the economy: growth opportunities, changing the rules to enable companies to do well by doing good, mitigation of operational risks, mitigation of competitive risks

Many of the narratives constructed by individuals involved in the process accounted for the occurrence of the action in terms of both the public need for more public policy intervention to address governance gaps in order to advance sustainable development, and the direct commercial benefits such public policy interventions could have, in terms of helping increase the size of markets for a company's products and services, helping make 'doing the right thing' commercially attractive, addressing operational problems created by governance gaps relating to sustainability that were threatening the company's financial position, and addressing the competitive risks that made it difficult for companies to do the right thing, all of which could help further the interests of the company's owners or shareholders.

Growth opportunities: Changing the rules to enable companies to do well by doing good

A number of individuals representing companies involved in the process to develop the SDGs talked of policy interventions that would simultaneously help address sustainable development challenges and increase the size of the available market for the company's products and services. Some constructed narratives more directly in terms of seeking to achieve commercial benefits through influencing policy, others talked more in terms of seeking to change the rules in order to create the market logics that would enable companies to do the right thing and make the contribution to tackling sustainability challenges that they wanted to make. Across these narratives different individuals focused on

different aspects of policy interventions: some focused on the value of specific issues being referenced in the goals and how this could influence public policy priorities, some focused on public-private partnerships, and some on the use of both market-based and traditional policy instruments to affect pricing (carbon taxes etc).

A corporate sustainability professional at a telecoms MNC, for example, constructed a narrative justifying the investment of time and resources in engaging with policymakers in terms of how more active government policy on climate change (such as the use of various policy instruments to put a higher price on carbon) could help increase the market for their products and services which were more carbon efficient than alternatives:

“We've made a number of calls on government... we're starting to engage a bit more deeply in the area of external political advocacy... we recognize that for some of these things we actually do need governments to take action and step in and create the right policy framework to move towards a low-carbon economy... Because of the nature of our business and the fact that we sell products and services that are inherently low-carbon or are carbon-abating we recognize that there's actually an incentive for our business to push on governments to speed up the transition to a low-carbon society because it will actually drive demand for our products and services.” (Interviewee 25)

A government affairs representative from one consumer goods company justified their involvement in the process purely in commercial interest terms: if “hygiene” were to be explicitly referenced in the SDGs, that would give their company greater leverage to persuade different governments to invest in public health programmes that could drive sales of soap.

“I'm after one singular thing in the 2015 process and it's very linked to my business... if I don't have the word *hygiene* in there, being a health and hygiene company, that's going to affect the way in which I can push governments to drive sanitation, hygiene and handwashing programmes. I make [a particular brand of] soap. That's the only reason I can quantify or qualify going to that meeting... I can just back-track it very easily to how successful can my Pakistani business be in selling soap? And if I can say that it's in the sustainable development goals then I've got a hope of convincing the Pakistani government to have a hygiene programme. If they have a hygiene programme then my Pakistani business can do it. But I guess my point to you is that I have to be able –

however thin that red thread is I have to be able to directly correlate it to my business.” (Interviewee 21)

A corporate sustainability professional at a pharmaceuticals MNC constructed a similar narrative focused on the value of certain issues being referenced in the goals, but with more of a combination of public and commercial benefit. They discussed the company’s ‘shared value’ strategic goals aimed at deriving business value from helping address public issues (Porter & Kramer, 2006, 2011), and the significance of UN goals in helping precipitate national level government programmes. This company had been pushing for the inclusion of a reference to non-communicable diseases in the SDGs (a topic not included in the MDGs) as a means for initiating conversations with national-level policymakers about developing national action plans for tackling diabetes:

“We actually joined forces and worked with the UN system to pass a resolution on diabetes... to ensure focus of the UN system on diabetes. Because traditionally the UN system has been focusing on... humanitarian assistance and aid, and... infectious diseases like malaria, HIV, tuberculosis and so on. But what we could see from the statistics was that, as it is today, you actually have more people dying also in developing countries from non-communicable diseases where diabetes is the fourth biggest one. So we worked together on passing that resolution, and it was passed, and now we have a world diabetes day on 14th November... And there was a big high-level meeting and you have all nations signing onto it. This doesn't mean things will happen in each country, but it definitely gives you an opportunity as a business to go in together with your other interested parties to have conversations with national governments on what are you actually then doing on diabetes. Sitting down, saying; ‘OK, would you be happy to work with us on making a diabetes plan for your country? Identifying what are your challenges, what are the solutions to dealing with the challenges in your country.’... There is still this scrutiny of you, sales people saying: ‘Why are you working with the UN system? It's got nothing to do with us.’ ... So this was a very good case, the UN resolution on diabetes, to say: ‘OK, here we give you – we are part of creating a tool together with the UN system that will help you also having that conversation in each country or market.’” (Interviewee 39)

Putting more emphasis on the need for public policy intervention in markets to change the rules in order to unlock greater corporate contribution toward advancing sustainable development, a corporate sustainability professional at a chemicals company constructed a narrative arguing that the objective of engaging with governments on public policy was to change the policy

frameworks to create the structural conditions that would allow businesses to thrive financially from helping to address public issues. Here this individual constructs a narrative to account for the value of policy interventions that increase the potential commercial returns from the provision of products and services that help address global challenges (both through use of public funds through public-private partnerships and use of carbon taxes and other policy instruments that make problematic goods and services more expensive and more helpful goods and services better value in comparison):

“That's very simple: (a) it's a very strong personal belief [of our CEO], but (b) it's also believed that of course for our company, it could be a differentiator, and it could be something where we could do well by doing good, and if we can set our environment to reward us and other front-running companies for this type of behaviour, that would of course make a major shift possible in society. The capitalistic system is not bad, but we need to review the conventions that are part of the capitalistic system and come then to a responsible capitalistic system. And so one of his [our CEO's] pleas is it [the SDGs framework] meets in the end that our TBL [triple bottom line] performance needs to come back in the valuation of our company and of other companies so the stock market will recognise it because then we have built in the right incentive for companies to start doing this. And one of the ways to do that is looking into changing, for instance, the tax system. We understand that Governments need to raises taxes to pay for what they have to deliver to society, but why do they still raise taxes on labour and not on resources? And so he [our CEO] wants to see that very fundamental shift to take place, that's why we are so active in the World Economic Forum, and last week he and I visited the Secretary General and... other high ranking people in the UN, to make sure that we give our message on: 'We believe that things need to change, and we count on you Secretary General that you play a role in that.'" (Interviewee 13)

This individual expanded further:

“We are good in food so we know a lot about nutrition. We are good in climate solutions, if you look at renewable energy solutions, if you look at energy savings, that sort of thing, that's what we're good at, so that's the sort of things. If you look at renewable resources, so making materials from renewable rather than [depletable] resources, that's the sort of things that we're good at and that's the sort of things that I can bring to the table... we see the business opportunity, we see the contribution we can make. That's what we see, both a responsibility that we have as a large corporate as well as the opportunity that we can create out of engaging. So it has to always be that combination of the two... we start to see a new paradigm coming on and if we shape that paradigm in a direction that it will actually be creating a new environment, then we

believe that then much more people will come on board because it will create new business opportunities... we are very happy to see that there's now a lot of discussion around carbon pricing because that will create a new opportunity, that will create a new business environment. So we need to have some systemic change to get many more companies on board.” (Interviewee 13)

A corporate sustainability professional at an electronics MNC discussed the company’s shared value strategic goals aimed at deriving business value from helping address public issues, and the role of public policy in helping achieve them:

“[Our company] is predominantly in health tech, healthcare transformations, so that's about 45% of the company, and about 30%, 35% of the company is in lighting and the rest is in personal care. When you're in healthcare and when you're in lighting very often your customer is a government, [whether it's] national [or] you deal with the minister of health or you deal with mayors or infrastructure or the department of energy to either deal with climate change or energy security or energy efficiency. So we look at markets and we look at our transformations we see in healthcare and in energy and climate, and the SDGs are very, very relevant for us.” (Interviewee 34)

This individual discussed the way that the MDGs in the past and the SDGs in the future would influence public spending, and the precise formulation of the SDGs could influence whether those funds would be spent in ways that could enable their business to make a bigger contribution to helping address public issues in ways that would drive commercial return at the same time. This individual discussed the way Overseas Development Aid (ODA) spending was influenced by the MDGs, and in relation to health, the precise formulation of the MDGs prioritised investment in, for example vaccines, but did not prioritise investment in wider health system strengthening. The aspiration with the SDGs was to mobilise blended finance by using public funds to leverage private funds which could provide a larger source of investment in public goods, in this case in healthcare in developing countries, which would ultimately mean more funds would be available to invest in healthcare technology products and services they offered:

“What you saw was happening in healthcare was a lot of emerging markets and developing countries said, well, healthcare, I'm not going to budget for it in my national budget, the NGOs will do it. They've got the

money. So therefore you see that health-system strengthening – there was really no funding for it. And now you saw, the last couple of years, that that's starting to happen, and people are starting to say, look, we need health-system strengthening, we need infrastructure. But it's been very difficult to finance it because the World Bank didn't really have the right kind of expertise in financing those kind of activities, and the Global Fund, all these kind of funds were not directed at health-system strengthening. And a lot of the ODA and the bilateral aid also wasn't looking at that. Now, with the SDGs, it's become holistic... Not only ODA is changing, private equity is becoming much more important... One of the things which you see... private equity... investing in healthcare is that they don't want to take the first loss, they want to de-risk their investments, and they need a party to take the first-loss guarantee, to take the first loss. And ODA, technical assistance, is the perfect tool for that. So you see blending mechanisms where at the bottom layer the first loss is taken by the government, and then private equity. Now we're seeing that the agenda says: 'you guys [shall] invest holistically in healthcare-system strengthening, governments will make financing available for that, bringing the private equity as a catalyst for generating more funds.' (Interviewee 34)

This individual also discussed how changing public policy frameworks guiding public procurement could help the company address public issues and drive commercial returns in the process. The same individual offered a similar story on the societal and business value of changing regulations on public procurement rules to take into account quality and long-term value and total cost of ownership, rather than prioritising lowest up front cost. In the case of public procurement of street lighting, using LED lighting could reduce electricity consumption by 40-80%, but LED bulbs are more expensive, and so the current formulation of public procurement regulations in many countries, which require city authorities to prioritise lowest up front cost, prevents cities from switching to LEDs for street lighting.

Mitigation of operational risks

Some participants in the process to develop the SDGs constructed narratives to account for the occurrence of the action in terms of the organisation's need to address operational problems created by governance gaps relating to sustainability that were threatening the company's financial position.

For example, a corporate sustainability professional at a consumer goods MNC justified their investment of time and resources into engagement with

policymakers in terms of the alignment between the need to resolve public issues and address business risks – in this case relating to water stress. The narrative constructed here begins with a company experiencing operational challenges due to water shortages which affect its profitability, leading senior executives to conclude that the solution to their problems lay in persuading farmers to use water more efficiently. Water is currently so cheap that farmers have no economic incentive to invest in drip irrigation technology to use water more efficiently. This situation led the company to conclude that (in addition to farmer education programmes) the most effective route to persuading farmers to use water more efficiently is to persuade governments to introduce policy instruments that increase the price of water, so that it becomes in the farmers' economic interests to invest in drip irrigation technology in order to use less water and therefore reduce their costs associated with water use, making more water available to the public at large and the company in particular:

“I think there's been a realization by a lot of companies, certainly including [our company], that all of the sustainability methods that you've pressed on with and taken sometimes to their limits in terms of, for example, resource efficiency within your operations, in our case in a sense inside our [fence line], inside breweries and bottling plants, are nowhere near sufficient responses to the specific business risks that they are supposed to be responding to. So if you take the example of water, that's a classic case of, we've driven up our water efficiency to world-class levels now, and that's the bit that our technical people are very good at, because you just set some targets and they will expend some capital and they will just deliver on those targets. There's some really impressive water efficiency across all of our operations. Then you realize that in practice, when you look at the water footprint, it's rarely – it's always at least 98% of the water in the river basins that we're dependent on is used elsewhere, obviously mostly by agriculture. So you realize that although you're pushing yourself to your absolute limits as a company in terms of your own water efficiency, the problem of water stress, which is a real business risk for us, lies outside there, and the control of that is in the hands of other actors. And then we've got therefore into partnerships beyond the fence line, trying to work with local stakeholders including in particular farmers and how do we deal with this shared risk of water together. That involves local partnerships to, say, conserve a river basin and change the agricultural practices that we will sometimes help fund. But the policy framework ultimately determines or shapes that. So that's the point at which you realize that if we're serious about managing those shared risks, like resource security, we have to get involved in shaping the policy and regulatory framework on that, so that takes you well beyond operation efficiencies and into the policy arena.” (Interviewee 19)

A corporate sustainability professional at a financial/professional services firm similarly justified their investment of time and resources into engagement with policymakers in terms of the alignment between the need to resolve public issues and address business risks. For the insurance industry, global challenges such as climate change bring a higher chance of the need for insurance payouts, and therefore higher costs. Public policy action to address these kinds of global challenges would therefore help lower costs. Additionally, the financial resources to fund insurance payouts are generated through investments, and global challenges such as climate change present risks to long term value creation and investment returns, also threatening the insurance business:

“So insurance actually has an alignment with the public interest, the public good, at that point, and has helped shape it. I think there are sustainability risks – macro sustainability risks – which affect the actuarial assumptions and therefore shrink the addressable market in price terms. There are also practical consequences from, for example, increased flooding, which also shrink your addressable market because you don't want to underwrite something unless you get reimbursed for it but you don't want to underwrite something that's being flooded three times a month. [You] also have sustainability risk to the value – because the way insurance works is that people pay a premium, that premium gets invested in various different instruments, so when somebody needs to draw down their insurance – they have a claim – at a certain point, if there are enough claims, some of that investment needs to be realized so that you can then return money. A mutual environment as of old would still invest in the capital markets. There's nothing new here. People don't tend to understand, though, that insurance invests in the markets, but when it does invest, as an asset owner, insurance companies are significantly asset owners. Broadly the same as pension schemes in the UK. And most of the civil society debate has overlooked that. Not all. And that's changing too. So my personal fear, and this is a professional concern of [our company] too, is that the underlying asset base has a value at risk to unsustainable development. And so you've got your insurance market potentially shrinking, or certainly changing, and you've got the value of the assets that you run certainly at risk too. So these are uncomfortable conundrums for insurance. And over the coming four or five decades some of the scenarios – plausible scenarios about climate change – you have significant strategic risks to not just insurance but to many, many sectors. Ultimately that's why the value is at risk.”
(Interviewee 36)

Mitigation of competitive risks

Some individuals involved in the SDGs process constructed narratives to account for the occurrence of this action in terms of the public need to address governance gaps in order to advance sustainable development, the organisational desire to help achieve this, and the consequent need for public policy interventions to mitigate competitive risks that could arise from this if other companies did not act the same way.

For example, one corporate sustainability professional at a chemicals MNC discussed the company's shared value strategic goals aimed at deriving business value from helping address public issues, and the role of public policy in helping achieve them. This narrative focused on the need to remove certain harmful chemicals from products, that doing so increased costs, and if one company did this and others did not, the company doing the right thing could lose market share to competitors, a situation that could be mitigated if governments intervened with public policy that banned the use of the harmful chemical meaning no company could use it, removing the competitive threat:

“We understand very well that we have a big challenge, how can nine billion people on this planet have a decent life in terms of preserving human development, welfare and natural capital. We call our strategy for this reason [corporate strategy name]. We are optimists, we say this planet, we do have the resources, the fresh water, the [fibre] to ensure that nine billion people can have a healthy life. However many things have to change... I can give you an example. Yesterday we learnt that the European Union will take another 12 years to regulate chromates in paint because it's so difficult and costly to phase it out. We as the leading company in the world phased out lead pigments, lead chromates, two years ago. For us it's a big disappointment. We would like to say: stop lead pigments! Stop chromates! Because it's part of moving on, making sure we have less hazardous materials in all of our products. But we need a level playing field. We would like the European Union to say: we need cars that emit less than 80, 70, 60 milligrams of CO₂. It's possible. But we would like these changes because that would help us to further move on antifriction and antifouling and lightweight materials.”
(Interviewee 32)

6.3. Accounting for corporate lobbying action for more activist public policy interventions to advance sustainable development: the significance of senior executives

The significance of the personal orientation, or intent, of CEOs and senior executives was frequently attested to in the narratives constructed by the individuals involved in the Post-2015 process. Many corporate representatives involved in the process constructed narratives that attested that, despite convincing macro arguments for their organisations to engage linked to circumstances in the external context, the influence of the CEO or other senior executives was also a significant factor in whether or not the organisation would be lobbying for more ambitious SDGs and more active public policy interventions in the economy. Two particular themes are discussed here in relation to the specific ways in which the role of senior executives was perceived to be significant in these narratives: their role in ‘creating the space’ for this action, and their role in helping establish a general management approach and culture that made such action seem reasonable.

6.3.1. Creating the space

A theme in many of these narratives was that the existence of convincing public interest and commercial interest arguments for such lobbying activity to take place was not sufficient on its own for such action to occur – the presence or absence of the blessing of the CEO was also a significant factor in whether or not the action could actually transpire, and whether or not such a blessing was forthcoming could be more to do with a CEO’s mindset and value orientation than the strength of the public interest or commercial interest arguments.

