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Corporate Social Responsibility Reshaping International Casting?

A Minor Field Study on CSR in a Chinese Context and the
Political Role of Multinational Corporations.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to study how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) may change the role of corporations in an international political context. As a case study on this theme, part of the thesis is focused on how CSR may influence areas concerning human rights in China. The study is undertaken from a discourse theoretical approach and is hence stressing the dialectical constituting relationship of language and the social world. Since CSR is defined through different discourses, and initially through discourses stressing economic values and human rights, the thesis seeks to understand the balance of these discourses in different contexts. This discursive interaction is also important to understand when one looks at the role of multinational corporations with CSR-policies. The analysis is divided on the production phase where the CSR concept is developed and on the Chinese consumption phase where the CSR concept is integrated in a new a context.

The conclusions are that CSR mainly are defined as a business case through a business discourse, which merely reproduces existing conditions and roles. However, there are a few signs that the adoption of CSR widens how some corporations identify themselves and in these cases they do tread on the political area. In the Chinese case one may also draw the conclusion that a nationalistic discourse is important in the definition of CSR. When CSR is defined as foreign it is rejected, but when CSR is defined as Chinese the approach is much more affirmative and it also makes it possible to include values outside the business discourse that shows similarities to values of the human rights discourse.

Key words: CSR, discourse, multinational corporations, China, human rights

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Table of Content

1 Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Aim	1
1.1.1 Framing Reality	2
1.1.2 ...and Moulding Questions	3
1.2 Disposition	4
1.3 Definitions and Delimitations	4
1.3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility	5
1.3.2 CSR in Practice	5
1.4 The Minor Field Study	5
2 Theory	7
2.1 Theoretical Points of Departure	7
2.1.1 Power and Knowledge	8
2.2 Discourse	10
2.2.1 The Net Metaphor	10
2.5 The Individual in Discourses – Slave or Master	12
3 Methodology	13
3.1 Interviews	13
3.1.1 Selection	14
3.1.2 Ethical Issues	14
3.2 The Analytical Structure	15
3.2.1 Principles for Discourse Identification	16
3.2.2 Defining a Human Rights Discourse and a Business Discourse	17
4 The Production Phase	19
4.1 The Development and Driving Forces for CSR	19
4.1.1 Pressure Groups	20
4.1.2 Investors	21
4.2 Risk Management and Business Cases – CSR through a Business Discourse	22
4.3 Universal Ethics – CSR in a Human Rights Discourse	22
4.4 Merging Business and Ethics – Sliding Subject Positions	24
5 The Consumption Phase	26
5.1 The Rejection of CSR	26
5.1.1 A Threat to Profitability and Growth	26
5.1.2 A Threat to Stability	28
5.1.3 Private – Public	29
5.2 The Adoption of CSR	30
5.2.1 Profitability, Growth and Adjustments to Market	30
5.2.2 The Chinese Resemblance	31
6 Concluding Summary	34
6.1 CSR through Different Discourses	34
6.2 CSR and Human Rights in China	35
6.3 MNCs as Political Actors?	35

7 References	36
Appendix 1	38

List of Figures

Figure 1: Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model for Discourse Analysis.....	11
Figure 2: The Net Metaphor.....	13
Figure 3: CSR as a Floating Signifier in an Order of Discourse.....	20

1 Introduction

Is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) a controversial issue in China? It is a difficult question to answer. No, since CSR is a natural component in Chinese business and community. There are links both to ancient traditional values as well as to later socialist ideology. That business should take responsibility for the community in which it exists is an obvious assumption in the Chinese society that has only been challenged when the Chinese market opened up for foreign investments and international trade a couple of decades ago. Today, when focus is more and more drawn to conditions of production, the willingness to invest in sustainability is great and it is compatible with the policy for a harmonious society¹ recently declared by the Chinese government.

On the other hand yes, since CSR is sometimes viewed as just another tool of Western imperialists trying to interfere with internal affairs and hidden protectionism. CSR is on everyone's lips and there seems to be a countless number of seminars, conferences and initiatives dealing with CSR in China. However, quite often titles and contents of lectures are changed, at the last moment rooms cease to be available for CSR training and seminars and conference delegates suddenly experience a notorious bureaucracy when applying for visas and unfortunately end up missing the whole conference.

What then is so mysterious about CSR in China? Why is it both welcomed and, seemingly, rejected? How is CSR defined and interpreted? And could it be that CSR have different meanings in different contexts? To study this I will approach the questions from a discourse theoretical angle. In connection to this I also try to understand how CSR changes the role and responsibilities of Multinational Corporations (MNCs), which might have implications for the traditional arrangements of actors on the international arena.

1.1 Background and Aim

For quite some time I have been interested in a phenomenon named Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). On a general level I have found it exiting to view how the barrier between public and private responsibility is eroding. A thorough elaboration on CSR will follow below, but for now one can establish that big corporations increasingly take on the tasks to improve and monitor labour conditions, environmental protection and

¹ The policy for a harmonious socialist society aims to point out the way for the future development of China. It is applied on most areas in Chinese politics, but is especially focusing on problems that have arose from the blistering economic growth of China (Washington Post 2006, www.china.org.cn).

human rights, tasks that traditionally lay with the public sector. In formalising CSR, MNCs are creating Codes of Conduct based on the UN declaration and conventions on human rights, labour rights conventions by the ILO etc – international conventions where states are the *legal entity* – as guidance in their business conduct (e.g Magnusson 2002, *Corp.*: 33). From these observations one may argue (as I am) that corporations are concerning themselves for a new kind of political issues. That huge enterprises have the ability to put pressure on governments and that political decisions all over the world are often adjusted to attract and remain investments are not breaking news, but with CSR enterprises are reaching out to new kind of issues related not only to an economic sphere but also to greater social concerns. Through this perspective I believe it fair to assume that corporations with CSR-policies could function as a new kind of actor in the international political arena. Their entrance is interesting since they supposedly will have other channels to exercise their political influence through than other actors with similar agendas.

In this thesis I have decided to study CSR in China. The reason for this is that I find China to provide quite an interesting environment for the implementation of CSR. In a few decades the country has transformed from strict planned economy to one of the worlds most unregulated capitalistic economies (Hydén 1998: 21). The country is however still a communist state and run by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The regime is accused of grave atrocities against its own people and there is continuous reporting of human rights violations (Country Report 2005). On the other hand later years have shown alleviation in political restrictions and economic growth and prosperity are evolving rapidly (Country Report 2005: 1-3). The accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 has further integrated China in the world economy and the political system it rests on, and in the competition for labour intensive industry China has proved outstanding (Bhattachali 2004:1-16). However, in the shadow of economic growth severe environmental disasters are common, human rights are violated and labour conditions are pushed far below international as well as national stipulated rules and norms (Country Report 2005: 13, 21-25, 30). Multinational corporations are often accused of being part of these problems and/or taking advantages of the situation.

With this in mind, the implementation of CSR is a challenging and innovative project to improve conditions in the production line. What I am curious to find out is if companies with a committed engagement in CSR (and with the resources to carry it out) also have a supportive influence in areas concerning human rights and democratic processes? And if MNCs with CSR-policies at all could be considered as a new kind of international actor in the political field?

1.1.1 Framing Reality

How should I then define and specify my initial questions? The theory one chooses to apply will affect the question one will be able to handle and likewise the questions one asks have implications on which theories one will be able to use. I do not, of course, expect to find a democratic movement springing out as a result of ambitious CSR management. What I am looking for is tendencies that issues concerning human rights

and democratic values have attracted attention in situations where CSR is implemented, which would also shed some light on the role of MNCs in the political sphere. One way of approaching these questions is to view it as a case of how ideas and thoughts from different contexts integrate and how a change of mind is the first step towards a change in action. To my mind, when the questions are framed like this it is suitable to apply a discourse theoretical perspective.

In discourse theory, language constitutes the frames of our social world and thereby the things we can say or do (Bergström et al. 2000: 225, Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 11-12). A discourse could be described as a net where every word or concept (sign) gets its significance in relation to other signs in the net. A sign can have several meanings or interpretations, but the discourse only allows for certain meanings (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 33-37). The discourse thus has an excluding function and can be viewed as a power constellation (Bergström et al. 2000: 225). In the interaction of different discourses meanings might however change and this also changes the frames of our social world (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 13).

To reconnect to the aim of this thesis, I believe that influences via CSR can be viewed as changes in discourse. One may assume that CSR partly originates in a discourse where ideas on human rights and democracy hold a strong position. I also assume, based on China's political system, that CSR might challenge some domestic discourses. On the other hand one can also picture a scenario where CSR is not at all a carrier of these values or/and where CSR complements and strengthens some discourses it intermingles with in China. Or even that CSR has no influence at all. Regardless of which I find it interesting to understand the implications of CSR in a Chinese context.

1.1.2 ...and Moulding Questions

Discourse theory stresses that concepts and signs (like CSR) are subject to interpretation and not locked to one meaning. It is thus far from certain that CSR is interpreted in terms of human rights or that CSR has an impact on roles and responsibilities of MNCs. Since CSR is also a result of business strategies it might be that the business reasons are emphasized on behalf of the ethical dimensions in the definition of CSR. Furthermore, not only the creators of a concept decide its definition but also those who consume it takes part in a definition process and as been indicated above, the attitude towards CSR is ambivalent in China.

From this discussion I have moulded a set of research questions that will guide the study. The first question is aimed at the overarching purpose of the thesis and the second question focuses on how this might function in the specific case of China. The third question then constitutes the operational approach in this study.

1. How may MNCs with CSR-policies function as a political actor on the international stage?
2. How may CSR influence areas concerning human rights in China?

3. Through which discourses are CSR interpreted and how might this affect its influence in a Chinese context?

1.2 Disposition

After this introduction to the purpose and research question of this thesis I find it appropriate to provide a short outline of the following pages. Chapter two will elaborate on discourse theory and the concepts that will prove important in the following analysis. After that follows a chapter on the methodological considerations for this study and on the construction of the analytical model and outline. Thereafter two chapters focus on the analysis and the thesis is concluded with a chapter that summarizes the conclusions. Before leaving this introducing chapter I will however spend a few words on definitions and delimitations and on the material this thesis built on.

1.3 Definitions and Delimitations

1.3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR is the focus for this thesis, but what then is CSR? As discussed above, this question constitutes an analytical unit for this study. CSR has sprung from different traditions and fields of profession and my aim is to understand how this affects the interpretation of CSR. Though the frames of CSR are rather vague, it is necessary to give a brief description of the phenomenon called CSR to be able to discuss it. When speaking of CSR one does in some way refer to responsible business. According to a traditional view, enterprises contribute to society by generating profit, creating employment and paying taxes (Magnusson 2003: 66). One definition of CSR that might be suitable as a least common denominator in the jungle of varying definitions is that CSR is to be understood as commitment by companies to follow international law and practice also in countries where the authorities for some reason do not or cannot implement this and overall assure decent standards (Horn af Rantzien 2003: 33-34). This definition does not differ much from the traditional view of roles and responsibilities of companies. The practical result of a commitment to CSR seem however to be that the company itself tries to make sure that laws and practice are followed also in states where the authorities by some reason is weak in law enforcement or where regulations are lacking. This concern tends to include also suppliers and contractors. From this base the CSR concept can be expanded in several levels and direction (c.f. Horn af Rantzien 2003: 33-35), but there is one delimitation to be drawn for the purpose of this thesis and that is the division between CSR and philanthropy.

Since philanthropy refers to charity activities that a company takes part in, such as sponsoring hospitals, school equipment, and scholarships and has little to do with the practice of business, I believe it would be confusing to include in the CSR concept.

1.3.2 CSR in Practice

To be able to put policies of CSR into practice, most corporations have developed Codes of Conduct (CoC). They are commonly based on international conventions on labour rights by the ILO, on the UN declaration and core conventions on human rights, on OECD's guidelines for multinational enterprises and/or Global Compact's ten principles² (Magnusson et al. 2002). The codes thus deal with occupational health and safety, minimum wages, environmental protection, freedom of association, collective bargaining and anti-corruption. Although they are all set by the individual company most codes are based on the same standards and conventions and are hence very similar to each other (e.g. Magnusson et al. 2002).

As this study is centred to CSR in China, the focus will mostly be on supply chain management. When big multinationals use suppliers this means that they are less in control of the production process and have to choose a strategy to enforce their CoC in an environment that is actually external and autonomous to them. Different corporations have then chosen different ways of monitoring the *compliance* of their CoC. Some use external auditors, while others have employed auditors and aim to integrate CoC compliance with other quality controls and developments. Others refrain from monitoring and rely on that contracts including compliance to CoC will be followed by their suppliers.

A problem with CoC and monitoring systems is also that MNCs are breaking the traditional relationship between buyer and seller by having opinions not only on the finished product, but also on the circumstances of production. This has caused suppliers to feel offended and constitute a delicate problem in the CSR-process.

1.4 The Minor Field Study

This study is primarily based on interviews with journalists, academics, representatives from MNCs, NGOs, IGOs and governments in Sweden and China during the late spring and summer of 2005. Altogether I have conducted about 40 interviews. On about half of the occasions I use a recorder to document the interviews and when I did not use a

² Global Compact is an initiative launched by the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The idea is to give corporations a possibility to make public and voluntary commitment to the ten principles on human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and anti-corruption. There are no monitoring functions tied to Global Compact, but the idea is that corporations that have endorsed the principles will provide examples of "best practice". They will of course also draw public attention to their commitment, which in some ways have monitoring effect (www.unglobalcompact.org , Magnusson 2002 et al: 130-134).

recorder, depending the setting of the interview, the interviewee's objection and or in a few cases my subjective feeling that recording was just not right, I have been taking notes and have tried to transcribe the interviews as soon as possible afterwards.

The interviews were conducted in either Swedish or English and on one occasion I used an interpreter to translate from Mandarin to English. My language skills, or perhaps lack of them, have certainly affected the research design and this might also have led to an imbalance between an international/western perspective and a Chinese perspective and it might have refrained me from establishing contact with or even identify important Chinese actors. Nevertheless, while this being noted, I am convinced that also secondary sources provide important insights to the CSR-process in China and that the rich material I have collected is quite sufficient for the kind of analysis I want to conduct.