For example, the corporate sustainability professional at the insurance company spoke about the significance of the orientation of senior leaders for the company’s ability to engage in lobbying for more activist public policy action from governments, referencing the notion of some business leaders as ‘statespeople’, recognising the duty and responsibility to advance the public interest, not just commercial interest:

“It is phenomenally important to have leadership that also get this. I'm phenomenally lucky to have that environment. There have been people – the people here and the people before them, whether it's just by luck or because it's an insurance business or so on – but it has been led by statespeople, statesmen and women. So for example I think [A], who was the previous chief executive of [our company], deserves phenomenal credit for allowing the Rio+20 coalition that we built to form. It's really under his statesmanship that we built that coalition because he understood this. His predecessor, [B] – they were concurrent for a while but [B] called for a discussion with stock-market listing agencies, or the stock-market listing authorities rather, in 2008, to say "We need all the data from companies that list on sustainability issues." ... People that understand if you're in a position of power and influence that you have a duty to society – not just the state – to society to do what you can to deserve the position. I think it's rare to find people in finance, in fund management, who have that perspective.” (Interviewee 36)

The corporate sustainability professional at one of the chemicals companies spoke about the significance of the orientation of the CEO of his business:

“We would be doing some of it anyway. The excellence in which we're doing things comes because we have the chief executive. The [sustainable products] programme I started was sort of grass roots, so I didn't need the chief executive to OK that, to get that sort of thing going. So if you can prove immediate economic benefits then of course it will also fly without a chief executive, because then it's very simple that people will come on board and so the people who are opportunistic will join because there is apparently a good business reason for it. But where we need a more longer-term horizon, then you need more a visionary leadership, then the chief executive comes in. And that's, I think, the difference that we have at [our company]. So we've done a lot of things, we always had a culture where multi-stakeholders were very important... I think heritage is one important element, company culture is one important element, which allowed me to start doing the things which I wanted to do in 2006. And the chief executive will give that additional boost, will be able to accelerate, will be able to bring in much more visionary and longer-term approach and investment... [In terms of policy engagement at the UN level, with a different CEO with a different orientation, the company would have engaged] less. The impact would have been less. I would have been able to contribute to the discussion, but I would not have been able to the extent where we are able to dedicate resources to it as what we are doing right now.” (Interviewee 13)

A government affairs professional at one of the pharmaceutical companies attested to the significance of their CEO's orientation in relation to the company's policy advocacy work:

“I think it's because we have got quite a forward-looking mentality. This is part of our corporate strategy, it's not just something we think of because it's nice to do and it's nice to report in the media, it's something that is really close to [our CEO]'s heart and we have a whole unit dedicated to it, and global team, not to mention lots of other people who are focused on various programmes. So I think, in that sense, it's something that we're always seen as a bit of a thought leader on, so it's almost natural that we would be then seen as a thought leader in a progressive development framework as well.” (Interviewee 8)

The corporate sustainability professional at the electronics MNC constructed a narrative that noted the need for CEO support in order to achieve the resources necessary for the sustained focus required for such policy engagement to be effective:

“Well, it is a lot of effort. You need to make people available to it. It's complex, the SDGs. So if you think that signing in and attending one event – you'd be hopelessly lost and you'd never come back again. So you've got to engage for a longer time and if you haven't got your top management really committed and understanding the strategic relevance of this development for your company probably you won't get anybody available to do that.” (Interviewee 34)

A government affairs professional at one of the consumer goods MNCs constructed a narrative attesting that CEO orientation was one significant factor in organisations engaging in corporate lobbying activities on the SDGs:

“I think that there are some companies that will just join because they see a direct correlation to their interest. There are some that are more – often because of the leaderships of those organizations – take more of a moral stance, or a philanthropic stance. There are others who are nervous of what might not happen, or could happen – not what's *there* but what might be put there in the future. That kind of thing. So more from a risk-management perspective... I actually think we're [at our company] probably quite schizophrenic because I actually think it was probably at least one of those motivators applies to all of us. So there's the moral issue, which is [our CEO] and his own conviction and a personal sense... that this is an important thing to do over and above what is important to [our company]... So there's a little bit of that personal thing... that's a little bit of his own personal passion and his own personal interest. So it does come down to a degree of leadership and a degree of personal energy and commitment and I think that's why I said, when we engaged we engaged partly because... [our CEO] because he's very passionate and drives it, and then of course we also then see... these SDGs are an important catalyst for the future. We have our own

[corporate shared value strategy] and we have our own goals and we know that if we can't persuade others that these things are important then... it will be harder for us to achieve our own goals. So there is a self-interest motive and a business imperative... The profit motive, right? There's a profit motive. Now as I said to you, it's a profit motive that results in a social good." (Interviewee 15)

A C-suite senior executive in one of the pharmaceutical MNCs spoke about the significance of CEO orientation in influencing the level of corporate engagement in corporate sustainability activities generally as well as lobbying on the SDGs in particular, arguing that action occurs when CEOs appear to be influenced by something like a Social Welfare value orientation, and such action does not tend to occur when they are more influenced by a Fiduciary Duty welfare orientation:

"If I learn something in my life then it is that it is very much the most decisive factor for the corporate responsibility or corporate sustainability, performance of a company, is the mindset of the top person. If you have somebody like Paul Polman or if you have somebody like [a previous CEO at the pharmaceutical company] was, you get things done because they know it's the right thing to do. They want to get it done. They want to be part of such a process. They invest their personal time. They invest their personal engagement, and if you have that, we have one kind of a performance. And you have other companies where you have corporate leaders who do not deserve to be called leaders because they have myopic view of what is their responsibility and that is predominantly, if not exclusively, the financial performance in the short term. And if you have the right leaders then everything becomes more easy because – and that's my personal opinion, you can agree or not – I think most of the people in the world, and certainly also in companies, are very opportunistic, in the sense of if they know that kind of message is liked from the top, they will deliver it. And if they get the feeling he couldn't or she couldn't care less, as long as the figures are right, that's what they deliver. So, the decision – the most decisive element is the leadership mindset." (Interviewee 43)

A C-suite senior executive at one of the chemical companies constructed a similar kind of narrative:

"Our company... has been involved, prior to the SDGs, very heavily in the Millennium Development Goals, the MDGs. In fact our now retired chairman, but our chairman at the time, [A], was and is one of the Millennium Development Goal advocates for the secretary-general... One of the key things is that while all these things are nice they can't happen, they won't happen, without clear leadership from the top. So because of our former chairman [A] and our current chairman [B], they

make all this possible. They believe it. If they didn't believe it they wouldn't let people spend time, effort and energy trying to do it. So I think in all these things there has to be clear leadership. I think there has to be a framework or an environment with which they can act and I think that private sector engagement with UN Global Compact... with Roll Back Malaria, with all of these energies, they create that space. So you need leadership, you need a space that you can work... that's really where the things happen within that space. But if your top leadership... if there's not that clear direction, nothing happens... So I think for us, because we had leadership that was outward-looking, and willing to fail, that allowed us to again have that space to take some actions, to try some things... And I think that's unique. I think the leadership of [B] and [A] have created that space for us... But again, it takes a different mindset.” (Interviewee 30)

A corporate sustainability professional the consumer goods MNCs engaging in lobbying on water policy argued that senior executive orientation was more significant cases where the commercial arguments for corporate lobbying were harder to quantify:

“Particularly some things that are in the long-term interests of the business but you could never quantify, you need that personal commitment at the top to take you over the line with those kinds of things. In a sense I think that's important when you get to the – on human rights, for example, it's – beyond the basic compliance which of course everyone has to do, taking human rights to a higher level. It's quite difficult to frame that in terms of a specific return on time invested, frankly. But of course you have a lot of people just saying, of course, we just have to do this because it's the right thing to do.” (Interviewee 19)

The significance of the CEO and their orientation was also attested to in narratives that spoke of the absence of senior executive support. Three such cases are discussed here. Two of the organisations that were interviewed initially participated in discussions to develop the Business Manifesto, but subsequently chose not to become a signatory to the document. In one of these cases, the narrative constructed by a C-suite senior executive from a financial/professional services company accounted for their non-participation in the lobbying process with reference to the language in the manifesto and its emphasis on responsibility – this individual argued that they found such language antagonistic towards business, implying their own imaginative horizon and ideas of the good they were aiming towards in their action were closer to a Fiduciary Duty value orientation and Social Welfare:

“The development goals and things like that... I thought their goals were laudable, you won't hear me deny that, but I felt that the references to a manifesto, which sounds vaguely communist, the way that they phrased it like 'businesses have an obligation' and all these other things and ... well maybe businesses should feel empowered to get involved. I definitely wouldn't have wanted to stand up in front of that audience and explain what I do. Some of the language in the packet that I saw seemed – it just sounded vaguely antagonistic towards people in business, like people in business have an obligation and they haven't been fulfilling it, and things like that. Obviously that wasn't stated but I just kind of inferred it as an underlying tone across it. I felt that there were a lot of euphemisms, empowering change and stuff like that. There wasn't a lot of real – I'm very much a numbers person. [Unfortunately] trying to quantify a really emotive topic into numbers is difficult. I understand that. But a lot of it was so airy – like OK, we want to change how the world does things. Well, I don't think that's – I tend to focus more on bite-sized chunks.” (Interviewee 20)

In the other case of non-engagement a corporate sustainability representative from a financial/professional services company that engaged in the Business Manifesto process but did not sign the document constructed a narrative arguing that although the company nominally had a 'shared value' ethos of seeking to help address public issues through core business activities, the language on climate change and market failures and active government policy intervention was too radical for their organisation, and they specifically linked this to the orientation of the CEO and other senior executives. Referring to an early draft of the Business Manifesto, this individual commented:

“With the Manifesto I think it's, in general, philosophically, I think it's good, it's challenging business to take action on lots of issues. They had a lot of really strong points of view in it... It says things like, we need to rethink the whole of the capitalist system, we need to realize that we're going to cause the planet to become extinct. Those are quite strong statements. You have to think about your audience and if you have a more traditional business leader – not everyone's like Paul Polman, so not everyone is really – and I think that that's what we have to think about internally is, are we willing to put our name against something that is so strongly leaning in one direction... not everyone who might be at the top of a business organization might... be entirely comfortable with that... So we're bringing it inside, we're talking to people about it, but it would require a very senior level of support if we were to sign on to it at this stage... We agree that these things are important, we want to see the firm supporting these types of things, but – we've got a global CEO who's running a business and he's not a Paul Polman. This isn't his main sort of eminence agenda around sustainable development goals.” (Interviewee 23)

The government affairs professional at one of the consumer goods MNCs that was involved in the Post-2015 process, but with relatively low engagement, who was previously quoted discussing the company's engagement in purely commercial terms, constructed a narrative linking the unambitious nature of the company's engagement to the orientation of its senior leadership:

“Depending on where your business is in terms of level of maturity and level of engagement this is a slow burn... I cannot put together an ROI or a business case that says you need to do this. You're either going to take a punt and say, you know, I'm not sure why I need this, but every other company has it, so I'm going to do it. Which is pretty much my conversation with [A] who's the CEO. He said to me: 'You know, I think Paul Polman wastes a whole lot of time and takes his eye off the ball of running the business.' And I said: '[A], you may think that... but,' I said, 'you've got to admit that if every other company's got this function and you don't, maybe they know something you don't.' ... the ethos of the company comes down to the guy who runs it... [my CEO has] come up through a very distinct set of circumstances that defines his leadership” (Interviewee 21)

6.3.2. Establishing the management approach and culture

As well as constructing narratives arguing that the presence or absence of the blessing of the CEO was a significant factor in whether or not the action could actually transpire, some participants in the process to develop the SDGs also constructed narratives linking the occurrence of the lobbying action to the role of CEOs in the past helping establish a general management approach and culture that now in the present day made such lobbying action seem reasonable. Such narratives cited the role of former CEOs in shaping cultural norms within an organisation that later meant the logic of lobbying for more ambitious public policy for sustainable development was more natural.

Two companies examined here were previously both part of the same organisation, prior to a de-merger. Representatives of both of those companies spoke about the influence of the former CEO of that company. A corporate sustainable professional at one of the companies commented on the significance of the former CEO in introducing a triple-bottom line perspective, as well as commenting on the significance of another subsequent CEO:

“He [A] was a big part of the story and he was the CEO and that was 15 ago... So I would say he... was the one understanding and bringing into business principles and what-have-you, together with his management group at that point of time, that we had the Triple Bottom Line. But for the past 15 years it has been [B] who has taken it to where it is today and has, for good or worse or however you put that... He was the CEO when we got it into the Articles of Association but also at that point of time, because [A] continued at the board of directors, the chairman of the board of directors, and I think actually the year we got the Triple Bottom Line included in the article of association, that was the last year with [A] on the board. So I would say he... created the frame within the company, it's being organized today and managed today... he definitely created the whole way of thinking that this is something we had to look at.”
(Interviewee 39)

A corporate sustainability professional at the other company similarly commented on the significance of this former CEO, as well as subsequent CEOs:

“We have been engaged in the UN from the very beginning of the Global Compact and... the CEO who stepped down when he demerged the company, [A], [had been on] the Global Compact board for many years. So our commitment to the UN started already back then... This has been an underlying commitment in the company for many, many years, so it's also natural for us to step in and see where can we contribute for this [the SDGs] to be a success, because we see the UN as having fantastic potential and a lot of problems, so there's a lot of things that we can help on. We do see it as the only way forward to create a sustainable world... I think... this C-level commitment, that creates an umbrella that you can work under and that gives you a room to be in when you work with these kind of things, where the link to direct business impact can sometimes be really blurred. So that is of course very important. But another thing that is extremely important is actually that you can make the link to the business case, that you can argue that if we succeed doing this and that together with the UN it will have an impact on policies that will have an impact on markets that will have an impact on our business down a long road, but still you can tell the story and that this is a likely story. Because if we cannot build those cases then this will not survive, not even if the C-level is really enthusiastic... And this is why we have engaged in the sustainable development goals...” (Interviewee 33)

6.4. Conclusion

Chapters six and seven address the research question: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying

activities? To address this research question, the narratives constructed by individuals representing companies involved in the process are being examined.

Chapter six has examined the narratives constructed by people involved in the corporate lobbying activity to account for the action they are involved in. This has found that these narratives are marked by a number of repeating themes, many of which displayed some connection with the 'initial categories' identified in the existing theory on corporate political activity, political CSR and Responsible Leadership.

These narratives exhibited many of the themes already offered in the various literatures discussed above as potential starting points for understanding how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities, but none of these narratives straightforwardly aligned with the accounts in one or other of these literatures. Rather, a feature of these narratives constructed by individuals involved was a complex interweaving of many of these themes at the same time.

The need to address governance gaps features across these narratives, with a number of different rationales given for why these need to be responded to. Protecting organisational legitimacy is mentioned, but so too – paradoxically – is a profit motive. As noted previously, the CPA literature assumes that firms in their lobbying activities are motivated exclusively by their economic interests, that regulation and government intervention increases costs, and therefore that firms would not lobby for it as it would not be in their economic interests. But a case is made in many of these narratives that increased government intervention through public policy could increase profits, even if increasing costs at the same time.

In the narratives offered by participants, the understanding they construct and communicate in interview situations to account for the occurrence of the action they are involved in is neither straightforwardly related to short-term profit motives (to advance the interests of shareholders), longer-term organisational legitimacy concerns (to advance the interests of shareholders with a long-term

horizon), nor concern to act for the public interest (to advance the interests of all stakeholders), but actually a complex mix of all three.

The significance of the orientation of CEOs, chairpersons and other C-suite senior executives is attested to in these narratives. Two particular themes are developed here in relation to the specific ways in which the role of senior executives was perceived to be significant in these narratives: their role in 'creating the space' for this action, and their role in helping establish a general management approach and culture that made such action seem reasonable.

Across these narratives, it is the nature of the senior executive's value orientation (to use Maak's language) or imaginative horizon aiming at (to use Ricoeur's language) that is attested to as being significant in enabling the lobbying action.

Across these narratives references are made to the significance of something akin to a Social Welfare orientation and republican notion of citizenship among senior executives: that action is required because of the duty to advance social welfare for all stakeholders (sometimes explicitly including advancing the interests of shareholders), and that social welfare is sometimes best advanced through power-in-concert through state intervention, rather than just through protecting individual autonomy from state interference. Senior executives that exhibit a sense of the good in their imaginative horizon that is more akin to a Fiduciary Duty value orientation or liberal notion of citizenship are cited as making such lobbying action more difficult. While a case can be made that such lobbying could advance shareholder interests, in these narratives such lobbying action doesn't tend to occur unless there are also senior executives present who have a value orientation or sense of the good where acting in the public interest as much as shareholder interests is seen as the right thing to do.

If the nature of a senior executive's value orientation, or sense of the good aimed at, is significant in constructing an account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities, this invites the question: what particular encounters with others and otherness influence the

development of the imaginative horizon that senior executives aim at when pursuing this kind of action?

To address this question, chapter seven will examine the narratives these same individuals constructed to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives. Chapter seven will then conclude with a discussion reflecting on how we might interpret these empirical findings presented in both chapter six and chapter seven, and what meaning we might draw, or construct, from them, using a critical hermeneutics approach to consider both trusting and critical interpretations, in relation to the overall research question: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities?

7. Empirical Findings Section 2 – Part 2: Executives’ narratives of what encounters with otherness influenced their aims

7.1. Introduction

As noted in the introduction to chapter six, chapters six and seven focus on the research question: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? To address this research question, chapters six and seven examine the narratives constructed by individuals representing companies involved in the process. Chapter six examined the narratives constructed by people involved in the corporate lobbying activity to make sense of the action they are involved in. Chapter seven examines the narratives these individuals then constructed to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives, and then concludes with a discussion reflecting on how we might interpret these narratives and what meaning we might draw, or construct, from them in relation to the overall research question, using a critical hermeneutics approach to consider both trusting and critical interpretations.

In chapter seven the analysis is again, following Herda (Herda, 1999), guided by the theoretical framework of ‘initial categories’ developed from pre-existing theory and literature. Specifically, chapter seven draws on themes from the Responsible Leadership literature and on themes from Ricoeur’s work on the ethical intention.

From the Responsible Leadership literature, the analysis draws on ‘initial categories’ relating to theory arguing that high engagement in political CSR activities is associated with senior executives that display an integrative Responsible Leadership style shaped by a ‘social welfare’ value orientation and low engagement in political CSR activities is associated with an instrumental Responsible Leadership style shaped by a ‘Fiduciary Duty’ value orientation. This thesis has noted connections between these two categories of value

orientation with the concepts of republican and liberal citizenship from the citizenship literature.