Aside from the information I have gathered from interviews, I have relied on printed literature on CSR – most of which that are aimed at introducing CSR to readers in the business sector – and on Internet resources that are very frequent in providing information on this topic. For the theoretical discussions I have mostly used literature introducing discourse theory and social constructionism. If I should only mention one book in here I find Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillip to give a detailed, yet comprehensive, introduction to the complicated concepts of discourse and discourse theory.

2 Theory

What is discourse? In the introducing chapter I gave a brief definition of the discourse concept. In this section I will provide a more thorough elaboration on discourse and discourse analysis. If discourse analysis is to make any sense at all it is however also necessary to have good understanding of its meta-theoretical ground.

2.1 Theoretical Points of Departure

As has already been discussed in the brief definition of discourse, the ontological base in discourse analysis is relativistic. From a discourse analytic point of view this means that there exist no objective reality and that reality is fluid and constantly changing. Hence, in contrast to positivistic and critical traditions³, researches using discourse analysis are not concerned with questions aiming at describing or revealing truths, because truth is always relative. Instead the relativistic ontology favours an epistemological focus, which entails that discourse analysts are interested in how knowledge is constituted, how we reach knowledge and what knowledge we are deprived (Neumann 2003:14, Lundquist 1993: 67-70, Burr 1995: 80-82).

Discourse analysis belongs in the field of social constructionism and reality is only available for us through categories and these categories are based on available knowledge (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000:11, Burr 1995: 3). This is not (at least not in the case of discourse analysis) to be understood as a complete relativity where the world could be anything or nothing (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000:12, Burr 1995: 86-89). Whether you explain a volcanic eruption in geological, religious or mythical terms it does exist. Our categorisations of a phenomenon are restricted to a cultural and historical context and in another time and place we would understand it differently (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000:12). This also applies to our identities as individuals and members of different groups (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 97, 105-107, Bergström et al 2000: 244).

Discourse theory focuses on the process in which these categorizations or meanings get fixed and on the implications this brings. The theory stresses that our interpretation of the world is possible, but not necessary (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 11-12, 32). When one meaning wins a dominant position, other possible meanings are locked out and become taboos

³ Note that discourse analysis still defines as a critical theory. Discourse analysis does not seek a neutral position, but has explicit critical aims to reveal alternative interpretations. Though discourse theory rejects the assumption of an objective reality it takes a clear critical stance by stating that the social world could always be arranged in another way

(Bergström et al 2000: 225-226). In accordance with social constructionism this means that the dominant meaning generates certain social practices and precludes practices that would be logical to the taboos (Burr 1995: 85).

A meaning in the discourse theoretical context is not simply words, but to my understanding refers to wider value and language systems. Discourse analysis has however clear resemblances and roots in structural and post-structural linguistics (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 16-17, Neumann 2003: 18-21). The core point in these theories is that a word lacks a natural connection to the phenomenon it represents. Language is a relational structure where every sign gets its meaning in relation to other signs that it is not and language is therefore not an objective reflection of reality (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 17, Neumann 2003: 18). The post-structural approach stresses that the relation between different signs not are static, but subject to constant sliding and extension. From this follows that language constitutes reality by giving it meaning, but also that reality constitutes language by bringing the relations in movement (Neumann 2003: 20, Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 17). The function of language according to modern linguistic theories hence constitutes a bearing pillar in discourse theory. Other pillars are power and knowledge.

2.1.1 Power and Knowledge

Discourse theory really emerges when structuralism and post-structuralism are combined with power and knowledge analyses. Structuralism introduced the theory that signs get meaning in relation to other signs, that meanings were locked in a net of differential position and that meanings thus were constituted in a system or structure (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 16-18, Neumann 2003: 18-21). Post-structuralism altered this theory by claiming that positions were not fixed but constantly changing due to the fact that all positions was contingent, possible but not necessary. Other possible meanings could intrude on the positions when the social world changed. The social world was thus not only constituted by language, but also constituted language in a dialectical relation (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 16-18, 25-26). Alone, these theories tell us little about reasons for certain meanings to establish and other possible meanings to remain locked out.

In Michel Foucault archaeological works he search to understand why certain meanings get established as true and why other possible meanings are locked out and he comes to the conclusion that meanings that support the existing power-structure come to be viewed as natural and true, while those that challenge the power-structure are taboos or will be considered false (Burr 1995: 81-82, Bergström et al 2000: 225-228, Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 19-20). Power to Foucault is a relational structure, a knowledge regime, in which we are all interwoven rather than an instrument for autonomous agents. This also means that power to Foucault is not solely repressive, but also productive. In the relational system we create discourses that bring meaning and knowledge that are essentially appreciated. The dominate discourse thus earns its positions because we experience it as good and useful (Bergström et al 2000: 225-228, Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 19-21). Later discourse theorists have altered Foucault's theory by questioning his monolithic knowledge regime and

are instead picturing many different discourses in constant competition over hegemony. The essential bound between power, knowledge and discourse is however inherited, so that discourse is viewed as a system that reduces possible meanings or possible knowledge, and thereby exercises the power of exclusion, of what cannot be said or done (e.g. Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 19-21).

In this respect it is also interesting to look at how power constellations may be broken, changed or reproduced, especially since a core assumption in discourse theory is that meanings are constantly changing. Norman Fairclough is one of the discourse analysts that most explicitly have focused on processes of changes in his work (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 25, 76-77).

To Fairclough, texts constitute and are constituted by social practice. The process takes place in the discursive practise so that the text is mediated to the social practice through the discursive practice. Fairclough thus separate between a discursive practice restricted to linguistic elements and a wider social practice that is only partly expressions of discourses and where also other none-discursive structures are influential (e.g. economic system) (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 72-76, Fairclough 1995: 57-60). According to this model every case of language usage is a communicative event with three dimensions.

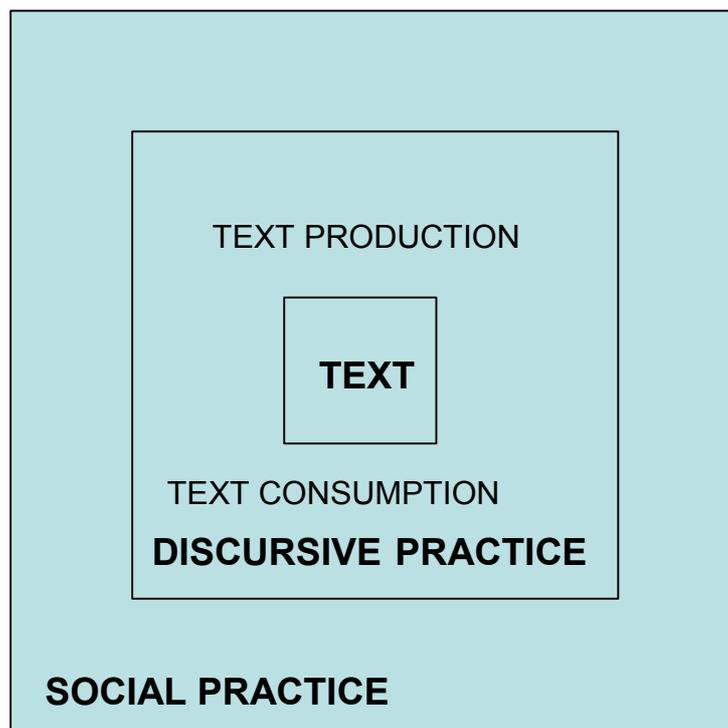


Figure 1: Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model for Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995: 59).

The text-dimension consists of the text, i.e. speech, writings, pictures, symbols (Fairclough 1995: 57-62, Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 87-90). Note that also "textless" expressions like pictures and fashion may be considered as texts (Fairclough 1995: 54). This dimension lies in

the discursive practice where texts are *produced* and *consumed* which in turn rest in a wider social practice in which texts (but also other non-discursive circumstances) generate actions (Fairclough 1995: 57-62, Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 85-87). Changes and reproduction are generated in so called inter-discursive processes where different discourses are articulated. If this is done in a conventional way the inter-discursive process reproduce existing discursive and social orders and if discourses are articulated in a new mix this is a sign and a driving force for change in social practice Fairclough 1995: 57-62, Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 90-91).

2.2 Discourse

So what exactly is a discourse? With the theoretical outline in mind it will hopefully be easier to give and understand a more detailed picture of discourse. First of all I find it important to stress that discourse is a concept that is tied to metatheoretical considerations. It thus articulates a belief-system, a way of understanding the world, and aims at – with the above mentioned theoretical points of departure – explaining how the world might function⁴. However, it is important to understand that discourse is and should be understood as a theoretical model. The discourse concept does not (of course) reflect a complete picture of reality, but is a theoretical figure to frame and caricaturize a piece of reality, which (as is the purpose of all theoretical models) provides a manageable unit for analysis and deepened understanding (see e.g. Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 137). In theoretical works the model is incorporated in metatheoretical explanations and the model aspect is toned down (see e.g. the works of Foucault and Laclau&Moffe). One should however not forget that also metatheories are models of what might be. When on the other hand the discourse concept is applied to empirical findings the concept as an analytical model and tool is emphasized. In these cases the researcher owns the right to define and construct discourses in a way that makes it manageable (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 137).

2.2.1 The Net Metaphor

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are probably the ones that have developed the most thorough discourse theory and they use a net metaphor to illustrate the discourse concept (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 7, 13, 33ff). A discourse can thus be viewed as a net of signs, where every sign represents a meaning in relation to other signs in the net and where other possible meanings are excluded. I.e. signs only get meaning in relations to other signs that they are not. Some of these signs – so called *nodal points* – have a stronger position as the other signs organize around them and get their meaning in relation to the nodal point. One could say that nodal points are pointing out the subject of the discourse and is defining it⁵ (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 33). Discourse can thus be seen as a net of signs fixed to one

⁴ Even a relativistic ontology, like discourse analysis and social constructionism, give us at its core an assumption to how the world function.

⁵ E.g. in a liberal discourse nodal points would be “individual” and “freedom” and in a medical discourse the nodal point would be “body”.

meaning with other meanings closed out. However, all discourses and signs are constantly changing and fixed signs in the net metaphor should be viewed as frozen moments (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 32).

In the outer areas of a discourse signs are less fixed and are subjects to shifting meanings. These signs not only indicate the limits of a discourse, but signs that are intensively filled with different meanings, so called *floating signifier*, also indicate that different discourses borders to each other and that there exists a discursive fight over meaning. The areas that are subject to discursive fights are called *order of discourse* by Norman Fairclough⁶ (Fairclough 1995: 55, Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 34).

The Discursive Field

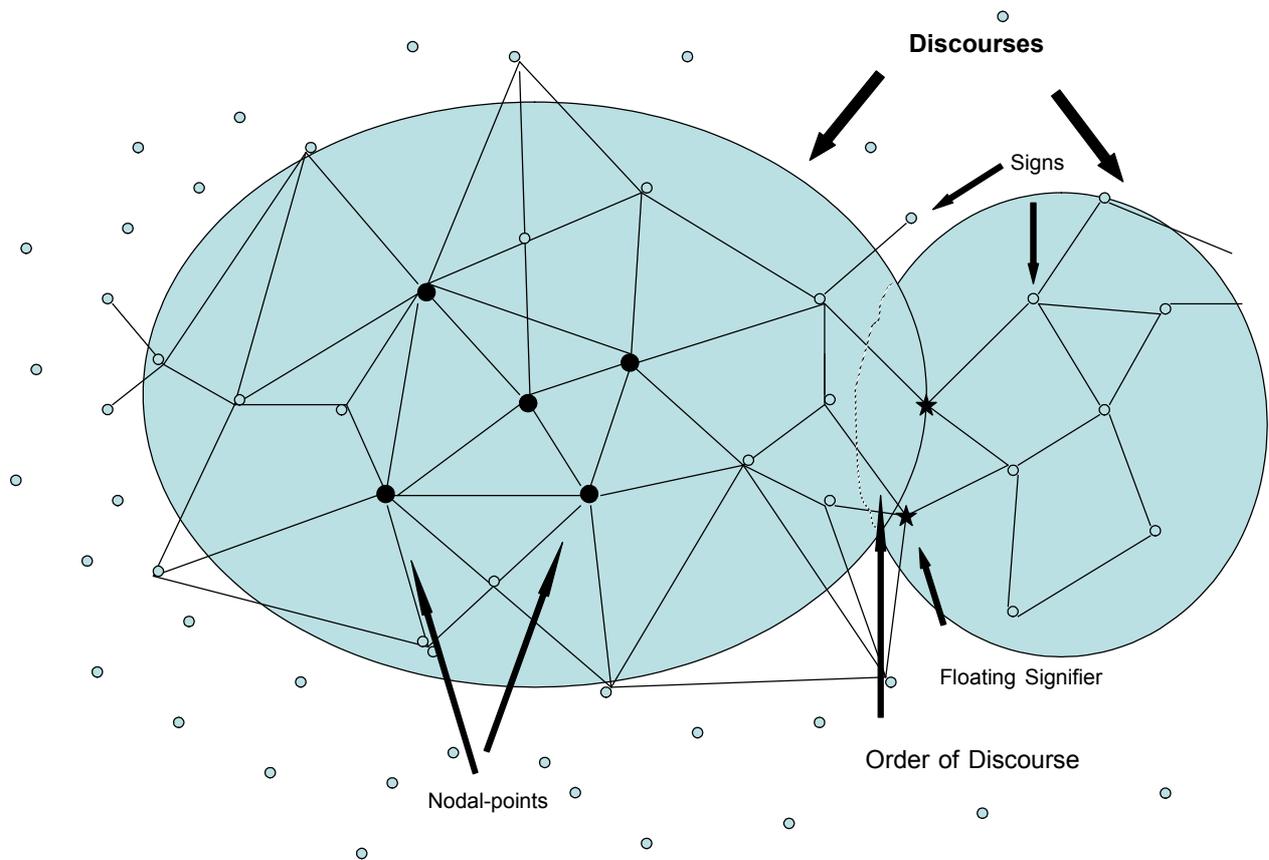


Figure 2: The Net Metaphor

Except for the competing discourses in orders of discourses, discourses also entangle with each other and exist within each other, as well as there are discourses that exist parallel but

⁶ Processes of changes are in focus in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and orders of discourses have a central position there since it is in the clash of discourses that new meaning and thereby changes in our social world is born (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 76).

that do not cover the same area. All this Laclou and Mouffe call the *discursive field* and basically, the discursive field constitutes our social world.