Drawing on Ricoeur's proposal that motivated action is guided, as far as a self is able, by the desire to act in alignment with life plans and an imaginative horizon of ideals of the good, itself in turn shaped by intersubjectively-shaped meanings encountered and critically appropriated by others and otherness over a lifetime, chapter seven deliberately seeks to examine narratives constructed to account for such corporate lobbying action for references to encounters with others and otherness which actors cite as having had an influence on what was being aimed at in the action performed by senior executives. In particular, the analysis takes among its starting points Ricoeur's notion of solicitude: the three kinds of encounters with others and otherness that particularly shape the ethical intention to aim 'at the good life with and for others in just institutions', the aim to participate with others in processes in a communicative mode to develop collective rules that each individual can test their own lifeplans against in order to reduce the risk of harm to others from their actions. The three kinds of encounters that shape this kind of aim, Ricoeur proposes, are, first, meanings relating to concern for friends encountered and critically appropriated through relationships with friends and concern for them. Second, meanings relating to sympathy, critically appropriated through encounters with others who are suffering. And third, meanings relating to responsibility, critically appropriated through encounters with others who act as 'Masters of Justice', expressing to the individual a sentiment as to what is right or wrong, issuing commands or demands or instructions as to how they should behave towards others, presenting arguments that it is necessary to behave this way toward others as that is what is required to in order to be able to live well with others, and manage the risk of doing violence to others in pursuing one's own life plans. In all three cases, such meanings become critically appropriated within the self, internalised as the voice of conscience, and become part of the sum of prior meanings that guide motivated action.

Chapter seven is structured as follows. The chapter begins with a summary of the main themes emerging from the analysis of the narratives constructed by individuals involved in the process (both senior executives and those that

worked with them) to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives. The chapter then presents a series of sections each examining narratives relating to different senior executives, discussing the range of themes that feature in each case. A concluding discussion section then reflects on the common themes across these narratives in more detail. The chapter then concludes with a second discussion section reflecting on how we might interpret these narratives and what meaning we might draw, or construct, from them in relation to the overall research question, using a critical hermeneutics approach to consider both trusting and critical interpretations.

7.2. Summary of themes in narratives constructed to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives

The analysis presented in this chapter takes as its point of departure Ricoeur's theory of motivated action, solicitude and what shapes the ethical intention to participate in collaborative processes to develop collective rules, and both first shows how this theory can helpfully act as a narrative to help make sense of the phenomenon of corporate lobbying for more ambitious public policy on sustainable development, and second further develops this theory, providing more insight into different kinds of manifestation of the three elements of solicitude, and the interaction between phenomena encountered by business leaders and how they make sense of and act on these in light of their own particular intersubjectively shaped hermeneutic horizon. In so doing, the chapter also offers a contribution to the Responsible Leadership literature, further developing the theory around Maak *et al's* propositions around the relationship between senior executive value orientation, responsible leadership style and organisational approach to PCSR activities, and Patzer *et al's* propositions around the influence of global institutional configurations on responsible leadership style.

Key themes in the narratives constructed to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives include the following. One clear theme is the significance of the personal exposure of senior executives to a range of different kinds of manifestation of the global transition to a post-national context, including different kinds of problems caused by governance gaps created in this

process, as well as the positive benefits of Political CSR activities engaged in to respond to these. Another clear theme is the significance of the specific kind of intersubjectively shaped hermeneutical horizon with which senior executives interpret their encounters with these phenomena, and the different kinds of encounters with others and otherness over their lifetime that have led to the critical appropriation of intersubjectively-shaped meanings that have formed their hermeneutical horizon – including the significance of the values and norms of different communities the individual has been involved in at different times in their life, concern for the welfare of friends and others the individual is in relationship with and cares about, sympathy for suffering others, and commands from ‘Masters of Justice’. Values and norms critically appropriated from the particular values and norms of a range of different communities the individual has been part of at some stage feature strongly, including family, local communities where the individual grew up, faith communities they have been a part of, organisational communities they have belonged to at some point in the past or at present, and also national or regional communities. Values and norms critically appropriated through different kinds of educational experiences also feature. Concern for the welfare of friends or others the individual is in a relationship with and cares for features, with particular reference to concern senior executives feel for the welfare of their children, as well as friends they may have (including friendship relationships developed with people during periods of life spent in developing countries) who suffer in some particular way that relates to one or more of the goals. Sympathy for suffering others also features strongly – particularly in relation to suffering others encountered during periods of life spent in developing countries, or also indirectly through TV news or documentaries. Different manifestations of commands from ‘Masters of Justice’ feature strongly: from significant political figures (personal injunctions from the UN Secretary General are cited frequently), from peer chief executives, from non-executive board members, from public intellectuals and academics, from significant family members, and also indirectly from authors of books and narrators of TV documentaries.

The following sections examine narratives relating to different senior executives, discussing the range of themes that feature and interweave in each case. A

concluding discussion section then reflects on the common themes across these narratives in more detail.

7.3. Narratives relating to specific individuals

7.3.1. Senior executive 1

The chair of one of the consumer goods MNCs involved in the Post-2015 process attested to how his aims in the corporate lobbying process on the SDGs were shaped by personal exposure to business risks created by governance gaps stemming from the transition to the post-national constellation through both a strategic review process and involvement in professional networks, and also attested to the influence of 'Masters of Justice' in the form of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and Unilever CEO Paul Polman.

"When we were celebrating [a major corporate anniversary] I was wondering what would be the most critical issues in order to be able to celebrate [another major corporate anniversary in the future] and, after all the analysis, we came to the conclusion that water was the most important issue." (Interviewee 16)

"I have been a member of the World Economic Forum Foundation Board for quite some years and I think one of the things that the World Economic Forum has evolved into is that it looks to help to solve some of the world's most pressing issues"

"Kofi Annan launched his UN Global Compact which he did in 2000. He early on asked me to be like an Ambassador for his UN Global Compact which I did of course, and he, on the other hand, was very much giving me support also for the Water Resources Group [at the World Economic Forum], so it was something that we started to get involved more and more. And by Chairing this group, when Paul Polman, with whom I have a very long relationship, was selected to be the spokesman of the private sector [on the SDGs], well he contacted me and asked me: was I willing to take over the chair of the water specific area?" (Interviewee 16)

A government affairs professional at the same company also referred to the chairman's personal engagement with the business challenges of governance gaps that he became aware of as part of a major strategic review analysis undertaken by the company on the occasion of a major corporate anniversary, but also referred to the chair's personal exposure to NGO critique, and to

personal encounters with suffering others – in this case with smallholder farmers in India suffering water scarcity challenges, through an event organised by the UN Global Compact:

“He sat back and thought about what would be one major risk for the company overall in the years to come... and after that he came to the conclusion it is this issue of water, water for agriculture but also water for energy, water for industry... I don't know whether you have heard about the [a specific NGO campaign] story where we came under attack. This was not about our product, it was about the lack of safe water for these people. It is water all over when you see what could challenge, and basically he said if we want to continue to be successful... this is the one we're sure we have to look at very carefully...” (Interviewee 12)

“It was an experience. We had joined the UN Global Compact... I was with him for meetings with Secretary General Kofi Annan... there was one of these discussions around at that time, about the nine principles of the UN Global Compact, that was taking place in India, and you had, on a number of issues, real eye openers... In this case, when environment came up, they had only one topic, it was water... And it's a region where water tables fall one metre per year, because of over-use, over-use mainly from agriculture. And the farmers told us: ‘We know we are destroying our livelihood.’ But each one of the farmers said: ‘If I'm not pumping, my neighbour will pump up anyway, neighbouring villages will continue pumping up anyway, by the way, the electricity for these pumps is... delivered for free by the Government, so it's just pumped up.’ And this was, I don't know whether it was the only trigger, surely not – I don't know all of his [the chairman's] thinking, but it was a main trigger. We have factory there, it was instantly clear that this would first affect our own interests, but it would destroy the whole society, something like this. It sounds now a bit big, but talking to these farmers, and I was there with the team who did that, that was impressive.” (Interviewee 12)

7.3.2. Senior executive 2

The CEO of one of the chemicals companies cited both the values and norms of the company they worked for – its science-based culture – as well as a particular event organised by a previous CEO where academic specialists acted as ‘Masters of Justice’:

“We have to go back many years. And I've been with the company for 31 years, so it's not just like I was parachuted in the other day, so I've been a part of that journey, even though I have not been the CEO. And I think it was almost a, it was very natural, it was straightforward for this company to be very environmentally concerned in the late '80s, early '90s... That was an evolution that happened over these years... The

understanding of that companies have to take an interest in the environment and they have to go beyond what is required by law, and they have to be more long term in their thinking about environmental impacts, both from their own operations, but also from the products that they both procure and sell, that thinking matured in the first half of the '90s in this company, and I think we all were on board on that one... This is a very science-based company where we spend 14% of our revenues on R&D, so there's a lot of scientists, and this had a lot of appeal to scientists, so... that was not in any way a difficult bridge to cross at all... our thinking just evolved. And the social dimension was probably much harder for us... if you want to find an eureka moment then the former CEO of [the company], ...he organised a session, and I think it must have been '97 or '98, with some very, very inspirational and insightful people, for the top team of [the company]. So we were, this is the setting... a small conference centre... thirty-odd people and two handfuls of very inspirational guys – they came in from the outside. And one of them, and unfortunately I've forgotten his name, a German Professor, just sat down and confronted all of us with this simple fact: that companies simply had to take an interest in the social dimension. We started talking about sustainability in a much wider sense and I – and it – I mean, literally, it wasn't until that moment that I realised that the growth we are now seeing, or back then saw, in the emerging markets, all is developing in an unsustainable way. I think, and I'm kind of sorry to admit it, but I think it was as late as '97, '98 I realised that the world simply has to decouple growth from resource consumption, because resource consumption, be it water or energy, has tremendous social impact. If you think about how it evolves." (Interviewee 41)

The same CEO also spoke about the influence of participating in events organised by the UN Global Compact that exposed him to manifestations of the problems of governance gaps that he did not usually encounter:

"I'm, just for reference, I'm just a dumb, fairly irrational Chemical Engineer, but, I mean, I find it interesting to have conversations around these things. I find that the world is often more complex, has more facets than you comprehend when you sit in your Head Office somewhere in the world. The world is much more complicated. There are issues in the world that you don't necessarily, at least when you live in this part of the world, you're not faced with every day and despite, of course, we all travel, are frequent travellers. This is a way of also being confronted with some of the issues that you tend to forget when you buy your groceries in a shop... So there's an educational journey which is important for the, if you like, the Senior Team." (Interviewee 41)

A corporate sustainability executive at the same company attested to a variety of influences they believed had shaped various senior leaders at the organisation. Regarding a former CEO that had had a major influence on the company, working to embed a Triple Bottom Line mandate into the

organisation's purpose, he pointed to the significance of a friendship, and how that friend—the UN Secretary General—acted as a Master of Justice, calling the CEO to participate:

“We have been engaged in the UN from the very beginning of the Global Compact... our commitment to the UN started already back then. I think [the CEO] got involved because he had a summerhouse in Sweden next to Kofi Annan, who was married to a Swedish lady, so that was where it started, 20 years ago! I don't know if that's an official story but that's the true story. So that laid the foundations for us committing to the Global Compact. This has been an underlying commitment in the company for many, many years, so it's also natural for us to step in and see where can we contribute for this to be a success.” (Interviewee 33)

The same corporate sustainability executive attested to the company's most recent CEO being influenced by direct exposure to manifestations of the post-national constellation through involvement in professional networks and exposure to 'Masters of Justice' at the UN and in peer organisations:

“We had a new CEO... he's been in the company for many years and he's been known as a real hard liner. So I was really worried how this would go. But then... we had some conversations that were really interesting and he started to ask me about sustainability and then started to care about sustainability because now he was like responsible for the whole company. And we had some interesting discussions. And he started to buy into this idea... but what really made the difference in terms of, that we actually would name that, using the SDGs as the formulated targets [in our corporate strategy], I think, I was in New York for a week with [a C-suite senior executive] and our CEO before the UN meetings in September and that made a big impression on these guys, meeting the Paul Polmans of the world and other business leaders that step up to this, and meeting Ban Ki-moon and political leaders and really understanding that this is for real, this is – there's big powers behind this and that – seeing how we connect to this agenda, it was really strong... I mean if you ask our CEO he may have a different opinion but to me he left New York at a completely different level of understanding what is happening in the world.” (Interviewee 33)

7.3.3. Senior executive 3

Another C-suite executive at the same company spoke about his awareness of the challenges of the post-national context being shaped by participation in professional networks through the UN Global Compact, and personally experiencing the positive impacts of engaging in Political CSR activities:

“I think now we're working in the UN Sustainability Energy for All. I'm actually going to New York, for a meeting there in a couple of weeks' time. It came to become an important project for [our company] as follow-up on a small project we did in Mozambique. Unfortunately it didn't turn out positive but we had a lot of learning from it. And during this [we] were getting into Sustainable Energy for All and the opportunities for us to get in contact with some of the development banks, to get in contact with FAO, I think has certainly shown me and other members of the management team that being engaged in such a project, such a venture, we can get to hear directly from these development banks, and directly from FAO, what are their concerns on this technology and what is it they would be looking for in funding such ventures.” (Interviewee 40)

At another point, the same senior executive again referenced the influence of awareness of the post-national constellation and its implications being raised through participation in professional networks:

“That comes through being involved in this type of meetings and talking to what peoples are doing... Paul Polman... he's the master of doing this. I talk to my colleagues across the street here, [at another company], they were actually also participating in Davos and [also on] meetings on sustainable development goals. So to hear about how do *they* it, how do they work with public-private partnerships in different parts of the world and how does all [that confidence do that]. And I think that helped me to shape my thinking around [our company] and how we should [engage them].” (Interviewee 40)

The same senior executive also spoke about the influence of the values and norms of the organisational culture they had been a part of for a long period:

“I think in general across the 6,500 working at [our company] – I think a lot of people have a very personal engagement in working for a company where we kind of have a sentiment that what we do is in little ways actually making the world a better place to be in... that has been part of growing up in this company also and it's something that's extremely important to me.” (Interviewee 40)

The same senior executive talked about their action being shaped by a concern and sense of responsibility toward the welfare of their children, and also a concern for suffering others – in this case farmers in India, as illustrated in this quote:

“I have two kids, I can assure you they know more about [our core products and how they help] than any other kids in [our country] because we spend a lot of time at home talking about what it is I do and why is it I travel all the time, why is it I spend time at work as I do, and when we do that at home we don't talk about it's because I make my salary up, we don't talk about it's because [our company has] become a big company; we talk about it because this is what could help grow more crops in the fields... I was in India a couple of years ago when I was lucky to be visiting... a small farm growing potatoes, and the picture I saw and I have in my head day-to-day and I was articulating at home is something we often talk about: this farmer being grateful... for someone who had helped him to be able to grow more potatoes. I could have worked six months without a salary just with this picture in my head. And that's something that I talk about when we have dinner at home. And that's something that I am extremely proud to tell my kids, that that's what I do for a living, and that's why I spend all the time at work.” (Interviewee 40)

7.3.4. Senior executive 4

The CEO of one of the consumer goods MNCs involved in the Post-2015 cited a number of influences, including a concern and sense of responsibility for the welfare of people they cared for (specifically their children, and also a friend with blindness), the influence of the values of a faith community they were part of, the influence of the cultural values of the organisation they worked for, and a concern for suffering others they had encountered over their lifetime: being raised and having friends in a relatively poor, industrial region, and spending an early part of their career working in an area suffering from post-industrial deprivation.

“Do you want to make a difference or you don't? Do you want to tell your children that you didn't even try, leave them with the mess? So that's for you to decide... It makes good business, but it's not why I do it, but it makes good business. I do it because I have – how many people have an opportunity to work for a company like [our company] where you can do those things and have an impact?” (Interviewee 3)

“I've always wanted to be a priest, I've always been very focused on just making this a better place. I don't think we work for ourselves that's what I've always felt [...we want to be as successful]. So, I don't know, that's how I just grew up.” (Interviewee 3)

“We all have these moments throughout our lives. When you are at home and you don't know if your father has a job or not the next day, you know what that means, and you will fight very hard to ensure that you give a lot of people opportunities to work. You can't go to university, you know what that means and you work very hard to ensure everybody can go. I

lived in Newcastle for three years where shipbuilding, coal and steel were all gone, and a lot of people were unemployed. The only thing they could get when they were 15 was a baby. You know what that means. It's the first time I saw a second generation of people unemployed... Then I climbed with my blind friend Kilimanjaro and I started fighting for the rights of blind people and the right of education. So we all have things happening in our lives that touch us, that we get exposed to, which could have been something else... But I've seen a lot of things in my life going round in different places where it's very clear to me, as I sit there, if there is a system where too many people don't get the benefits and don't see that they are fully participating, then ultimately that's wrong. And I've said that before... I said we have a big problem. And we have a responsibility, not just to go on the golf course but...! And I grew up in a family where we take responsibility, I'm from [a region], which is a part of the [a country] where we have our feet on the ground." (Interviewee 3)

A government affairs professional at the same consumer goods MNC also attested to the influence on the CEO of encounters with suffering others—women smallholder farmers—and a challenge from a 'Master of Justice' – Hillary Clinton – in relation to gender:

"His view of the role of gender very much changed... we met with a load of women farmers and just suddenly the dawning realization – and then just talking to them about their lives and how they lived their lives. That was a big sort of understanding. You know those little "aha" moments? They're just these things that make you – so in [our company, our CEO] is very much driven to do this, so every time he visits a country he goes and tries to visit people's homes, he'll go to a slum dwelling or in Kenya he'll go to the backstreets of Nairobi... That's a little bit of how, I think, much of the time, change comes. It's from that personal knowledge, experience, exposure to these things. And that's what motivates people to then want to make the difference." (Interviewee 15)

"[Hillary Clinton], was there. We were talking about farmers and she said: 'Why isn't [your company] doing anything about smallholders – why are you not thinking about women?' And [our CEO] just looked at her and he said, 'That's a really good question.' And she said, 'Do you know that there's loads of evidence to show that female farmers are way more productive, that they can actually – and by the way many of them are women but the men keep all the money' – and she said, 'The biggest problem is that these women don't have equal access to land or to loans and finance. So actually I don't understand why you, when you talk about smallholders, why aren't you singling out women smallholders?' And [our CEO] said, 'I don't know the answer to that question' he said, 'and I've never heard anyone say it to me.' And we got in the car and he said 'Why haven't we discussed this before?' And I said "[name] I don't know." So we went back to the office and we wrote all these emails to people... and so they came back with this data, FAO and all these things, they said: 'Yes, this is right, and blah blah blah', and [our CEO] said, 'Well, I want to

understand therefore what it is we can do. And by the way, if we understand that we can get something that will enable women farmers to be more productive, surely that's good.” (Interviewee 15)

7.3.5. Senior executive 5

A C-suite executive, heading a regional business unit of a consumer goods MNC, attested to the influence of a significant family member acting as a Master of Justice, influencing their sense of right and wrong, which in turn influenced their action to participate in corporate lobbying on the SDGs:

“Some of these things have to come from a deep belief and conviction... some of these are deep values, values of equity, values of fairness, values of what's right and what's a larger purpose... And I think business must also start asking the question of, what's this larger purpose? It cannot be making a lot more money. Making money is an outcome of doing something right. That doing something right has to be to act in manner which is good for society... The principles, this whole notion of equity, fairness, what is right and what is wrong is a very deep personal value which I cherish. My mother works in the social [space] so – she spent the last 25, 30 years doing things in education, in the education of the underprivileged, it started off with one child, now into tens of thousands of students across schools in Mumbai and Poona. And I have seen what belief and conviction is. And therefore I have seen this, I feel for it.” (Interviewee 1)

7.3.6. Senior executive 6

The CEO of a Southeast Asian-based multi-national conglomerate attested to the influence of having been raised in poverty and developing friendships with others who were suffering, in contrast to most business leaders in the region who came from wealthy families:

“Most business leaders in Indonesia come from wealthy families, I come from a poor background, gives me a different perspective... I grew up in a village. I grew up in a small village, not in a town. And then I also, working to pay my own education. So it's not because – my family is [quite] OK but when I moved I decided I will work to pay my own education fee and to pay my own living. And then I worked for very low-level jobs and I mingled with many poor. So [then] I had the feeling about all of this lower level of society.” (Interviewee 37)

7.3.7. Senior executive 7

The CEO of a chemicals MNC attested to the significance of concern for and a sense of responsibility towards people they cared for, specifically their children, and also cited the influence of significant family members, their education, and the significance of conversations with friends and the intersubjective meanings created and critically appropriated:

“I don't know, education, your parents, your family you come from, morality – triggered by friends who are leading other businesses discussing that, having evening discussions, really 10, 20 years ago, saying: ‘We are in power, what do we do with the power?’ and I was always fascinated by, if you have power, and impact, what does that mean? And I think power and impact means increased responsibility. And I see also, I do that internally also, when people become top executives, I have a meeting with them, and sometimes they are saying: ‘Well, I'm finally getting the label of top executive and get more stock options’ and all this stuff, so I really found that: ‘oh I'm excited’ stuff, I say: ‘wait a minute, you've much more responsibility now for your people, for the world, etc. Let's not talk about the power you have, let's talk about the responsibility.’ I find that important.” (Interviewee 44)

A corporate sustainability representative from the same company also cited the influence of the CEO's direct personal experience of manifestations of the post-national context, specifically the benefits that could be derived from participating in PCSR activities – in this case a public-private partnership with the UN World Food Programme:

“What typically made him [the CEO] sort of grow his confidence that it could actually work was the collaboration with the World Food Programme... He saw that we were able, as a company, able to deliver things, otherwise we would not have been able to deliver. So that sort of boosted his confidence it's actually do-able. I can see it happening in my own company. So that sort of made it easier because I have the proof, I have the stories... we're not talking hypothesis here, we're talking real.” (Interviewee 13)

7.3.8. Senior executive 8

The CEO of a pharmaceutical MNC attested to the influence of a range of personal experiences of manifestations of the post-national constellation – in this case NGO campaigning and legitimacy challenges arising from global

governance gaps – and argued that part of what had shaped his intent to respond differently from peer CEOs to these challenges was to do with spending parts of his life living and working in Asia and Africa, encountering suffering others and developing concern for the welfare of friends there. On the personal experience of the challenges of being a business leader in the context of the post-national constellation, he commented:

“I do think that’s a very conflictual position to be in, because the people who own shares in the company, particularly anonymous institutions... they don’t care about that stuff and nor should they really, because that’s not what they’re there for. Meanwhile, society and the voice be society, whether that be NGOs, politicians or media, they are more and more interested in that agenda. So that’s a very interesting place for businesses to try and operate... if you’re big, you’re right in the crosshairs of that. It’s quite a challenging tension, actually.” (Interviewee 42)

The individual referred to a period of intense NGO campaigning against the company, when the individual was a senior executive, but prior to becoming CEO – this experience had been influential in shaping their intent, but so had the experience of living in Africa and Asia:

“Witnessing the way it played out definitely had a role. Definitely had and it still does. I mean – you know, nobody wants to get back into that situation, but it’s more than that, I think. I think I have a slightly more – probably a more liberal view of the world than people probably would expect. So having lived in Africa and Asia, I think it’s really important that people in Africa and Asia, and Latina for that matter, are given access to modern technologies and medicines and everything else, and we need to find ways to make that happen.” (Interviewee 42)

The individual expanded on the influence of the period of their career living in Africa and Asia:

“I think mostly, it’s a product of a melting pot, of everything you live with, right? I mean, it starts with the way you’re brought up and your values and then it’s kind of, it’s what you absorb through life... I mean, that’s obviously that’s what makes people, people... I think I have a more – compared to many of my... peer group [of CEOs in competitor companies] I think I had a much more international experience base and I’d say, you know, if there was anything that really stood out, it was running our business in South Africa, where I ran it, immediately before and then during Mandela’s first term. And you know, South Africa is a very, very – what a brilliant place to just see, you know, what’s not great,

how different models can co-exist next to each other, how people can make bad assumptions about each other. I mean, all the things which are stereotypically South Africa, when you live in the middle of it, it's a very – it's a great teaching environment. So I would say probably something like that would have been quite informative, and then I think, when I took over this job... I did take the time to think hard about what I wanted to do with the job beyond, you know, create shareholder value, which is, you know, goes with the territory. And I do believe companies are a force for something beyond shareholder value. I don't think they exist just for shareholder value. I think they should exist for creation of broader value in society and to advance society." (Interviewee 42)

One government affairs professional at the same pharmaceutical MNC also attested to the influence of the CEO's time spent living and working in developing countries:

"We think that Africa is going to be a growth area for the future and we want to grow with them. For other companies they perhaps ... they don't perhaps see that. We're fortunate that [our CEO]'s worked in Africa... he gets these issues... so he sets the tone for this company... we're far from being a one-man band on this... But [our CEO] does set a tone which... gives people across this organization permission to care about these things. There are other corporate cultures where you are not given that permission." (Interviewee 28)

7.3.9. Senior executive 9

A C-suite senior executive at the same pharmaceutical MNC, who led the Africa and Least Developed Countries business unit, and who personally participated in meetings at the UN between business leaders and policymakers regarding the development of the SDGs attested to the significance of first-hand experiences of manifestations of the post-national context—seeing the success of PCSR activities, specifically entrepreneurial approaches to addressing public health issues compared with government, donor and NGO-led approaches, and also attested to the influence of encounters with suffering others in developing countries, specifically when they had previously worked as a physician in Africa tackling HIV. This quote illustrates how his narrative references the influence of suffering others:

"When I joined [our company] 10 years ago... I didn't join it because I liked the industry in any way, I didn't, I hated it, and I hated it because I was a physician 10 years ago, working in Africa at the peak of the HIV epidemic... Round about the year 2000 there were about 14 million

people who had died from HIV. Easily two-thirds of those were in Africa. So it was very much an African epidemic, much as it was a pandemic across the world. So 20 million people living in the continent with HIV back then. The last thing I ever did as a physician was setting up a HIV care clinic in a rural town on the coast of Kenya, probably one of the poorest in the country. Again it's a lot of stigma – most of the stigma came from my physician colleagues, and the reason for the stigma was, you have nothing to give these patients. We couldn't afford antiretrovirals. So we could see, as physicians, they were having a Lazarus effect on patients in the West. But it was \$15,000 per patient per year, to treat someone. Completely out of the equation for the patients that I had. So I tried the best I could and I got it to 300 patients, this clinic. But they started falling down like flies and no one in the hospital would sign the death certificate. Someone just called me, even at night. 'You sign this because you brought them here and you've been seeing them for many, many months.' So I had a lot of those sort of final-moment discussions with a number of patients who quite frankly were not ready to die. 16-year-olds and 21-year-olds and – you're thinking: my gosh, this person had their whole life ahead of them and they're leaving it behind. Or parents with families. And that was tough. And that kind of propelled me away from the clinic, I couldn't deal with this. In many ways it was a bit cowardly of me but I just couldn't. And I started looking for a platform where I felt I could make my contribution, because in that one clinic I felt completely powerless. I traced this story – there was a big court case going on in South Africa where a number of pharmaceutical companies were suing Mandela, especially, for breaching patent laws by copying our antiretroviral medicines, or buying copies of our antiretroviral medicines from Cipla, a generic company in India. And Cipla basically had said: 'look, this is ridiculous, this is an epidemic, we cannot watch the natural history of this disease in Africa, we are just going to make the drugs as we know them and we're going to sell them to Africa at \$300 per patient per year.' I mean, from \$15,000, \$300 – all of a sudden it became reachable. So of course Mandela took this and starting treating his patients and of course he was taken to court. But that was decided in a court of public opinion, not in a court of law. There were massive, massive riots. Against the industry. That was ten years ago. Now, if I look back at how our industry approached Africa ten years ago, it's very different from what you see today. Ten years ago Africa was a basket case. Philanthropy – don't do business there. You donate things. And if you can't donate them, if you are too expensive, you ignore it. This is what happened with the HIV medicines. And people died because of that. I lost two brothers who – I looked them in the eye and I couldn't do anything and they said: 'You're a doctor, you're supposed to help me!' And I couldn't. Of course there were many millions of people who went through that story... In fact as a young physician – some of the physicians I left behind, they kept telling me, why would you work for big pharma when we have these Indian companies that actually do make the most difference for our patients. And my plan was basically to be a voice for that part of the world and bring a perspective that I kind of said thought: surely any human being in their right mind wouldn't take this approach. So bring that perspective that helps to recalibrate how we look at Africa, how we look at that part of the world." (Interviewee 24)

7.3.10. Senior executive 10

The CEO of the education MNC attested to the influence on him of the values and norms embedded in the organisation's culture, and also challenges from 'Masters of Justice' including the previous CEO and a board member (CK Prahalad, an influential academic who coined the concept of the Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid (Prahalad & Hart, 2002)):

"I've been working for [this company] for over 16 years, and have always been struck by the overwhelming sense of purpose in this organisation, which you can trace all the way back to its founding 160 years ago, even though it's done different things over time." (Interviewee 18)

"My predecessor as CEO, [A], who I worked for for over 16 years, she was very influential to me. She always made the point that profits are the by-product of achieving something valuable for society, and with those profits you pay dividends to shareholders, who are largely pensioners in North America and Europe, you pay your contribution through taxes, and what's left over you invest in making your company better." (Interviewee 18)

"I suppose the other point I would make, just [a bit of] personal influence, is that C.K. Prahalad, the late great C.K. Prahalad, was on the [company] board for some years and he was brilliant on the view that the poorest billion people on the planet are informed, active citizens and consumers just as much as the rest of us, we shouldn't be treating them as wards of the state, we should be treating them as people making rational, informed decisions." (Interviewee 18)

7.3.11. Senior executive 11

The CEO of the real estate development company spoke about how two 'Masters of Justice' had shaped his intent to engage in policymaking processes in relation to the SDGs: the influence of his grandfather, and a challenge received from Jeffrey Sachs:

"For me it was that – I was raised by my grandfather and he was, let's say, a large farmer, and he gave his farm to his older son when he was 55 then he became active in politics... and he taught me as a leader in society, business leader, he had a responsibility to use that leadership in the right way... I like to make money, right, but I also like to make affordable houses, and actually I enjoy making affordable houses... I like that more than the big profits." (Interviewee 2)

“There's this sort of balance in life where – if you're making money – you have to give back as well. At the same time you shouldn't be robbing people and then giving it back again... Part of that was as well that Jeffrey Sachs came to the [our country] and it was like a group of business people together. And we sort of met this group feeling: ‘OK, this is important, we are going to do something about it.’ This was like six years ago. So – I don't know – it was... important that the right people came over to ask it... I think that in the Western world a lot of entrepreneurs might have sometimes not a good reputation... but a lot of them are really trying to do the right thing. And so if we are mobilized and somebody comes up and says: ‘Hey ... you have to do something about it ... we will look at it with a positive outlook.’” (Interviewee 2)

7.3.12. Senior executive 12

The Chair of a textiles company involved in meetings with policymakers regarding the SDGs attested to the influence on their intent of both experiences of manifestations of the post-national context (specifically seeing competitor organisations benefit from engaging in PCSR activities), and challenges from ‘Masters of Justice’ – both in a documentary and in a book, as the following quote illustrates:

“What changed my life is a documentary about cradle-to-cradle. The documentary is called *Waste = Food*. It's a digital documentary from Rob van Hattum and you will find it on YouTube and I saw that – I got it from a ... and I went home, I watched the DVD, and it was talking about making [products] ... [interiors] [easily dissembled] you can endlessly recycle. And my competitors were miles ahead in communicating about sustainability, lower carbon, less energy and CO₂ reduction so I decided to say: ‘Well, I'm going to embrace this, because then I will have the media’ ... so I was – when I watched the documentary I got very – a bit upset in my head because I said: ‘Jeez, if I want to do this I have to change the way we do R&D, the way we manufacture, the way we market, the way we sell.’ So in order to calm down I read the book. It didn't really help. That *Cradle to Cradle*, you know? And then I approached Braungart [the author]... I went to him, I said: ‘Listen, I think this is a fantastic concept. I want my whole company to be cradle-to-cradle but I will only do it if you guys help me personally.’... This happened to me so that's why we transformed the whole company.” (Interviewee 4)

7.3.13. Senior executive 13

The CEO of a financial/professional services MNC who had called for more interventionist public policy around the accounting rules governing business behaviour cited the influence on the shaping of his intent of participation in professional networks (a business network called the Dutch Sustainable Growth Coalition), the challenge from a 'Master of Justice' peer CEO Paul Polman, the critical appropriation of the values of his family and faith community, and direct experiences of PCSR conditions seeing MNCs abusing governance gaps and creating for him a sense of injustice:

"I am linked to Paul Polman for two years in an initiative called the Dutch Sustainable Growth Coalition, that is formed of the eight top companies in the Netherlands. The eight top companies came together because they believe the world should change and that companies should be more sustainable, and they want to shape, share and stimulate... I have that connection to Paul, and he asked me to come." (Interviewee 6)

"My family maybe, I had a good solid family upbringing, Roman Catholic, maybe it was that. Also, I'm an accountant, I see a lot of businesses and clients, and so maybe I was also triggered by seeing a lot of greed and self-interest – CEOs and Chairmen of boards – I saw things that I wasn't comfortable with. People can get rich, but it's not the same as happiness, and it can be very bad for their businesses. I have seen a lot of that, and I wanted to disconnect from it, and I want to see different behaviours, to the extent that I can influence that. I think as a business leader you should use your influence for yourself yes, but also for the people around you." (Interviewee 6)

7.3.14. Senior executive 14

The CEO of an advertising business attested to the influence on their intent of seeing, through their professional network, companies beginning to behave differently as a result of the transition to the post-national context, and specifically seeing the challenges of governmental and NGO approaches to tackling global issues and the relative successes achievable when private companies engage through PCSR activities. They also attested to their education and a specific professor, and also a 'Master of Justice' on the television, presenting a documentary, as illustrated by the following quote:

“I can pinpoint the moment it started – I can't remember exactly how old I was but I was not feeling well and my – I was old enough that my parents finally felt comfortable leaving my sister and me alone for an hour or two in the house, I was not feeling well, and I was laying down on the sofa and I had a terrible, splitting headache, and I was just trying to focus on something to take my mind off it. The television was on and, as it was every night at that time, Walter Cronkite was on the television. And I remember it was a sort of like an epiphany as I really had to focus just because it was my way of coping with the headache and as I did I said, ‘Oh my God, this is really why we're all here. This is what's going on around the globe. And this is stuff we all need to care about and we all need to be thinking about how we are affecting – how it's affecting us – and what needs to be done.’ And from then on I found myself naturally migrating towards world issues, politics, government, economics, and I studied political science and economics and university and then went on to Columbia. And at Columbia I knew I needed something practical on the business side at graduate school but combined that with a degree in international affairs... And when I left Columbia... my favourite teacher over at Columbia graduate school was a professor called [A]. He was probably the only history professor that I ever loved. But in any case he was somebody I stayed in contact with from the moment I left the school and I remember calling him up as I was looking at job opportunities and I said: ‘I have a question and I know you're going to have a great answer. And it is this: Do you think that an individual can have a greater impact as a private citizen or must they pursue a government position or elected office?’ And he paused and he said: ‘I can't answer that question, but what I can say is that anyone... with your background and who was at a stage in your life where you're reflecting on this and trying to find your destiny, my strong recommendation was:... stay on the mark.’ And what he meant by that was, keep pursuing that answer. Don't decide anything. I think I've kept that – a very wise piece of the way I've moved through life and choices I've made professionally.” (Interviewee 26)

7.3.15. Senior executive 15

A senior executive from a financial/professional services firm involved in Post-2015 policymaking processes on behalf of their company attested to the influence on their intent of both their childhood experiences in Africa, and more recent experiences attending UN meetings that exposed them to manifestations of the post-national context:

“I'm Egyptian and I grew up in East Africa and I wanted to take on this role for a long time... So when I took on this role and I attended the leaders' summit of the UN Global Compact in September last year, I think it struck me... for me to use the role that I was fortunate to have with the firm for the benefit of Africa and the host continent. This all made sense. So I think in a way it was a little bit of a personal idea... how do I best use my opportunity to help Africa that ultimately created this idea. And

obviously I've worked in multiple sectors. So had I grown up in the public sector maybe I wouldn't have had it, or had I grown up in Europe maybe I wouldn't have been as passionate about it." (Interviewee 27)

7.3.16. Senior executive 16

A senior executive at a pharmaceutical MNC attested to the influence of growing up in a poor family, his educational experiences and political norms at that time, concern for suffering friends he cared about in Africa and other suffering others he encountered directly and saw on the television, values critically appropriated from involvement in a faith community, senior business leaders who had acted as 'Masters of Justice'. He also made a distinction very similar to Maak et al's between a social welfare and fiduciary duty orientation, and linked this to the norms and values of different geographical regions globally (Maak et al., 2016).