Before closing this section I find it appropriate to conclude that CSR suites the definition of a floating signifier. From the introducing chapter it stands clear that the definition of CSR is relatively vague and floating and that different agents strive to fill the CSR-concept with different substance. By going ahead of the chapter on method and operational considerations, I can here conclude that it is reasonable to identify CSR as a floating signifier which in turn points out that CSR exists in an order of discourse. This brings the advantages of constituting a natural analytical unit and facilitates my purpose of studying influences and changes in relation to CSR.

2.3 The Individual in Discourses – Slave or Master?

Are we then all slaves to discursive directions? Discourse theory view the individual in anti-essential terms, which means that there is no authentic or autonomous I, no inner essence, independent from our social world (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 104-106). We are rather products of the discursive systems we are interwoven in and are formed by social activities (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 106-107). Discourses interpellate to us and by responding we become subjects to discourses and thereby occupy certain *subject positions* (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 22, Neumann 2003:104). One could thus claim that we are totally subjected to rules and frames of discourses and lack a free will and mind. According to discourse theory we are indeed severely restricted to discourse both in how we view our world and in how we form our identities, but we are the products of many different, and sometimes contradicting, discourses and this gives room for personal agency (Burr 1995: 90-91, Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 105).

In studies on attitude, discourse psychology represents a different view than the traditional cognitive psychology. Instead of searching for authentic values and attitudes of an individual, discourse psychology shows that we can carry multiple and competing attitudes at the same time. We merely belong to different subject positions that trigger different postures simultaneously (Neumann 2003:104-105, Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 100-101). Further more, the multiple subject positions give us a certain amount of agency to choose which discourse we want to appeal to and which subject positions we want to act on in different situations. As individuals, we are thus not only carrier, but also creators and activators of discourses (Winther Jørgensen et al. 2000: 105). When looking at the CSR process it is hence important to view how different actors use discourses and it motivates the inclusion of an actor perspective in the analysis.

3 Methodology

As has already been discussed CSR is a good example of a floating signifier positioned in a discourse order, as it is defined and filled with values from various fields or discourses and it still lacks a common understanding. The analytical unit in this thesis will thus be CSR as a discourse order.

For this purpose I have found it interesting to learn the personal thoughts and experiences of people involved in these processes, as they are forming CSR by their use of language. The material I have had at hand during my analysis does to a great part consist of the interviews I conducted during my minor field study in China. Below I will elaborate on the methodological and ethical considerations concerning interviewing and in the second part of the chapter I will describe the analytical structure and model I have applied in the analysis.

3.1 Interviews

While interviews might seem like a comfortable way of accumulating information, there are a number of circumstances that demand more effort than it might seem like at a quick glance. Peter Esaisson and his co-authors make a useful definition of the common distinction between interviewees as informants and respondents. Interviewees considered as informants are viewed as witnesses that can present information on certain matters and this information is then treated as a source to which the regular considerations of reliability apply. (Esaisson et al 2004:253-254). Interviewees as respondents on the other hand are themselves the object of study. The interviewer will in these cases seek to understand the thoughts, values or attitudes of the respondent regarding a certain topic (Esaisson et al 2004:254).

As always in social sciences, categories are there to facilitate understanding and structure and are not to be seen as unquestionable. Thus, in reality many studies apply a combination of the two approaches (Esaisson et al 2004: 280) and that is also the case in this thesis, which necessarily reflects on the methods of interviewing. To manage the mixed nature of the interviews I have conducted semi-structured interviews, meaning that my point of departure for each interview was an interview guide with a set of themes and open questions (i.e. optional answers were not provided) that were posed and adjusted to the specific situation (cf. Kvale 1996:34, Esaisson et al 2004:255), and had a conversational character. I find the advantage of this model to be that it provides a certain amount of structure that allows for comparability, while maintaining sensitivity to the individual situation that hopefully brings out more information.

3.1.1 Selection

Which people, then, would be suitable as interviewees? My strategy has been to apply the method of snowballing, meaning that once one have identified a few interviewees and conducted interviews with them asking them to introduce other potential interviewees (Taylor et al. 1984:83), in order to increase the number of informants/respondents. At an initial stage I thus identified a few groups of key actors in the Chinese CSR-process based on my pre-knowledge of the situation. These key actors did not represent a final number and was altered during the field work as new actors appeared and others were proven to play a less important role or proved difficult to establish contact with.

I found the method of snowballing to be satisfactory to its purpose. It should however be noted that a problem with snowballing is that one might fail to include persons that are not involved in the social and professional sphere of one's interviewees. When I on some occasions attended CSR-events (conferences, seminars) it struck me that it seemed like the same people were meeting over and over again. My interviewees also quite often referred to the small CSR-community they belong to.

3.1.2 Ethical Issues

In interviews one tries to understand the thoughts of interviewees or get a share of their knowledge, which in both cases imply that one is asking for a little piece of the interviewees' private sphere, even though the interview does not treat any personal subject. What is said during an interview, and later interpreted by the interviewer, is of much less control for the interviewee than if the same person had written an article or book on the subject. It is therefore important to follow some basic ethical guidelines, like informed consent and to be considerate of the disproportional influence over the conversation the interviewer has by posing questions, by unconscious gestures, pronunciations and by the unavoidable characteristics of age, sex, educational level, etc (cf Esaisson et al 2004, Thomsson 2002, Kvale 1996).

Another ethical consideration I had to consider for this thesis was that of confidentiality. CSR is in several aspects a sensitive issue to discuss. It involves values that in some cases might be put in contrast to the official Chinese politics and especially interviewees of other descent than Chinese were concerned of damaging their relations to Chinese authorities or to discredit other people in the eyes of the regime. In consideration of this, I believe, some people asked to be anonymous, though at least when I was interviewing people of Chinese decent I rather found that they knew the limits and refrained from answering certain questions. The greatest area of concern did however seem to be western media and the group that was most conscious of confidentiality issues was representatives of MNCs. There was a widespread anxiety of misquotations finding its way to media and past experiences of being unfairly pictured by hurried journalists. In the end I had a mixture of requirements concerning confidentiality to mind. Even though the majority did not demand anonymity, the rather small number of interviewees will make it easy to match quotes with names. In

quotations and references I have therefore chosen to show only which group the interviewee belong to. Instead of a name in these cases the reader will find the abbreviations *Corp.* (for Corporations), *Org.* (for Organisations⁷, Associations, Trade Unions and Consultancy Firms), *Gov.* (for Governmental representatives) or *Acad.* (for academics and journalists) followed by a random number.

The groups are surely a quite wide, but a more detailed division would challenge the confidentiality and my ambition is that this system will make it possible for the reader to put a reference in a context (e.g. if the reference belongs to the group of corporations or NGOs) and to determine whether I am referring to different individuals (i.e. each number represents one interviewee), while still shielding the identity by the interviewees. Unfortunately, these concerns for confidentiality have also hindered me from indicating when I have translated quotations from Swedish (or Norwegian) to English. All this clearly challenges reliability and transparency. To make up for some of these shortcomings I have added an appendix with names and details on all interviewees.