"My background is – I studied development economics and development sociology... I'm one of the '68 students [a reference to the political issues of 1968]. That was at the height of a fundamental ideological battle... no student starting in that time could avoid becoming, you know, making up his or her mind on, you know, what's the right way to go." (Interviewee 43)

"My personal experience was, I'm coming from a poor family and I have, very early on in my study, I had a lot of African students being my friends and I was getting interested in Africa. I was collecting money during the Biafra War in Nigeria." (Interviewee 43)

"By the way, I am a Christian, but what I'm doing has nothing to do with being a Christian. I think what I'm doing is part and parcel of all enlightened people, whatever religious domination they have." (Interviewee 43)

"The pictures of the starving children in the Biafra War were sticking on my heart. Because, you know, it's – this was the first time, at least in my life, that I was confronted with thousands of children starving. And everybody knows that this is not exactly necessary, and the next step then was the whole Sahara crisis, with the lack of rain and that kind of drought that drove a lot of hungry people out of their original places. That was end of the 60s, beginning of the 70s, and that kind of re-emphasised the necessity of doing something." (Interviewee 43)

"I was lucky to work with the corporate leader, from the very beginning, at the [X] Company, then it was [A], and later on it was [B], and then [C] who always came from a basic conviction that it's all to do with

responsibility of a company to do something that does not have a short term business impact.” (Interviewee 43)

“What I have learned, and what I have learned over the years, is they are people – there are people out there who are basically good human beings, but have a totally different point of view with regard to what the role of a company in a society. And this is not a moral question. They are morally as good as anybody else, but North Americans usually have a different attitude on the role of companies in society on the fiduciary responsibility of management than Europeans.” (Interviewee 43)

7.3.17. Senior executive 17

A C-suite executive involved in the corporate lobbying activity on the SDGs, heading a regional business unit of a chemicals MNC headquartered in East Asia attested to the influence on their own intent of a number of first-hand experiences of the transition to the post-national context, including first-hand engagement with NGOs and successes from engaging in PCSR activities around social innovation for products that helped address the MDGs (nets treated to prevent malaria). The meaning this individual critically appropriated from these encounters with otherness was shaped by prior experiences related to their upbringing in the USA: the values he had critically appropriated from the community in which he was raised, and from participation in a faith community. The influence of the values he had critically appropriated from the culture of the organisation he worked for had also been influential in shaping his intent, as were the values critically appropriated from the cultural norms of the region where the company was headquartered. The following quotes illustrate some of these themes:

“Growing up in the conservative Midwest, there's always a basis for charity. So it's not unusual for people to make a significant contribution of their income to the church or to local, do the right thing. So there's always some community aspect, community contribution spirit. So I always had that and grew up with that” (Interviewee 30)

“I think, as [an East Asian] company, I think there's a different mindset than a lot of western firms have. There really is much more of a focus on stability and sustainability. There really is much more of a focus on stability and sustainability, both socially and otherwise, so – it's not often that you hear [companies from this country] have massive lay-offs of employees. They don't do it. You join the company – you finish university, you join the company, and you kind of have an expectation that the bulk of your adult life that's where you're going to be. So where –

in a US company you have hard times and you want to cut the budget by 10% so you line up 10 people and say: 'OK, who's my bottom employee out of the 10, sorry Fred, you're gone.' That's not what a [company from this country] does. What we do is that we will cut everybody. So everybody will stay employed, we'll just have to do it in a different way. It's a very different mindset. Again, working for a [company from this country] – [this country] as a country is not blessed with a lot of the natural resources that many other countries are, and so in all things that kind of thriftiness, that efficiency, that incremental gain – that just fits in better... But I think having that [reference to country] heart puts us in a particularly good place because again we don't have... [reference to country] society doesn't put the same kind of shareholder pressure on companies as do western shareholders. So we don't have these activist investors that are clamouring for show a return today, show a return tomorrow. We're able... to think much longer-term... So I think it's just a difference in viewpoint." (Interviewee 30)

7.4. Other senior executives

Several government affairs and corporate sustainability professionals at other companies involved in the Post-2015 process attested to various encounters with others and otherness that had shaped the intent of senior leaders in their organisations with regard to lobbying for more ambitious public policy on sustainable development.

A corporate sustainability professional at a financial / professional services MNC, in relation to the intent of senior leaders in the organisation cited the influence of critically appropriated meanings from educational experiences, organisational culture, and first-hand experience of issues (and meanings to interpret them) as a result of the part of the world they grew up in:

"One of them at least went through the CISL [Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership] course. [A], when he was at [a previous company], went through the CISL, and I think that education component was an important part." (Interviewee 36)

"I think both the erstwhile mutual status of [various predecessor organisations from which our current organisation is formed]... the history of insurance is mutual. The social contribution of insurance generally is – people work in insurance and are proud to because you help free people from fear and uncertainty. If you've prepared for the future you know that at times of great need someone else will step in and help finance what needs you have. New home, new car, whatever. Life. Insurance where you've got healthcare requirements." (Interviewee 36)

“[B], I think, historically he comes from New Zealand, New Zealand's obviously exposed to all sorts of ozone-related, climate-related issues. He understands it.” (Interviewee 36)

A government affairs professional from a mining MNC attested to the influence of direct personal exposure to manifestations of the post-national constellation – in this case through the professional networks combined with challenges from ‘Masters of Justice’ that business leaders encountered when participating in meetings such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, speaking with reference to their current CEO as well as several previous CEOs they had served under. This individual also argued, speaking with reference to a fifth CEO, that the kind of professional training and education a business leader had received previously could also shape how they responded to such encounters:

“I think they've all been softened up, if that's the right phrase, by Davos. I think anybody who has been near one of those platforms, you know, has got the... ‘part of my Chief Executive role is to think about the good of the wider world’, so I think... the mixing with politicians to talk about things beyond your immediate business requirement, I think is quite widespread now.” (Interviewee 10)

“I think it probably depends a bit on the company but certainly, you know, [A] had it at [Company X], big time. [B] seems to have it. And [C] had it at [Company Y] and [D – current CEO at Company Y] has it, so of the four CEO's I've been exposed to, five, those four all have it. The one that didn't particularly have it in quite the same way was the guy who has been appointed from the Finance Director position. It's always the role. You have somebody expansive and engaging and then you find that the stock market gives you a tough time because your books aren't looking great, so you promote your Finance Director, does this pay or doesn't it pay... It's still personal, it's still personal to [D] you know you're two months into the job, and you would think that he would be absolutely focusing on... the detail on all the mining operations and not seeking to be all extensive on other things, so it's a measure of the man, and that's what he's about.” (Interviewee 10)

A government affairs professional from a consumer goods MNC attested to the influence on the intent of senior leaders at the company to engage in lobbying around more ambitious interventionist public policy on sustainable development of direct personal experiences of the post-national constellation – both the business challenges of governance gaps (in this case the business challenges to the company's operations arising from water scarcity, itself linked to water

policy frameworks and the inefficient use of water in the agricultural sector) and the positive successes achieved through working in public-private partnerships. This individual attested that part of what shaped the way these individual responded to these phenomena related to previously critically appropriated meanings from the values and norms of the organisational culture – the origins of the company were in sub-Saharan Africa, and had a ‘start-up’ culture which valued challenging prevailing norms. This quote illustrates the significance of senior executives personally experiencing the operational challenges presented by water shortages, in coming to the realisation that lobbying for more interventionist government water policy made sense after realising that actions they could take within the business to improve water efficiency were not sufficient to deal with the problem.

“The reason I was attracted to the company is because it was a company that clearly... – right the way up the line to managing directors of whole regions – clearly got this... I think frankly it emerges from – you know, in our business, I've used the example of water because it's the most clear-cut one – it emerges from any decent risk analysis... You've got a risk analysis that says in some places – so our brewery in [a city in India] is the classic example where in some of the hottest seasons in recent years we've had to truck in water [because local water suppliers have run out]. So it absolutely changes the investment numbers, if you look at the profitability of a business where you're having to take water from outside, and there's all sorts of issues in terms of control over quality... So that is the sort of effect that drought can have on the viability of a brewing operation. So clearly any risk matrix worth anything will have identified that a while back. And then you've obviously put in place your immediate mitigation responses, which are the things that *you* have as a company under your direct control, and that involves dramatically reducing our dependence per hectolitre of beer on the water, driving up efficiency. And then your re-evaluation of the situation shows that that mitigation action simply hasn't cracked it because you're dependent on a whole load of other actors over which you don't have control. And so that's a very natural and logical conclusion which any decent managing directors will have reached themselves, having tried the obvious thing which is "what do we have control over, how do you drive up efficiency."... I think perhaps we have been ahead of the curve precisely because we have been so exposed in hot, dry places to water risk. That's been a very helpful challenge to us.” (Interviewee 19)

7.5. Making sense of influences on the action of senior executives: common themes across their narratives

The preceding sections have examined – in relation to a number of specific individual senior executives – narratives constructed in interview situations to make sense of what shaped the action of these senior executives in relation to the corporate lobbying activity that is the focus of this thesis, discussing the range of themes that feature and interweave in each case. These themes are summarised here.

7.5.1. Encounters with manifestations of the shift to a post-national context and related governance gaps

One clear theme is the significance of the personal exposure of senior executives to a range of different kinds of manifestation of the global transition to a post-national context, including different kinds of problems caused by governance gaps created in this process, as well as the positive benefits of Political CSR activities engaged in to respond to these. The personal experience of strategic risks to the business caused by inadequate governance of water formed part of the narrative relating to senior executive one as well as the narrative of interviewee 30. Exposure to manifestations of the transition to the post-national context through participation in professional networks was a feature of the narratives of several senior executives, including specific reference in many cases to involvement in discussions through networks such as the UN Global Compact or through the World Economic Forum in Davos. Personal experience of manifestations of the post-national context such as legitimacy challenges and being on the receiving end of NGO campaigns also featured in some narratives, including those of senior executive one and ten, for example. Experiencing a sense of injustice at seeing other companies abuse governance gaps formed part of the narrative of senior executive 13. Personal experience of seeing the positive social and commercial benefits of taking part in Political CSR activities as a response to these governance gaps also featured in the narratives relating to several of the senior executives.

7.5.2. The significance of the encounters with others and otherness that shape the hermeneutic horizon with which these manifestations of the post-national context are interpreted

Another clear theme is the significance of the specific kind of intersubjectively shaped hermeneutical horizon with which senior executives interpret their encounters with these phenomena, and the different kinds of encounters with others and otherness over their lifetime that have led to the critical appropriation of intersubjectively-shaped meanings that have formed their hermeneutical horizon – including the significance of the values and norms of different communities the individual has been involved in at different times in their life, concern for the welfare of friends and others the individual is in relationship with and cares about, sympathy for suffering others, and commands from ‘Masters of Justice’.

7.5.2.1. *Values and norms critically appropriated from communities an individual has been part of*

Values and norms critically appropriated from the particular values and norms of a range of different communities the individual has been part of at some stage feature strongly, including family, local communities where the individual grew up, faith communities they have been a part of, organisational communities they have belonged to at some point in the past or at present, and also national or regional communities. Values and norms critically appropriated from family featured in the narratives of senior executive five, seven, 11 and 13, for example. Meanings critically appropriated from the values and norms of the communities in which individuals grew up featured in the narratives of senior executive four, six, 15, 16 and 17, for example. Meanings critically appropriated from the values and norms of faith communities featured in the narratives of senior executive 13, 16 and 17.

Meanings critically appropriated from the values and norms of organisational communities featured – there were examples in the narratives relating both to the organisations senior executives worked for now, as well as in some cases those they had worked for in earlier periods in their career. This kind of theme

featured in the narratives of senior executive three, four, 10, and 17, for example. In the narrative of senior executive two, the significance of critically appropriated values and norms from the organisational culture was linked with 'professional' culture – as a science-based organisation, the narrative cited the professional values of the scientific community, critically appropriated through training as scientists, as having influenced the values and norms of the organisational culture, and therefore the hermeneutic horizon of colleagues across the business as well as the senior executive in question.

Meanings critically appropriated from the values and norms of national or regional communities featured in some of the narratives, including those of senior executives 16 and 17. Senior executive 16, for example, contrasted the cultural norms of Europe with North America, and the different kinds of views about the 'normal' role of business in society, and implied that these different cultural norms tended to be critically appropriated by senior executives from those regions. Senior executive 17 contrasted the cultural norms of East Asia with North America, suggesting that cultural norms in East Asia placed greater emphasis on stability, sustainability and long-termism, compared with North America, arguing this influenced organisational norms and values and again implying that these different cultural norms tended to be critically appropriated by senior executives from those regions.

Values and norms critically appropriated through different kinds of educational experiences also feature across these narratives. Senior executive 14 and 16 both talk about the influence of educational experiences, as does interviewee 36 and interviewee eight. The narrative of senior executive 14 referenced the significance of studying political science and economics as an undergraduate, and then international affairs as a postgraduate. The narrative of senior executive 16 referenced the significance of studying development economics and development sociology. Interviewee 36 talks of the influence of participating in the Cambridge Programme for Sustainability Leadership. Interviewee eight talks of the influence of the professional education that those that become finance specialists need to go through, which connects with the theme in the narrative of senior executive two regarding the influence of the professional education received by scientists.

7.5.2.2. *Friends*

Concern for the welfare of friends or others the individual is in a relationship with and cares for features, with particular reference to concern senior executives feel for the welfare of their children, as well as friends they may have (including friendship relationships developed with people during periods of life spent in developing countries) who suffer in some particular way that relates to one or more of the goals. Concerns relating to their children featured in several narratives, particularly the sense of needing to account for their actions or non-actions to their children in the future, when their children could be suffering from the effects of anticipated sustainability challenges. This kind of theme features in the narratives of senior executive three, four, seven, and 10. Senior executive four also spoke of their action in part being influenced by concern for a friend who suffered from blindness. The narrative of senior executive nine referenced the significance of friends suffering from HIV/AIDS, or of friends losing loved ones to HIV/AIDS. The narrative of senior executive 16 referenced the significance of the suffering of friends from Africa they formed friendship relationships with when a student.

7.5.2.3. *Sympathy for suffering others*

Sympathy for suffering others also features strongly – particularly in relation to suffering others encountered during periods of life spent in developing countries, or also indirectly through TV news or documentaries. The experience of suffering encountered during periods spent travelling, living or working in developing countries featured in the narratives of senior executive one, three, four, eight, nine, 15 and 16. In three cases, specific encounters with the suffering of smallholder farmers was mentioned (senior executives one, three and four), with one of these encounters taking place as part of an event for senior executive organised by the UN Global Compact (senior executive one). Encounters with suffering others through growing up in poor communities featured in the narratives of senior executive four, six, 15, 16 and 17. The narrative of senior executive four cited among other influences the significance of a period of time working in a post-industrial region and encountering the

suffering resulting from job losses. The narrative of senior executive nine cited the significance of encountering the suffering of those with HIV/AIDS, and the suffering of those who lost family members and friends to HIV/AIDS. The narratives of senior executives 12 and 16 referenced the significance of encountering the suffering of others through documentaries and other media sources – for example in the case of senior executive 16 in relation to the Biafra War.

7.5.2.4. Masters of Justice

Different manifestations of commands from ‘Masters of Justice’ feature strongly: from significant political figures (personal injunctions from the UN Secretary General are cited frequently), from peer chief executives, from non-executive board members, from public intellectuals and academics, from significant family members, and also indirectly from authors of books and narrators of TV documentaries.

A number of narratives cite the significance of personal challenges received by the UN Secretary General (examples relate to both Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon) – including those of senior executive one, two, and interviewee 35. The narrative of senior executive six references the significance of challenge received from a government minister in Vietnam, and the narrative of senior executive four references the significance of challenge received from Hilary Clinton regarding gender.

The influence of challenges from peer CEOs featured in a number of narratives – Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, featured in the narratives of senior executive one and 15. The influence of injunctions from a predecessor CEO featured in the narrative of senior executive 10, as did the influence of a non-executive board member (in this case, Professor CK Prahalad, one of the originators of the concept of the Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid (Prahalad & Hart, 2002)). The influence of challenge from the academic and public intellectual Professor Jeffrey Sachs features in a number of narratives, including that of senior executive 11, 14 and interviewee 35. The narrative of senior executive two also references the significance of receiving challenge from academics

during an away-day retreat event organised by their then chief executive. A number of the narratives feature the influence of family members acting as 'Masters of Justice', including senior executive five, seven and 11. Some narratives featured the influenced of 'Masters of Justice' acting indirectly as authors or books or narrators of documentaries, such as in the narrative of senior executive 12 and 14.

7.6. Discussion: accounting for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in Deliberative Lobbying activities

Chapters six and seven have addressed the second research question of this thesis: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities?

To address this question, these two chapters have examined the narratives people involved in the action constructed to account for it. Specifically, the two chapters have examined two sub-questions. Chapter six examined the question: what narratives do people involved in the corporate lobbying activity construct to account for the action they are involved in? Chapter seven examined the question: what narratives do people involved construct to account for what influenced the action of senior executives? To perform this analysis, these two chapters analysed transcripts of interviews with individuals involved in the corporate lobbying activity representing companies.

The literature offers a number of starting points for considering this question, including arguments relating to commercial benefits, legitimacy challenges arising from shifts in macro-context, and senior executive leadership styles and value orientations. This thesis has sought to investigate what an examination of the empirical case of corporate lobbying for the SDGs can contribute to developing an understanding of how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities that builds on and further develops these multiple points of departure in the existing literature. Following critical hermeneutical principles, this thesis aims to

construct an understanding of what could account for this phenomenon that can be argued for, based on examination of a particular set of data, or texts, but that remains provisional and still open to doubt and critique. While some suspicion of the interpretation that will be advanced here must be retained, nevertheless, it is argued that it is useful in furthering theory and practice.

The analysis in chapter six identified the following themes in the narratives people involved in the corporate lobbying process constructed to make sense of the action they were involved in. The narratives constructed in these interview situations accounted for the occurrence of this action with reference to a combination of factors: some societal, some organisational, some relating to individuals occupying senior executive roles. The narratives of different participants in the process accounted for the occurrence of the lobbying activity with reference to a variety of combinations of the following. First: the societal need for more effective governance mechanisms and interventions to address collective challenges to advance social welfare; and the responsibility of businesses and business leaders to help support the introduction of such governance mechanisms and interventions, responsibility deriving from the increased power and influence of MNCs in the post-national context. Second: the organisational needs for effective societal governance, and the organisational benefits of improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy deriving from constructive policy engagement, and of activist government policy interventions that not only advance sustainable development and social welfare, but also serve to increase the size of markets available for certain products and services, provide the commercial basis for companies to do the right thing and achieve financial returns for doing so, mitigate operational risks arising from sustainable development challenges, and mitigate competitive risks that made it difficult for companies to do the right thing without losing market share to competitors who didn't. And third: in addition to these societal and organisational factors, the personal orientation of senior executives was significant. The presence or absence of the blessing of the CEO was a significant factor in whether or not the action could actually transpire, and the actions of former CEOs in shaping cultural norms within an organisation could be significant in creating the conditions whereby the logic of lobbying for more

ambitious public policy for sustainable development seemed may or may not seem reasonable.

Thus, in the narratives offered by participants, the understanding they construct and communicate in interview situations to account for the occurrence of the action they are involved in is neither straightforwardly related to short-term profit motives (to advance the interests of shareholders), longer-term organisational legitimacy concerns (to advance the interests of shareholders with a long-term horizon), nor concern to act for the public interest (to advance the interests of all stakeholders), but actually a complex mix of all three. Two particular themes are developed in relation to the specific ways in which the role of senior executives was perceived to be significant in these narratives: their role in 'creating the space' for this action, and their role in helping establish a general management approach and culture that made such action seem reasonable. Across these narratives, it is the nature of the senior executive's value orientation (to use Maak's language) or imaginative horizon aiming at (to use Ricoeur's language) that is attested to as being significant in enabling the lobbying action. Across these narratives references are made to the significance of something akin to a Social Welfare orientation and republican notion of citizenship among senior executives: that action is required because of the duty to advance social welfare for all stakeholders (sometimes explicitly including advancing the interests of shareholders), and that social welfare is sometimes best advanced through power-in-concert through state intervention, rather than just through protecting individual autonomy from state interference. Senior executives that exhibit a sense of the good in their imaginative horizon that is more akin to a Fiduciary Duty value orientation or liberal notion of citizenship are cited as making such lobbying action more difficult. While a case can be made that such lobbying could advance shareholder interests, in these narratives such lobbying action doesn't tend to occur unless there are also senior executives present who have a value orientation or sense of the good where acting in the public interest as much as shareholder interests is seen as the right thing to do.

The analysis in chapter seven identified the following themes in the narratives people involved in the corporate lobbying process constructed to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives. These themes included, first,

the personal exposure of senior executives to a range of different kinds of manifestation of the global transition to a post-national context, and second, the kind of hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpreted these phenomena, shaped by meanings critically appropriated through encounters with others and otherness over their lifetimes. The kinds of personal exposure of senior executives to a range of different kinds of manifestation of the global transition to a post-national context identified included different kinds of problems caused by governance gaps created in this process (including, for example, societal or commercial problems caused by poor governance of global issues (like water, for instance), through participation in professional networks such as the UN Global Compact or the World Economic Forum, experiencing being the target of NGO campaigning, or witnessing other companies abuse governance gaps), as well as personal exposure to the positive benefits of Political CSR activities engaged in to respond to these.

The kinds of meanings critically appropriated through encounters with others and otherness over their lifetimes that shaped the hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpreted these phenomena that were identified in the analysis included the following: values and norms critically appropriated from the particular values and norms of a range of different communities the individual has been part of at some stage, including family, local communities where the individual grew up, faith communities they have been a part of, organisational communities they have belonged to at some point in the past or at present, and also national or regional communities; values and norms critically appropriated through different kinds of educational experiences; concern for the welfare of friends or others the individual is in a relationship with and cares for, with particular reference to concern senior executives feel for the welfare of their children, as well as friends they may have (including friendship relationships developed with people during periods of life spent in developing countries) who suffer in some particular way that relates to one or more of the goals; sympathy for suffering others – particularly in relation to suffering others encountered during periods of life spent in developing countries, or growing up in poor communities, or also indirectly through TV news or documentaries; and different manifestations of commands from ‘Masters of Justice’ – from significant political figures, from peer chief executives, from non-executive

board members, from public intellectuals and academics, from significant family members, and also indirectly from authors of books and narrators of TV documentaries.

7.6.1. A critical interpretation

So what? How can an analysis of these narratives constructed in interview situations help us account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? The conclusion from a critical reading of these narratives would probably conclude: not that much. A critical interpretation would treat such narratives with suspicion. Following Alvesson, for example, a critical reading will doubt the face value meanings in these narratives for a number of reasons (Alvesson, 2003). First, the construction of the narratives by the interviewee will likely be influenced by a wide range of contextual features of the interview situation – the nature of the interviewer, the physical setting of the interview - different circumstances could likely have led to different narratives being constructed. The interviewer in this situation was a white male from the UK, introduced as a business school academic interested in Corporate Sustainability, and interview settings varied from immediately in the aftermath of meetings with policymakers or other business leaders, to one to one face to face meetings in corporate offices, to telephone interviews. All of these features of the interview setting could influence the construction of the narratives, different circumstances could have led to different narratives, reducing the trust we can place in them.

Second, the construction of the narratives by the interviewee will likely be influenced by the nature of the questions asked and what they think the research project is about and what might be interesting to say in that context – different narratives would likely have been constructed in different research projects with differently articulated aims and questions. In this case, the research project was introduced as seeking to understand corporate lobbying for government action on sustainable development. Although a brief summary of the purpose of the research was given prior to and at the outset of the research interviews, as Alvesson argues, the interviewee knows little about the project and likely relies on guesswork and fantasies about what it is about. A

research project with differently stated aims, and interview situations where interviewees formed different assumptions regarding what the project was about, and with interview questions probing in different directions, would likely lead to different narratives being constructed to account for the same phenomena.

Third, the narratives constructed are likely influenced by the role identity of the interviewee invoked in the interview situation, as the interviewee performs identity work. In this case, in the interview situations the interviewer sought to encourage interviewees to respond from the position of being senior business leaders or corporate executives active in corporate lobbying activity. Asking interviewees to invoke a different role identity in the interview situation could have led them to construct different narratives in relation to the same phenomena.

Fourth, the narratives constructed are likely influenced by a range of aims the interviewee is trying to achieve. On the one hand, Alvesson argues such narratives should be suspected on the basis that interviewees tend to engage in impression management, seeking in a less or more conscious way to give a good impression of themselves and the organisation they represent, which can influence the construction of narratives created in interview situations, with certain things presented in better light than they might otherwise have been, or certain details held back. But at the other end of this spectrum Alvesson argues that such narratives should be interpreted critically in the context of the operation of power – interviewees should be considered as politically aware and politically motivated actors, and the interview considered a site where actors engage in a struggle, seeking to influence meanings on politically contested subjects. Such action in interview situations can vary from actively seeking to characterise certain actions in a more or less favourable light, choosing not to disclose certain things which could negatively affect the interpretation they are seeking to achieve, all the way to active manipulation, half-truths and lying. Different political aims and power dynamics would likely have led to different narratives being constructed. It is valid to perform a critical interpretation of the narratives constructed in interview situations occurring in this research project and conclude that it is reasonable to suspect the interests of power and political

aims could account for the face-value meanings constructed in these narratives – potentially both the focus on moral arguments and collective good aims to account for the corporate lobbying activity, and the kinds of encounters with otherness cited as sources of influence on their action, but also potentially the focus on commercial arguments to the exclusion of moral arguments out of a desire to promote commercially-based interpretations of their action. This critical interpretation would suspect that references in interview narratives to aiming at advancing the collective public good would represent action in a contest for meaning, seeking to legitimise what was actually action aimed solely at furthering elite interests and corporate power. An alternative critical interpretation might suspect that references in these narratives to aiming at advancing corporate interests could equally represent action in a contest for meaning, in this interpretation seeking to legitimise with people that have a more Fiduciary Duty kind of value orientation or liberal notion of citizenship (who do not recognise the legitimacy of action aimed at the collective public good) action that was in fact aimed principally at advancing the collective public good.

In sum, the critical interpretation of the narratives constructed in these interview situations considered here is that the meanings within them can be dismissed for a variety of reasons that make them untrustworthy, chief among these being something like ‘well they would say that wouldn’t they’ – it is in the interest of business leaders and corporate representatives to account for their action in terms of moral good (or perhaps, counter-intuitively, also commercial gain) in the struggle for meaning that such action is part of.

7.6.2. A more trusting interpretation

As discussed in chapter three, a benefit of the critical hermeneutics approach is that it seeks to enable power relations to be considered as one dimension structuring meaning without requiring that a concern for the operation of power is the only dimension structuring meaning, not defining it entirely. A more trusting interpretation of these narratives reveals some potentially helpful insights in relation to the research question: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities?

Using a critical hermeneutics orientation to guide interpretation, these accounts can give us some limited insights into how participants in the action may have made sense of and attributed meaning to the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities. And given the privileged position of these individuals in the midst of this action, and that they are able to give some account to others of the meanings guiding their action and the sources of those meanings, although we must retain some suspicion, their narratives do have some value in helping others arrive at their own interpretation in response to the research question.

As discussed in chapter three, Herda argues that a critical hermeneutics approach involves the researcher configuring a narrative with a plot from the analysis and interpretation of texts – in interpreting the analysis of data, the task of the researcher is to develop a plot (Herda, 1999). What is the plot, the narrative, proposed here in this more trusting interpretation? How can a more trusting interpretation of these narratives help account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? How can a trusting interpretation help us account for why some organisations respond to the phenomenon of governance gaps created by economic globalization with ‘dark side’ exploitative responses, while others respond with ‘bright side’ Political CSR activities, such as Deliberative Lobbying?

The more trusting interpretation of these narratives proposed here suggests such ‘bright side’ action is associated (at least by participants in the action) with the presence of the following conditions: both the presence of the phenomenon of governance gaps, and the presence of senior executives who perceive one or more of three things – a sense of responsibility to help address these governance gaps for the benefit of wider society, and/or organisational benefit of improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy, and/or organisational benefit of more activist government intervention (which could be relating to increased market for products and services, and/or providing the commercial basis for companies to do the right thing and achieve financial returns for doing so, and/or mitigating operational competitive risks).

Many themes from the CPA, Political CSR and Responsible Leadership literatures echo and entwine in these actors' densely woven narratives, and Ricoeur's theory of motivated action and the ethical intention offers a valuable means for navigating and interpreting the interaction of macro- and micro-influences on this action. Interpreting these narratives through Ricoeur's lens suggests we could reasonably attempt to account for the occurrence of corporate lobbying for more ambitious government policy intervention sustainable development as linked to the presence of the combination of three things: the presence of the governance gaps phenomenon, the extent to which senior executives encounter manifestations of this phenomenon, and the hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpret these manifestations.

Governance gaps may be present, and they may be likely to materially affect two MNCs in similar ways, but that one MNC may respond with Political CSR activities such as Deliberative Lobbying while the other may not respond this way may be linked to the extent to which senior executives at each firm encounter manifestations of this phenomenon, and the hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpret these manifestations if they do encounter them.

Specifically, it is the nature of a senior executive's hermeneutic horizon (intersubjectively-shaped through the critical appropriation of values and norms and inherited meanings from encounters with others and otherness over a lifetime) that influences whether in interpreting such manifestations of governance gaps, they perceive a sense of responsibility to help address these governance gaps for the benefit of wider society, and/or organisational benefit of improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy, and/or organisational benefit of more activist government intervention.

An individual with a hermeneutic horizon more consistent with what Maak et al call a 'Social Welfare' value orientation (Maak et al., 2016) and a more republican notion of citizenship will be more likely to interpret manifestations of the post-national context with one or more of these three responses. Senior executives that have over their lifetimes critically appropriated these kinds of

inherited meanings through their encounters with others and otherness (including through participation in specific communities, relationships with friends, and encounters with suffering others and Masters of Justice) will be more likely to interpret manifestations of the post-national context in ways that lead them to conclude that lobbying for more government policy intervention is a sensible response.

An individual with a hermeneutic horizon more consistent with what Maak et al call a 'fiduciary duty' value orientation (Maak et al., 2016) and a more liberal notion of citizenship will be less likely to interpret manifestations of the post-national context with one of these responses. Senior executives that have over their lifetimes critically appropriated these kinds of inherited meanings through their encounters with others and otherness (including through participation in specific communities, relationships with friends, and encounters with suffering others and Masters of Justice) will be less likely to interpret manifestations of the post-national context in ways that lead them to conclude that lobbying for more government policy intervention is a sensible response.

This interpretation and proposal helps contribute to and potentially develop the existing literature in a number of ways. The CPA literature says that lobbying is driven by a profit motive, and struggles to account for lobbying for more activist government intervention because it assumes this adds cost and so cannot be explained by profit motive. The Political CSR literature says action to develop private governance mechanisms (and therefore, potentially also action to help develop more traditional public governance mechanisms) is linked to legitimacy concerns arising from governance gaps created by globalization, but struggles to account for why some MNCs but not others engage in this activity when both face the same context of governance gaps created by globalization. The Responsible Leadership literature develops the Political CSR literature in this respect by proposing the significance of senior executive Responsible Leadership style in influencing why some MNCs engage in Political CSR activities in this context more than others, with some unresolved tensions in this literature about extent to which Responsible Leadership style is influenced by shifts in the macro-institutional configuration (the shift to a post-national context)

or an individual senior executive's own value orientation, where the question of what influences such a value orientation is not explored in any detail.

The interpretation and proposal presented here, guided by and further developing Ricoeur's theory of motivated action and ethical intention, is that such lobbying action can be accounted for with reference to both shifts in the macro-institutional context (the governance gaps created by globalization referenced by the Political CSR literature), and the nature of the hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpret manifestations of this changed macro-institutional context that they encounter. The extent to which an MNC will engage in Political CSR activities such as Deliberative Lobbying can be linked to a degree to both legitimacy concerns arising from governance gaps created by globalization (referenced by the Political CSR literature), and a profit motive (core to the CPA literature, but contrary to its assumptions, participants in this process attested that there can be circumstances in which more activist government intervention can lead to increased profits), as well as a more public-spirited sense of responsibility (referenced by the Responsible Leadership literature). The nature of a senior executive's hermeneutic horizon, or 'value orientation' (in Maak et al's language), will influence the extent to which different senior executives will interpret manifestations of a changed macro-institutional context, and the extent to which they perceive a sense of responsibility to help address these governance gaps for the benefit of wider society, and/or perceive organisational benefit of improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy, and/or perceive organisational benefit of more activist government intervention. An individual's hermeneutic horizon is shaped by inherited meanings critically appropriated over a lifetime. How a senior executive interprets the context they encounter is influenced by the hermeneutic horizon they bring to it.

Such a view helps address the tension between Maak *et al's* focus on integrative leadership versus instrumental responsible leadership styles being influenced by senior executive value orientation, while Patzer *et al* argue that different responsible leadership styles have emerged in response to different institutional configurations linked to shifts in the socio-historical context. The proposal advanced here suggests that we can understand shifts in socio-

historical context and institutional configurations will be encountered and interpreted differently by different individuals based on the pattern of prior meanings they have already encountered and critically appropriated. As the pressures driving Political CSR relating to shifting institutional configurations increase, the proportion of business leaders adopting integrative as opposed to instrumental leadership styles will increase, but in each case how an individual interprets this shifting context and therefore whether or not an individual does begin to exhibit integrative or retain instrumental leadership styles will relate to their own individual (but intersubjectively shaped) sense of the good and ethical aim. Whether or not senior leaders in an organisation will respond to a changing global context which creates governance gaps with bright side or dark side responses will relate to both these individuals' levels of direct exposure to manifestations of this changing context (for example: societal or commercial problems created by governance gaps, reputational problems, new business opportunities created, NGO scrutiny and campaigns), and their particular ideas of the good shaped by their life experiences, and how far these may follow liberal lines emphasising welfare emerging from primarily acting in self-interest, or more republican lines emphasising welfare emerging from care for others and active involvement in and maintenance of the political sphere and just institutions.

7.6.3. Combining trusting and critical interpretations

A feature of interpretations performed using a critical hermeneutics approach is that they are never final – judgements are argued for on the basis of the best available evidence available at the time, and the levels of trust or suspicion that are placed on that evidence, always with the caveat that such judgements are provisional and subject to revision in light of further evidence coming to light and being available to support future interpretation.