3.2 The Analytical Structure

In the analysis I will focus on CSR as a floating signifier in a discourse order and I will place it in the discursive practice from Fairclough's three-dimensional model with text, discursive practice and social practice. The discursive practice consists of production and consumption of text and I will arrange my analysis in these two sections. CSR clearly has a producing side and I believe it to be essential to understand which values that dominates this process to get an impression of what CSR means when communicated. Most interesting for the purpose of this thesis is however the consumption phase when CSR is introduced in a Chinese context. It is here essential to understand which parts of CSR that are adopted and which are rejected and the circumstances around it to look at the possible impacts CSR might have on social practice. Beside the concept of discursive practice I will also look at subject positions, since I believe it interesting and important to understand how different individuals and groups act upon CSR, i.e. how they use different discourses and how they might be limited by them.

As a floating signifier CSR is of course entangling in an uncountable number of discourses, but the focus in this thesis is the relation between political/ethical arguments and economic arguments. I am thus aiming to study whether CSR primarily is defined in economical or political-ethical terms, which in a discourse theoretical perspective have implications for the social practice. It is therefore important to construct a model of the discourses in which these two kinds of arguments belong. I do however wish to keep the door open to the possibility that also other discourses might prove important in

⁷ "Organizations" include NGOs and similar pressure groups. Since it is difficult to establish the exact nature of these kind of organizations I refer to them as simply organizations.

the definition of CSR, and to be able to recognize such discourses it is important to understand the principles of the analytical models for identification⁸.

3.2.1 Principles for Discourse Identification

Essential to the analysis of discourses and a discourse order is thus to be able to identify discourses. Since discourses are vague and changing in their nature it is not fruitful to construct a framework, but the identification process should depart at the core of a discourse, at the nodal point. It is the nodal points that define a discourse and other signs arrange around it (see also chapter 2). The limits of a discourse are thus reached when meanings are no longer consistent with the nodal point(s) (Winther Jørgensen et al 2000: 136). But what does this mean in practice? I find it useful to look at nodal points as key arguments or key standpoints to which other arguments should be logical, to be included in the same discourse. E.g. in a liberal discourse a nodal point is clearly “individual freedom” and arguments challenging this do not belong to the liberal discourse⁹. Frames of a discourse are thus set by arguments inconsistent to the nodal points. Discourses are of course interwoven with each other and are constantly sliding and changing, which entails that core arguments/nodal points and its meaning constantly are challenged. As an analytical tool discourse is however a constructed model with natural and unavoidable shortcomings. One has to accept that analytical models are simplifications and exaggerations, because the strength of models is also the ability to provide a picture with out going blind of complexity.

⁸ Many theorists, like Laclau and Mouffe, have merely focused on developing theoretical argumentation on a very abstract level and have avoided the operational aspects (källa). Furthermore, some discourse enthusiasts reject the idea of developing a methodology since discourse theory work on such an abstract level that it would lose its character when applied in practical studies (see e.g. Torfing 1999: 291-292). Though one can definitely agree that much of the wide and sophisticated theoretical arguments will unavoidably be left behind on the lower levels of abstraction on which most time and place fixed studies by necessity operates, it seems to me like a waste of important insights if they would not be allowed to be tested and applied on specific situations.

⁹ Individual freedom is however also subjected to sliding of meaning and changes

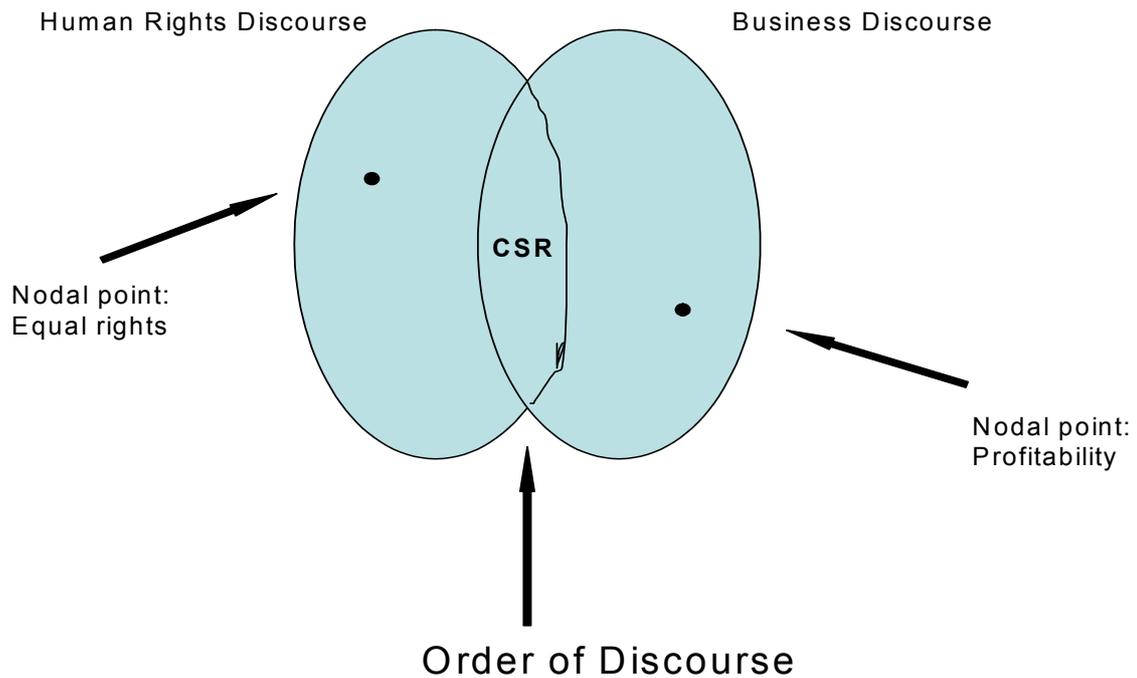


Figure 3: CSR as a Floating Signifier in an Order of Discourse¹⁰.

3.2.2 Defining a Human Rights Discourse and a Business Discourse

As will be described at greater length below, different organisations have driven issues of ethical and political nature directed at MNCs and their business conduct. Corporations have then been forced to act upon these accusations to protect their reputation and in the long run their survival. The motivation for organisations and corporations to act and to get involved in CSR are hence based on different discourses. According to the guidelines sketched out above I now need to identify core arguments for these two discourses.

What is then the least common denominator for organisations involved in this process? I believe it may be summarized as “all human beings are equal in dignity and rights” I.e. both demands on decent labour conditions and demands for boycotts of regimes that constantly violate human rights (e.g. the case of Burma/Myanmar) are based on the belief that all men are equal and that there exist basic rights that every individual holds. This belief is also included in the United Nations’ declaration and core conventions on human rights and in extension also the concept of democracy (or at least liberal democracy). Democracy cannot exist where human rights systematically are violated and only democracy can provide an adequate protection of human rights (which unfortunately does not imply that human rights always are respected in democracies).

¹⁰ Note that the illustration only is showing two competing discourses.

Even though these rights are regulated in legal and political systems, the argument is not based on legal or political ground but is *viewed* as universal ethics. As I find both ethic and political to be too broad concepts to apply on the discourse I am trying to define, and as I would like to avoid the misleading implicit connection between ethical and unethical, I choose to hereafter name the discourse that organize around the nodal point “all human beings are equal in dignity and rights“ to Human Rights Discourse”.

Corporations on the other hand depart their CSR-engagement on business grounds. They have been forced to react on demands and accusations that have been posed by organisations and they have primarily done so to protect their business. Their motives do therefore naturally belong to market economical theories and I therefore believe that one of the core arguments/nodal points is “profitability”. To market economy one could also apply nodal points as free competition, free market etc. In the individual business the central argument must however be profit and to stress the level on which this thesis operate I will from now refer to this as “Business Discourse” with the nodal point “profitability”.

To sum up, my analytical model is a simple construction where I will decide whether a discourse belongs to a business discourse or a human rights discourse by determining if arguments are consistent with the nodal points spelled out above or not. By this method I also hope to be able to identify other discourses than the two I have already defined if this proves necessary and relevant to the purpose of this thesis.

4 The Production Phase

The analysis of discursive practice, write Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, is focused on how the production of new texts are based on existing discourses and on how consumers of a text use available discourses to interpret it (Winther Jørgensen 2000: 75). This chapter focuses on the production phase, which entails a more general approach than the chapter on the consumption phase that specifies on the Chinese case.

I will begin by elaborating on the development of CSR and the driving forces behind it. Thereafter I will emphasize how CSR is defined through different discourses and how this effects the subject position of multinationals. The chapter ends with a few remarks on what this might indicate in the consumption phase of CSR.

4.1 The Development and Driving Forces of CSR

When one is to describe and analyze the development of CSR, it is important to understand the casting of the different actors involved. The leading part is definitely held by the MNCs. CSR is their construction and their responsibility. It is however important to understand that CSR has emerged from a conflict where corporations have been criticized for their neglection to deal with inferior conditions related to production processes, which in some cases led to consumer boycotts or threats of boycotts (*Corp.: 10*, Crook 2005: 3).

The critic against corporations were led and directed by pressure groups and NGOs (and continues to do so) that managed to engage media and thereby catch the attention of consumers. Media reports that damage the reputation of a corporation and scare consumers off is the nightmare for every corporation and something that must be avoided (Crook 2005: 3-4, Malmberg 2005: 77). To my mind, neither media nor consumers function as conscious actors in the process of defining and developing CSR, but are mostly marionettes in the hands of other actors¹¹ and I will therefore refrain from further discussing these two groups.

Since CSR reached the global agenda more actors have become involved in the game. Governments have in different ways and by different reasons started to engage and push for CSR (see e.g. Fox et al. 2002). It is difficult to get a picture of how (western) governments as a group view CSR, not least because their definitions of CSR vary greatly (Aaronson et al 2002: 25-44). Another group that got involved late in the process is investors (*Org.: 2*). They do however seem to play a more important part in defining CSR and I will therefore return to this group later on. On the whole, the

¹¹ That is not to say that there do not exist journalists that has taken it as their responsibility to report and draw attention to CSR-related issues, or that there do not exist groups of consumers that genuinely care and act on these issues. If there were not, CSR would probably be a dead issue.

development of CSR and the continuous process of defining is a result of the interaction between pressure groups and MNCs.

4.1.1 Pressure Groups

The early history of CSR began in the globalization debate in the 1990s and accelerated when documentaries showing children in Asia working under miserable conditions producing for famous brands were broadcasted (Malmborg 2005: 77, *Corp.*: 24, Ward 2004: 3, *Acad.*: 13). In the 1970s and 1980s labour intensive production was moved out of Europe and the US to low cost countries in Asia and northern Africa. Textile and apparel industries were the pioneers and are today followed by more high technological industries (*Org.*: 11, *Corp.*:25, *Corp.*:18). These countries often had and have weaker regulations or weaker law enforcement for labour conditions and environmental protection. Reasons for this could for instance be a wish to attract foreign investments by pushing costs down and facilitating business without complicated regulations (*Org.*: 6), or lack of capacity to enforce existing laws (*Corp.*: 1, *Corp.*: 24). The implication this had for people working in plants or living in the surroundings was shown in documentaries and was followed by more revealing reports and campaigns focusing on the responsibility of MNCs for these conditions. Some of the brands that were most exposed also witnessed consumer boycotts (*Corp.*: 10).

The first reaction of MNCs was in most cases defensive and denial. Especially in the textile and apparel business sector few companies own the factories that produce for them and many corporations also explain that they had very limited knowledge of the production conditions and were themselves taken by surprise when they saw the reports from inside the plants (*Corp.*: 18, *Corp.*: 15). About the same time as the documentaries were broadcasted some MNCs were also opening up production offices in these countries, which meant that they were buying directly from suppliers without agents (*Corp.*: 18).

“BBC and Swedish TV etc made reports on child labour in the Philippines and in Pakistan and there were child labour everywhere! We were all chocked. One thought one was in control of the factories, but we then realized that we know where they are located, but we don’t know what they do or what it looks like inside.” (*Corp.*:15)

”At that time American media paid a lot of attention to child labour in Bangladesh and in about the same period of time we opened up our own production offices. The agents disappeared and we suddenly saw the realities in the factories. In the beginning of the 1990s we started the process of formulating a policy and in the late 1990s the fist code was made public and a CSR-office was established.” (*Corp.*: 18)

As the damaging publicity continued the situation could not remain untouched (Horn af Rantzien 2003: 31, *Corp.*: 24). ILO and OECD have had codes and guidelines on ethics for multinational corporations since the 1970s (Magnusson et al 2002: 8-9) and on the initiative of some NGOs a few brands now started to formulate their own Codes of Conduct (CoC) as a guidance to the values and practice of the corporation. (*Org.*: 11, *Org.*: 8). The Textile and apparel industry was the first industry to be scrutinized by media and pressure groups and not surprisingly also the first to establish CoC and CSR-policies (*Corp.*: 25, *Corp.*: 18, *Org.*: 11). The objective at this stage was to protect a brand name that had been associated with controversial business conduct in media and the primary concern was thus to soothe consumers (*Org.*: 27, Horn af Rantzien 2003:

31). From this stage many of the concerned corporations have developed a preventive strategy to avoid future scandals and have incorporated CSR in its profile. The aim is to earn a top position in the CSR-community and to have the brand associated with ethical business practice. CSR is thus viewed as a business case in terms of risk management and marketing and is believed to contribute to more stable and creative organisations (*Corp.: 24*).

“Consumer campaigns the last decade have put pressure on transnational corporations – but it is only brand names that do something! They are the only ones that get under public pressure and they act as a respond to consumer pressure.” (*Org.: 6*).

People working in these corporations are however also concerned with these issues on an ethical rather than an economical base. According to CSR development models some of the corporations that engage in CSR also start to re-picture the role they play in the global community (Horn af Rantzien: 2003: 31-32).

“The ideas of CSR have increased probably because of a combination of greater awareness among investors, consumers, NGOs. Enterprises have been exposed to external pressure and embarrassments by media and NGOs. It has also become an issue of contest in the market and to protect brand names from damaged reputation. However one must not forget that people working with these issues within companies are most often very earnest and sensitive on these issues. They honestly want to improve the situation. It all comes down to human terms in the end.” (*Acad.: 12*).