The account provided here has presented an interpretation of the phenomena that is the focus of this study based on a relatively trusting analysis of the narratives constructed by individuals in interview situations, but also acknowledges that there are good reasons to have a level of distrust in the face-value meanings present in these narratives. The judgement is made that

there are some useful insights to be gained from this more trusting interpretation of these narratives, but that a degree of suspicion should be retained, given the reasons to have some doubts set out above. It is acknowledged that the interpretation presented here is open to critique on these grounds.

7.7. Conclusion

Chapters six and seven have addressed the second research question of this thesis: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities?

To address this question, these two chapters have examined the narratives people involved in the action constructed to account for it. Specifically, the two chapters have examined two sub-questions. Chapter six examined the question: what narratives do people involved in the corporate lobbying activity construct to make sense of the action they are involved in? Chapter seven examined the question: what narratives do people involved construct to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives? To perform this analysis, these two chapters analysed transcripts of interviews with individuals involved in the corporate lobbying activity representing companies.

The analysis in chapter seven identified the following themes in the narratives people involved in the corporate lobbying process constructed to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives. These themes included, first, the personal exposure of senior executives to a range of different kinds of manifestation of the global transition to a post-national context, including different kinds of problems caused by governance gaps created in this process (including, for example, societal or commercial problems caused by poor governance of global issues, eg water, through participation in professional networks such as the UN Global Compact or the World Economic Forum, experiencing being the target of NGO campaigning, witnessing other companies abuse governance gaps), as well as personal exposure to the positive benefits of Political CSR activities engaged in to respond to these. And second, the kind of hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpret these

phenomena, shaped by meanings critically appropriated through encounters with others and otherness over their lifetimes, including the following: values and norms critically appropriated from the particular values and norms of a range of different communities the individual has been part of at some stage, including family, local communities where the individual grew up, faith communities they have been a part of, organisational communities they have belonged to at some point in the past or at present, and also national or regional communities; values and norms critically appropriated through different kinds of educational experiences; concern for the welfare of friends or others the individual is in a relationship with and cares for, with particular reference to concern senior executives feel for the welfare of their children, as well as friends they may have (including friendship relationships developed with people during periods of life spent in developing countries) who suffer in some particular way that relates to one or more of the goals; sympathy for suffering others – particularly in relation to suffering others encountered during periods of life spent in developing countries, or growing up in poor communities, or also indirectly through TV news or documentaries; and different manifestations of commands from ‘Masters of Justice’ – from significant political figures, from peer chief executives, from non-executive board members, from public intellectuals and academics, from significant family members, and also indirectly from authors of books and narrators of TV documentaries.

The discussion at the conclusion of chapter seven considered the findings from chapters six and seven together and reflected on how we might interpret these narratives and what meaning we might draw, or construct, from them in relation to the overall research question, using a critical hermeneutics approach to consider both trusting and critical interpretations. The discussion first proposed a critical interpretation, setting out a number of arguments for doubting the face-value meanings in the narratives analysed in chapters six and seven, including that the construction of these narratives would likely be influenced by factors such as the nature of the interview setting, the nature of the questions asked and what interviewees thought the research project was about, the identities evoked in the interview situation, and the aims of the interviewee – variations in all these factors could have led to different narratives being constructed to account for the same phenomena, which gives grounds to doubt the meanings

developed in them. Specifically in relation to concerns regarding the aims of the interviewees, this critical interpretation set out grounds to doubt the face-value meanings in these narratives on the basis that, given the nature of the topic under discussion, it is reasonable to suspect the interests of power and political aims could account for the face-value meanings constructed in these narratives, with the interviews a site where interviewees engage in a struggle, seeking to influence meanings on politically contested subjects.

Following this critical interpretation, the discussion then presented a more trusting interpretation, arguing that while acknowledging the doubts set out above, the narrative accounts can give us some limited insights into how participants in the action may have made sense of and attributed meaning to the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities. And given the privileged position of these individuals in the midst of this action, and that they are able to give some account to others of the meanings guiding their action and the sources of those meanings, their narratives do have some value in helping others arrive at their own interpretation in response to the research question.

Interpreting these narratives through Ricoeur's lens suggests we could reasonably attempt to account for the occurrence of corporate lobbying for more ambitious government policy intervention on sustainable development as linked to the presence of the combination of three things: the presence of the governance gaps phenomenon, the extent to which senior executives encounter manifestations of this phenomenon, and the hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpret these manifestations.

The more trusting interpretation of these narratives proposed here suggests such 'bright side' action is associated (at least by participants in the action) with the presence of, first, the presence of the phenomenon of governance gaps, and second, the presence of senior executives who, due to the nature of their hermeneutic horizon, perceive one or more of three things when they encounter manifestations of this phenomenon – a sense of responsibility to help address these governance gaps for the benefit of wider society, and/or organisational benefit of improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy, and/or

organisational benefit of more activist government intervention (which could be relating to increased market for products and services, and/or providing the commercial basis for companies to do the right thing and achieve financial returns for doing so, and/or mitigating operational competitive risks).

An individual with a hermeneutic horizon more consistent with what Maak et al call a 'social welfare' value orientation (Maak et al., 2016) and a republican notion of citizenship will be more likely to interpret manifestations of the post-national context with one or more of these three responses. An individual with a hermeneutic horizon more consistent with what Maak et al call a 'fiduciary duty' value orientation (Maak et al., 2016) and a liberal notion of citizenship will be less likely to interpret manifestations of the post-national context with one of these responses. The hermeneutic horizon of a senior executive will be shaped by the meanings critically appropriated through encounters with others and otherness over their lifetime, including from communities participated in, friends in relationship with, suffering others sympathy is felt for, and challenges received from 'Masters of Justice'. How an individual interprets this shifting context and therefore whether or not an individual does begin to exhibit integrative or retain instrumental leadership styles and engage in Deliberative Lobbying activities will relate to their own individual (but intersubjectively shaped) sense of the good and ethical aim. Whether or not senior leaders in an organisation will respond to a changing global context which creates governance gaps with bright side or dark side responses will relate to both these individuals' levels of direct exposure to manifestations of this changing context (for example: societal or commercial problems created by governance gaps, reputational problems, new business opportunities created, NGO scrutiny and campaigns), and their particular ideas of the good shaped by their life experiences, and how far these may follow liberal lines emphasising welfare emerging from primarily acting in self-interest, or more republican lines emphasising welfare emerging from care for others and active involvement in and maintenance of the political sphere and just institutions.

8. Conclusion

8.1. What has this thesis found?

This thesis has sought to focus on the phenomenon of corporate lobbying for more activist government policy intervention in the economy to address sustainable development challenges and advance social welfare. It has done so by examining the case of corporate lobbying during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals over the period 2012-2015. It has specifically addressed two research questions. First: can the corporate lobbying that occurred during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals be seen as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development? And second: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? This choice of research questions is guided by the critical orientation of the study, the thesis's explicit interest in what should be aimed at in order to improve social welfare, and how such goals and priorities could be achieved. Given the history of debates regarding how best to organise to advance sustainable development particularly in relation to arguments over how far to rely on markets versus government intervention, and the significance of corporate power in global governance and history of corporate lobbying to prevent government intervention discussed earlier in this thesis, corporate lobbying in favour of more ambitious government intervention holds the promise of being potentially a helpful development for advancing social welfare in the form of sustainable development. This thesis therefore, in relation to a specific empirical case, focuses on the questions of whether or not such action can be considered a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, and what might account for the pursuit of such action by some organisations but not others. If such action can be judged helpful, understanding more about what accounts for its occurrence could help those who might be interested to try to encourage more of it.

The thesis has constructed a narrative in response to these two research questions based on a critical hermeneutical analysis of documents and interview transcripts relating to the corporate lobbying that took place during the

process to develop the UN SDGs between 2012 and 2015. This body of texts is both substantial and necessarily incomplete, but with this caveat does provide a meaningful basis to investigate these questions. This narrative has been presented over two sections, each comprising two chapters. Section one, comprising chapters four and five, examined the first research question: can the corporate lobbying that occurred during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals be seen as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development? It did so by applying the tests of the Deliberative Lobbying framework to the corporate lobbying activity in question. Section two, comprising chapters six and seven, examined the second research question: how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? It did so by examining the narratives constructed in interview situations by individuals involved in the lobbying process to account for the action they were involved in, and to account for what influenced the action of senior executives.

The narrative constructed here in chapters four to seven in response to these two research questions can be summarised as follows.

8.1.1. Summarising findings in relation to the first research question

In response to the first research question – can the corporate lobbying that occurred during the process to develop the UN Sustainable Development Goals be seen as a helpful contribution to advancing social welfare and sustainable development? – the analysis presented here concludes that on balance, such lobbying does meet the tests of the Deliberative Lobbying framework and can be judged a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, but with some caveats.

The lobbying activities associated with the UN Global Compact, the HLP Business Consultation and the Business Manifesto are judged to have all broadly met the three process tests of inclusive discourse, transparency and accountability with a few minor caveats. The lobbying associated with the ICC Global Business Alliance is not judged to have met these three process tests.

In terms of whether this lobbying activity meets the test of being aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others, a view regarding the lobbying associated with the ICC Global Business Alliance cannot be reached because this lobbying was not conducted in the public domain, and private domain documents were not available to this study. The lobbying associated with the UN Global Compact, the HLP Business Consultation and the Business Manifesto is judged here to have met this test, but some ambiguity is acknowledged.

As discussed in the conclusion to chapter four, on scope of issues and technical framing, the lobbying positions taken by the private sector were largely aligned with the positions of others pushing for the most ambitious and effective SDGs framework possible, pushing for a broadening of the scope of issues to include climate change and other environmental issues, good governance, strong institutions, human rights and rule of law, and inequality. On technical framing, corporate lobbying was aligned with the positions of others that draw on learning from the MDGs regarding those aspects of the framing that had been judged particular strengths and those areas that should be different.

Corporate lobbying on means of implementation is judged to be more ambiguous, simultaneously lobbying to reproduce and challenge existing power relations at the same time. Much of what the private sector was calling for in terms of means of implementation can be judged to be consistent with the widely criticised Washington Consensus, with its emphasis as the private sector as the primary engine of development and the need to governments to prioritise policy interventions that create an 'enabling environment' that maximise the opportunities for business to create financial wealth. To this extent, this action can be judged to be a continuation of the corporate lobbying for neo-liberalism that has been so widely criticised. But at the same time, much of what the private sector was calling for was more activist government policy intervention in the economy to address market failures in ways that could expose MNCs to more regulation and increase costs, specifically the increased use of policy instruments such as taxes, subsidies and standards to price externalities, and

also changes to capital market rules affecting the valuation of companies in ways that might advance sustainable development. This corporate action marks a departure from the neo-liberal focus on deregulation and minimal state that has been widely criticised, and it is this aspect of the corporate lobbying that is judged here to mean that on balance the corporate lobbying can be judged to have met the first test of the deliberative lobbying framework: that the action is aimed at achieving public policy outcomes that help address societal challenges and have consensus backing from all stakeholders, rather than aimed simply at achieving public policy outcomes that ensure corporate interests prevail, if necessary at the expense of others. However, the ambiguity must be noted: a more critical interpretation might conclude that corporate lobbying for a central role for business in plans for the achievement of the goals, the calls for the continued emphasis on the neo-liberal 'enabling environment' and voluntary initiatives, and the bias towards market-based policy instruments, all point towards business making some limited accommodation of the challenges of others in order to maintain its privileged status and power in society. The more trusting interpretation (favoured here) concludes that corporate lobbying for more active state intervention in the economy through use of a broad range of policy instruments as described above does indeed mark a tempering of corporate commitment to neo-liberalism and can be considered a helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development.

8.1.2. Summarising findings in relation to the second research question

In response to the second research question – how can we account for the participation of some business leaders and corporations in such lobbying activities? – the thesis proposes a narrative that links the existence of governance gaps arising from the global institutional reconfiguration that occurred as a result of economic globalisation, the level of personal exposure of senior executives to manifestations of these governance gaps, and the nature of the personal hermeneutical horizon and intersubjectively shaped sense of the good with which senior executives interpret these manifestations they encounter.

Specifically, it proposes that it is the nature of a senior executive's hermeneutic horizon (intersubjectively-shaped through the critical appropriation of values and norms and inherited meanings from encounters with others and otherness over a lifetime) that influences whether or not in interpreting such manifestations of governance gaps, they perceive a sense of responsibility to help address these governance gaps for the benefit of wider society, and/or organisational benefit of improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy from constructive policy engagement on these questions, and/or organisational benefit of more activist government intervention to help address these governance gaps.

Senior executives whose intersubjectively-shaped imaginative horizon aimed at in everyday action emphasises a sense of the good associated with an obligation to create long-term value for all stakeholders, the advancement of social welfare through exercising power-in-common through the state and public policy, and an assumption that welfare is advanced when each individual has a sense of obligation towards the welfare of others and takes on the responsibility of acting collective with others towards the collective good, senior executives aiming at a sense of the good like this are more likely to tend to interpret manifestations of governance gaps they encounter in ways that lead them to conclude that corporate lobbying for more government intervention to address these is an appropriate response.

Senior executives whose sense of the good aimed at is associated with an assumption that social welfare is advanced through each individual in society focusing on pursuing their own individual interests and a market economy which emphasises the fiduciary duty of managers to maximise the creation of financial value for owners/shareholders, and that state intervention in the economy should be limited to protect the autonomy of the individual, senior executives aiming at a sense of the good like this are less likely to tend to interpret manifestations of governance gaps they encounter in ways that lead them to conclude that corporate lobbying for more government intervention to address these is an appropriate response.

This proposal is developed from a critical hermeneutical analysis of the narratives constructed in interview situations by individuals involved in the

lobbying process to make sense of the action they were involved in, and to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives.

The narratives constructed in these interview situations accounted for the occurrence of this action with reference to a combination of factors: some societal, some organisational, some relating to individuals occupying senior executive roles. The narratives of different participants in the process accounted for the occurrence of the lobbying activity with reference to a variety of combinations of the following. First: the societal need for more effective governance mechanisms and interventions to address collective challenges to advance social welfare; and the responsibility of businesses and business leaders to help support the introduction of such governance mechanisms and interventions, responsibility deriving from the increased power and influence of MNCs in the post-national context. Second: the organisational needs for effective societal governance, and the organisational benefits of improved stakeholder relations, reputation and legitimacy deriving from constructive policy engagement, and of activist government policy interventions that not only advance sustainable development and social welfare, but also serve to increase the size of markets available for certain products and services, provide the commercial basis for companies to do the right thing and achieve financial returns for doing so, mitigate operational risks arising from sustainable development challenges, and mitigate competitive risks that made it difficult for companies to do the right thing without losing market share to competitors who didn't. And third: in addition to these societal and organisational factors, the personal orientation of senior executives was significant. The presence or absence of the blessing of the CEO was a significant factor in whether or not the action could actually transpire, and the actions of former CEOs in shaping cultural norms within an organisation could be significant in creating the conditions whereby the logic of lobbying for more ambitious public policy for sustainable development may or may not seem reasonable.

The narratives constructed in these interview situations to make sense of what influenced the action of senior executives identified themes including, first, the significance of the personal exposure of senior executives to a range of different kinds of manifestation of the global transition to a post-national context,

including different kinds of problems caused by governance gaps created in this process (including, for example, societal or commercial problems caused by poor governance of global issues, eg water, through participation in professional networks such as the UN Global Compact or the World Economic Forum, experiencing being the target of NGO campaigning, witnessing other companies abuse governance gaps), as well as personal exposure to the positive benefits of Political CSR activities engaged in to respond to these. And second, the significance of the kind of hermeneutic horizon with which senior executives interpret these phenomena, shaped by meanings critically appropriated through encounters with others and otherness over their lifetimes, including the following: values and norms critically appropriated from the particular values and norms of a range of different communities the individual has been part of at some stage, including family, local communities where the individual grew up, faith communities they have been a part of, organisational communities they have belonged to at some point in the past or at present, and also national or regional communities; values and norms critically appropriated through different kinds of educational experiences; concern for the welfare of friends or others the individual is in a relationship with and cares for, with particular reference to concern senior executives feel for the welfare of their children, as well as friends they may have (including friendship relationships developed with people during periods of life spent in developing countries) who suffer in some particular way that relates to one or more of the goals; sympathy for suffering others – particularly in relation to suffering others encountered during periods of life spent in developing countries, or growing up in poor communities, or also indirectly through TV news or documentaries; and different manifestations of commands from ‘Masters of Justice’ – from significant political figures, from peer chief executives, from non-executive board members, from public intellectuals and academics, from significant family members, and also indirectly from authors of books and narrators of TV documentaries.

A critical interpretation of these narratives would treat the face-value meanings apparent within them with suspicion on a number of grounds. Narratives constructed in interview situations can be influenced by numerous factors which mean that different narratives would be constructed in different situations to account for the same phenomena, making any such narratives untrustworthy.

These include, for example, the nature of the interview setting, the nature of the questions asked and what interviewees thought the research project was about, the identities evoked in the interview situation, and the aims of the interviewee – variations in all these factors could have led to different narratives being constructed to account for the same phenomena, which gives grounds to doubt the meanings developed in them. Specifically in relation to concerns regarding the aims of the interviewees, the critical interpretation proposed here doubts the face-value meanings in these narratives on the basis that, given the nature of the topic under discussion, it is reasonable to suspect the interests of power and political aims could account for the face-value meanings constructed in these narratives, with the interviews a site where interviewees engage in a struggle, seeking to influence meanings on politically contested subjects.

However, the thesis argues that one of the benefits of a critical hermeneutical approach is that it seeks to enable power relations to be considered as one dimension structuring meaning without requiring that a concern for the operation of power is the only dimension structuring meaning. This approach gives rise to the more trusting interpretation set out in the proposal outlined above.

8.1.3. Meanings emerging when considering both sets of findings together

What narrative emerges in response to these two research questions when we consider them together in light of the analysis presented here? Four possibilities present themselves. The first combines the two trusting interpretations outlined above. In this narrative, the corporate lobbying during the process to develop the SDGs is interpreted as a broadly helpful contribution to advancing sustainable development, and its occurrence is linked to the kind of hermeneutical horizon with which senior executives interpret manifestations of these governance gaps they encounter – corporate lobbying for more activist government intervention on sustainable development is more likely to occur when the hermeneutical horizon with which senior executives meet encounters with manifestations of governance gaps has been shaped by meanings critically appropriated over a lifetime which tend to emphasise ideals of the good associated with Social Welfare value orientations and republican notions of active citizenship.

The second narrative combines the two critical interpretations outlined above. In this narrative, the corporate lobbying during the process to develop the SDGs is interpreted critically as business making some limited accommodation of the challenges of others in order to maintain its privileged status and power in society. The interview situations are interpreted critically as a site where interviewees engage in a struggle, seeking to influence meanings on politically contested subjects, with the resulting narratives suspected as having been constructed with the aim of presenting the corporate action in the best possible light for furthering corporate aims: characterising the lobbying action as resulting from senior executives aiming at the collective good when in fact it was aiming at the maintenance existing power relations.

The third narrative combines a trusting and critical interpretation. In this narrative, the corporate lobbying during the process to develop the SDGs is interpreted critically as business making some limited accommodation of the challenges of others in order to maintain its privileged status and power in society, but the action of the individuals involved in the process interpreted more trustingly as action aimed at furthering the collective good. Actors in this process may be considered to have believed in good faith they were acting to advance sustainable development, but in fact judged in practice to have merely inadvertently and naïvely contributed to maintaining corporate power. Equally, a fourth narrative combines trusting and critical interpretations the other way around. In this narrative, the actors are suspected of acting primarily with the aim only to further corporate interests and maintain corporate power, but the end result – corporate lobbying for more government policy intervention – is judged to be (inadvertently) helpful for advancing sustainable development.

It is the first narrative that is argued for here, but some suspicion is retained, and it is acknowledged that it is possible to argue for the others. A reader does not need to conclude that one of these interpretations is more valid than any of the others – it can be that each interpretation could be valid depending on which specific different actors are focused on within the process: all four permutations could be going on at the same time, some actors seeking to challenge existing power relations while others seek to maintain existing power relations for

example. It can even be argued that, following the principles of critical hermeneutics, that the extent to which any reader of this thesis will conclude one of these four interpretations is more valid than the other three is likely to be shaped as much by the hermeneutic horizon of the reader as it is by the analysis and argument presented here.

8.2. Key contributions

The conclusions of this thesis represent a number of key contributions, both to the literature and to practice, as well as presenting implications for further research. Each of these areas is discussed below.

8.2.1. Contributions to the literature

This thesis has engaged with a variety of literatures, including both the CPA literature and the Political CSR literature, and two of its branches, the Deliberative Lobbying literature and the Responsible Leadership literature. The findings of this thesis make contributions to all of these literatures. The thesis also makes a contribution to the research methods literature.

The Political CSR literature has focused primarily on the phenomenon of voluntary initiatives, private governance and soft law, rather than corporate lobbying to influence conventional hard-law public policy, and leading authors in the field have called for more focus on the relationship between corporate action and more traditional 'hard law' public policy at the level of both national government and intergovernmental institutions. Lock and Seele have responded by developing a framework based on Habermasian critical theory outlining what kind of characteristics corporate lobbying ought to have in order for it to help contribute to advancing social welfare, coining the phrase 'deliberative lobbying'. Lock and Seele present empirical applications of their framework to cases of corporate lobbying that do not meet the tests of their framework, using the framework to propose what the corporations in question could have done instead.

This thesis responds to the call from Political CSR scholars for more research on the relationship between corporate action and more traditional 'hard law' public policy at the level of both national government and intergovernmental institutions. It does this by building on Lock and Seele's contribution to contribute an empirical application of the Deliberative Lobbying framework to a case that has the potential to meet the tests of the framework, in the process taking themes set out in Lock and Seele's paper and further developing them to create a set of questions with which to examine the empirical phenomenon. It makes the further contribution to this literature, based on this application of the framework in this context, which is that while the framework can give a relatively unambiguous result when applied in the context of relatively conventional instrumental lobbying activity, it can give more ambiguous results in more complex borderline cases such as the case examined here. Further work to refine the framework in light of this would be valuable.

This thesis responds to the call from Political CSR scholars for more research into 'bright side' versus 'dark side' responses to the governance gaps created by economic globalisation, and builds on the contributions of Maak et al and Patzer et al (Maak et al., 2016; Patzer et al., 2018). It does this by employing Ricoeur's theory of the self, motivated action, the ethical intention, and what shapes the intent to engage in action to develop collective rules. The thesis offers an interpretation of an empirical case which builds on and further develops the proposals of the Responsible Leadership literature that the orientation of senior executives can have some influence on whether or not organisations respond to governance gaps arising from economic globalisation with 'bright side' Political CSR activities, such as Deliberative Lobbying. The thesis proposes that it is the nature of a senior executive's hermeneutic horizon (intersubjectively-shaped through the critical appropriation of values and norms and inherited meanings from encounters with others and otherness over a lifetime) that influences whether or not in interpreting such manifestations of governance gaps, they perceive a sense of responsibility to help address these governance gaps for the benefit of wider society, and/or a range of organisational benefits that would derive from more activist government intervention to help address these governance gaps. It proposes that senior executives are more likely to interpret manifestations of governance gaps this

way and conclude lobbying for more government policy intervention to address these governance gaps is a sensible response if their hermeneutical horizon has been shaped by meanings critically appropriated from a range of different kinds of encounters over a lifetime that emphasise notions of responsibility associated with a 'Social Welfare' value orientation and republican notion of citizenship.

In making these contributions, the thesis makes an additional contribution to the Responsible Leadership literature by further developing Maak et al's two categories of senior executive value orientation – social welfare and fiduciary duty – by connecting them with republican and liberal conceptions of citizenship.

The thesis also further develops the proposals made by Ricoeur in his theory of solicitude by identifying and elaborating on the range of different kinds of encounters with others and otherness that can shape the hermeneutical horizon of senior executives towards a sense of the good consistent with a Social Welfare value orientation and a republican notion of active citizenship.

The thesis also makes a contribution to the CPA literature. As noted above, two core assumptions of the CPA literature are that lobbying action is aimed at furthering the economic interests of the firm, and that regulation and government intervention increases costs and therefore firms would not lobby for it as it would not be in their economic interests. The analysis presented in this thesis provides the grounds for suggesting that both of these assumptions should be questioned.

Finally, this thesis in addition makes a contribution to the research methods literature through its articulation of a sixth principle of a critical hermeneutics research methodology – otherness and the self – based on what a reading of Ricoeur's 1992 work *Oneself as Another* adds to the principles of critical hermeneutics already articulated by Prasad and others (Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Mir, 2002; Ricoeur, 1992).

8.2.2. Contributions to practice

As noted in the introduction, many people are engaged in work to address pressing interconnected global challenges, trying to work out how best to organise to tackle these challenges and achieve ‘sustainability transitions’. Many practitioners engaged in this work have argued greater public policy intervention is required, and they have identified corporate power in global governance and corporate lobbying of governments to prevent such public policy intervention as a barrier to achieving sustainability transitions.

This thesis makes a number of contributions that could provide useful insight to advancing this practice. It has identified the emerging phenomenon of corporate advocacy for more activist government intervention and asked first whether such a phenomenon is a helpful development for work aimed at achieving sustainability transitions? Is it really as good as it seems? The contribution it makes is that the emergence of this phenomenon should be welcomed by those working towards achieving sustainability transitions, but with some caution. A trusting interpretation of this phenomenon recognises its potential contribution in achieving sustainability transitions, but a more critical interpretation suggests that it may simultaneously represent action to maintain existing power relations and corporate power.

The thesis also asks what might account for the occurrence of such action by some companies but not others, because if such action can be judged helpful, understanding more about what accounts for its occurrence could help those who might be interested to try to encourage more of it.

Many practitioners working to try to achieve sustainability transitions share some of the assumptions core to the CPA literature and the general CSR literature – that corporate action is always aimed only at furthering the economic interests of the firm. After the general failure of early attempts to engage corporate actors in sustainability transitions using moral arguments, it is now a norm that ‘business case’ arguments must be employed if one seeks to engage corporate actors in sustainability transitions. The contribution of this thesis is that it could be helpful to take a more nuanced approach to this practice. While

a healthy degree of scepticism should be retained, as the critical interpretation calls for, the more trusting interpretation of the narratives constructed as part of this thesis suggests a complex combination of public good and commercial benefit outcomes feature in the aims of business leaders that do engage in action to further sustainable development, such as lobbying governments to enact more activist public policy interventions. Such action is associated both, first, with levels of personal exposure to things like societal and commercial problems created by sustainability challenges, and the positive impacts (societal and commercial) that engagement in action to address these can have, often achieved through participation in professional networks such as the UN Global Compact and the World Economic Forum, and, second, with the distinct individual (but intersubjectively shaped) hermeneutic horizon each senior executive brings to the interpretation of their encounters with these kinds of phenomena – what kinds of ideas of the good they have critically appropriated through different kinds of encounter with others and otherness over their lifetime. The kinds of values and norms of different kinds of communities the individual has been a part of make a difference; the kinds of values and norms of the company an individual keeps makes a difference: the extent to which the individual has encounters with suffering others makes a difference (for example the extent to which they've spent time encountering the suffering of others in developing countries); the challenges received by others makes a difference: being exhorted to action by the likes of the UN Secretary General, political leaders, peer CEOs, public intellectuals like Jeffrey Sachs, academics and others might not be generally considered to make much difference at the time, but – according to the narratives of the people involved in this action – does make a contribution to shaping their action.

These insights suggest, first, that a wider range of rhetorical strategies over and above appeals to 'the business case' might be employed by those seeking to engage industry in sustainability transitions in general, and lobbying action to persuade governments to implement more activist public policy interventions in particular. But a delicate line must be navigated in seeking to both engage senior executives on grounds of the public good whilst still retaining a degree of suspicion that any corporate action could be aimed as much at maintaining

existing power relations and corporate power as furthering sustainable development.

Second, these insights suggest not only thinking about the existing life experiences of contemporary CEOs and what these might mean for the best grounds for trying to engage them in sustainability transitions, but also how the life experiences of today's and tomorrow's senior executives might be influenced to actively develop senses of the good in the lifeplans aimed at that are consistent with a Social Welfare value orientation, and republican conception of active citizenship. The emphasis on the hermeneutic horizon of senior executives and what has influenced it directs attention at those involved in the education of executives, and those involved in the recruitment and selection of senior executives. What kinds of life experiences should those involved in recruitment and selection seek out and value? What kinds of life experiences, values and norms should those involved in the education of senior executives seek to develop? The analysis presented here suggests that it is not only important to raise awareness among current and future business leaders about the business case for Corporate Sustainability. It is also important to develop a sense of active citizenship in the republican tradition, and that classrooms do have an important role in this, but so do the values and norms of communities participated in, the values and norms of friends, the encounters with suffering others, and challenges from Masters of Justice in many different contexts. Educators and others have a role to seek to create opportunities for these kinds of experiences. Those responsible for recruitment and selection of today's and tomorrow's business leaders could actively seek out and value such experiences. This thesis suggests that these practices could make a difference to those seeking to achieve sustainability transitions.

8.2.3. Limitations of the study, and implications for further research

The findings from this thesis, coupled with limitations identified, suggest a number of pathways for further research.

First, this thesis has been based on the detailed examination of just one empirical case of corporate lobbying for more activist government intervention

to advance sustainable development. The level of detailed analysis of this particular case is one of the thesis's strengths, but the focus on a single case could also be seen as a limitation. The field would benefit from more empirical studies of other examples of this emerging phenomenon.

Second, this study has focused primarily on the narratives of individuals that represented companies that did engage in corporate lobbying action to seek activist government intervention to advance sustainable development. This was a deliberate choice in the research design and has yielded rich results, but the lack of focus on narratives from individuals from companies that did not engage in such lobbying action could be seen as a limitation. Future studies would benefit from greater engagement with companies that were approached to participate in such action but declined to do so.

Third, as discussed above, this thesis has identified that the Deliberative Lobbying framework, when applied in the context of more complex borderline cases such as the case examined here, can give more ambiguous results than when applied to cases of lobbying that clearly do not meet its tests. The field would benefit from further work to develop the framework to respond to this.

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval



University of Exeter Business School
Ethical Approval Form: Research Students

Please refer to 'Business School Ethics Form Guidance' when completing the form.

This form is to be completed by the research student. When completing the form be mindful that the purpose of the document is to clearly explain the **ethical considerations** of the research being undertaken.

Once completed, please submit the form **electronically and a signed hard copy** to Helen Bell at H.E.Bell@exeter.ac.uk. A copy of your approved Research Ethics Application Form together with accompanying documentation **must be bound into your PhD thesis**.

Part A: Background

| | | | |
|---|--|--------|---------------------------|
| Student name | Matthew Gitsham | | |
| Supervisors names | Ajit Nayak, Jonathan Gosling | | |
| Title of thesis | <i>The changing role of business leaders in global governance: A study of the role of business leaders in shaping the UN Sustainable Development Goals</i> | | |
| Date of entry | Oct 2013 | Status | FT/PT/Continuation |
| Start and estimated end date of the research | Start: July 2014 End: Dec 2015 | | |
| Aims and objectives of the research | To interpret and theorise why and how business leaders engage in global governance processes relating to sustainable development | | |
| Please indicate any sources of funding for the research | - | | |

Part B: Ethical Considerations

| | |
|---|--|
| Describe the methodology that will be applied in the project (no more than 250 words) | <p>The project will involve semi-structured interviews with senior business leaders reflecting on their experience of participating in processes to develop the Post 2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p> <p>The project may also involve observation of these individuals participating in meetings to discuss and develop the SDGs. If this is possible, detailed observation and notes will be limited to those individuals who have given consent to be observed.</p> <p>Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Observations will not be recorded – detailed written notes will be taken instead.</p> |
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| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Describe the method by which you will recruit participants and gain their informed consent. If written consent will not be obtained, this must be justified.</p> <p><i>[Note: Please attach a copy of any Information Statements and Consent Forms used, including translation if research is to be conducted with non-English speakers]</i></p> | <p>The processes to develop the SDGs that will be studied are being coordinated by Unilever and the UN Global Compact. These two organisations have agreed to make introductions for me to approach business leaders involved in the process to ask permission for interviews.</p> <p>Those individuals who agree to interviews may also be asked whether observation of their activities in meetings will also be possible. In addition, either Unilever or the UN Global Compact (whichever is organising the meetings in question) will be asked to give consent for me to observe the meeting.</p> <p>In the case of both interviews and observations, individuals will be given background information about the project before being asked to confirm in writing that they are happy to participate.</p> |
| <p>Will there be any possible harm that your project may cause to participants (e.g. psychological distress or repercussions of a legal, political or economic nature)? What precautions will be taken to minimise the risk of harm to participants?</p> | <p>Interviewees will be senior business leaders and so therefore to some extent public figures (ie individuals in whom there may potentially be some media interest etc). Thus, there may be reputational risks to these individuals from participating in the study and their comments entering the public domain.</p> <p>To manage this risk, all interviews and observations will be conducted on a confidential basis. Steps will be taken to ensure that interviewees cannot be recognised from any anonymous quotes. If the nature of the material makes this difficult, interviewees will be approached in retrospect to check whether they are content for specific material to be published as part of the thesis.</p> |
| <p>How will you ensure the security of the data collected? What will happen to the data at the end of the project, (if retained, where and how long for)?</p> <p><i>[Note: If the project involves obtaining or processing personal data relating to living individuals, (e.g. by recording interviews with subjects even if the findings will subsequently be made anonymous), you will need to ensure that the provisions of the Data Protection Act are complied with. In particular you will need to seek advice to ensure that the subjects provide sufficient consent and that the personal data will be properly stored, for an appropriate period of time.]</i></p> | <p>Confirmation of consent, audio recordings, written notes and transcripts will all be stored securely, either electronically on a hard drive (and backed up), or on paper in the case of handwritten notes. Copies will be kept for at least five years.</p> |

Part C: Ethical Assessment

Please complete the following questions in relation to your research project.

| | yes | no | n/a |
|--|-----|----|-----|
| Will participants' rights, safety, dignity and well-being be actively respected? | X | | |
| Will you describe the main details of the research process to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect? | X | | |
| Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary? | X | | |
| Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason? | X | | |
| Will confidentiality be appropriately maintained at all stages of the project, including data collection, storage, analysis and reporting? | X | | |
| Will any highly personal, private or confidential information be sought from participants? | | X | |
| Will participants be involved whose ability to give informed consent may be limited (e.g. children)? | | X | |
| Will the project raise any issues concerning researcher safety? | | X | |
| Are there conflicts of interest caused by the source of funding? | | X | |

Please provide any additional information which may be used to assess your application in the space below.

Part D: Supervisor's Declaration

As the supervisor for this research I can confirm that I believe that all research ethics issues have been considered in accordance with the University Ethics Policy and relevant research ethics guidelines.

Name: Ajit Nayak (Primary Supervisor)

Signature: Ajit Nayak

Date: 25 June 2014

Part E: Ethical Approval

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Comments of Research Ethics Officer and PGR Management Board.</p> <p><i>[Note: Have potential risks have been adequately considered and minimised in the research? Does the significance of the study warrant these risks being taken? Are there any other precautions you would recommend?]</i></p> | |
| <p>This project has been reviewed according to School procedures and has now been approved.</p> <p>Name: (Research Ethics Officer)</p> <p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p> | |

Gannon, Kate

Mon 06/10/2014 12:30

Inbox

To:

Gitsham, Matthew;

You replied on 06/10/2014 12:41.

Dear Matthew

I can confirm that your ethical approval has been passed by Varuni . A hard copy will be signed shortly and I will send you a copy at that point.

Thanks

Kate

Best wishes

Kate

Kate Gannon

Senior Administrator Research Programmes (Secondment Cover)

University of Exeter Business School

Tel. 6255

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