4.1.2 Investors

Except for pressure from different organisations, investors are increasing their concern for CSR. Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) is a relatively new term, but ethical funds have a long history¹². The SRI-community is still small, but they influence beyond their weight (*Org.: 2*). Today investors pushing for CSR and CoC are mostly European. The London Stock Exchange is especially important since London is a centre for NGOs and civil society and its stock exchange therefore has been under pressure by these groups to take ethical issues into consideration (*Org.: 17*). Investors are however interested in corporations with good CSR-practice not only to satisfy NGOs and conscious savers, but also because firms with strategies for ethics are seen as safe investments in the long run (*Org.: 2*). In the US legal liability is an important driving force for CSR and in Europe there are discussions on making MNCs liable for human rights violations in other countries, and in that perspective firms with strong CSR-policies are more likely to avoid scandals that might lead to costly legal suites in the future (*Org.: 17, Org.: 2*).

In theory, shareholders themselves may also play an important role as they have the possibility to questioning business practice and demand changes (*Org.: 2*). Though in

¹² In the US religious groups have been running ethical funds since 1920s. After the world wars firms producing arms were banned in many funds, during the apartheid system in South Africa many funds supported a boycott and avoided investing in firms doing business there. Since the 1990s focus has been on green and ethical funds (*Org: 2*).

reality one might question whether the majority of shareholders care about these issues and whether those who do care act on their beliefs¹³.

4.2 Risk Management and Business Cases – CSR through a Business Discourse

From the earlier résumé on the historical development of CSR it stands clear that CSR is the respond to demands posed by NGOs and other pressure groups and a strategy to handle damaging publicity. From the corporations point of view CSR is hence initially viewed as a business case, where the key is to attract and keep consumers (Horn af Rantzien: 2003: 31-32). There is also a fear for costly juridical processes in the future, concerns that are increasingly shared by investors (*Org.: 17*). As such, CSR is clearly defined through a business discourse. The motives to engage in CSR are to protect business. CSR is a means to mend a damaged reputation and to prevent similar situations in the future to be able to maintain consumers. In other words, arguments are tied to the nodal point “profitability” which is what is aspired in every business.

After the initial phase where CSR-policies and CoC are established, many companies develop CSR with the purpose to position as an ethic corporation. Also in these cases CSR is interpreted as a business case and incorporated in a business discourse. The purpose is thus the well-being of the company and adjustments to new demands (Horn af Rantzien: 2003: 30-32). From a discourse theoretical angle it makes a difference how a concept is dressed. If corporations continue to merely motivate their actions in terms of profit and business cases they will probably not go beyond the economic sphere. In the particular cases CSR might of course have an influence on standards in plants and touch on the political area by doing the work that traditionally belongs to the public sector, but it will not make MNCs to appear as a new political actor. There is however also arguments for CSR that are inconsistent with the traditional business discourse, which will be discussed below.

4.3 Universal Ethics – CSR in a Human Rights Discourse

NGOs and other pressure groups seem to play an exceptional part in CSR development since they to a great deal are the ones that are shedding light on dissatisfying conditions and bringing awareness to the public by putting pressure on politicians, directing media spotlights on related issues and campaigning to get consumers attention, and they

¹³ There are examples of organisations that put pressure on corporation by being shareholders. Amnesty International has for instance been raising questions on human rights conditions in the position of being a shareholder (www.amnesty.se/business).

apparently start off in a different discourse than corporations. They are promoting a universal view on global human rights and environmental protection and base their argumentation on ethics. To them CSR should be about the concern and protection of basic human rights. The overarching agendas of the different organisations do however vary. There are organisations where the primary aim is to bring attention to and improve conditions for production by functioning as a link between factories and western consumers, so that consumers get the information without middlemen¹⁴(*Org.: 11*).

Other organisations have a wider agenda aiming at for instance a regime, human rights advocacy or protection of the environment in general¹⁵. For these organisations MNCs are tools to reach their primary targets and through MNCs these organisations find channels to put pressure on regimes that otherwise are difficult to effect. By linking dissatisfying condition in developing countries, be it a regime, environmental devastations or labour conditions, with famous brands in everyday lives of western consumers these organisations have found an opportunity to connect western society to difficult situations in poorer countries. A bit simplified one might say that these organisations turn world politics into issues of consumption.

“And there’s another case where campaign groups don’t really have vehicles to directly concern themselves with conditions in China. They have to use the brand as the proxy, as the organization to access their concerns.” (*Corp.: 1*)

Both groups are thus addressing issues concerning how MNCs are conducting business and they are united in their advocacy for human rights and protection of the environment, though some organisations have a one-issue character while others put conditions in production and business behaviour in a universal perspective on global human rights and environmental concerns.

Pressure groups are thus acting on ethical motives when they engage in issues concerning global business and I believe it fair to conclude that the entire profession of pressure groups, NGOs and alike that engage in these kinds of issues belongs in a human rights discourse. As illustrated in the discussion above it is also obvious that these organisations are very skilled at integrating the human rights discourse in other discourses such as consumption discourse and investment discourse. It is also clear that organisations have had a very strong impact on the development of CSR, which entails that CSR is partly defined in a human rights discourse, with signs relating to “equal rights and dignity”. What effect this might have on the subject position of MNCs will be discussed below.

4.4 Merging Business and Ethics – Sliding Subject Positions

From the discussion above one can thus conclude that CSR built on different discourses and that arguments from different discourses are mixed in the promotion and

¹⁴ E.g. Clean Cloth Campaign, Swedwatch, Fair Trade Centre, Labour Right Watch, HKCIC, Contemporary Observations, AMRC

¹⁵ E.g. Oxfam, Greenpeace, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch

establishing of CSR and that this effects actions taken by corporations. Does this imply any changes in how corporations identify their roles and responsibility?

As long as CSR is viewed solely as risk management and a business case, there are no implications that CSR will affect the identity of corporations since the purpose for engaging in CSR fall within the business discourse. It is in the clash of discourses that changes can come about and the more CSR is defined also as an ethic project the more likely it is that corporations will redefine their role, as the CSR discourse then will interpellate to the corporation in a different way.

The interviews, both with people working with CSR in MNCs and others, show that corporations already is interpellated in other ways than the traditional business role, which the quotations below illustrates:

“We feel that we have a responsibility to make sure that our production is fair and we would not feel apposed if we though there were illegal conditions and people being abused in our production.” (*Corp.: 3*).

“Then as human beings we of course want to help and improve the conditions. This is also an awareness that we want to bring to the European society.” (*Corp.: 10*)

Naturally, employees at MNCs have different subject positions themselves building on discourses from both private and professional spheres and could of course have opinions and show compassion for these issues from their personal perspective. The interesting point here is that they are expressing the view of the corporation and its staff and as such it is a stand point that lies outside the business discourse. Compassion, consciousness and enlightening the home society are signs that have nothing to do with the nodal point of “profitability” and the traditional role of a company that builds on a business discourse.

In this respect, there are signs of widen responsibilities and a perception of business as a more integrated part of the communities in which it exists. Clearly, there are other values than economical ones that are taken into consideration. There are however always a struggle inside the organisation to find the resources and understanding for CSR. Different sections in a corporation have different goals, and resources are limited (*Corp.: 15, Corp.: 10*). Though most of the people working at the CSR-offices seem personally committed to the issue, the organisational structure, the commitment and communication skills of the top management and finally the personal understanding for the issue by the employees in other sections all have a great impact on how the organisation use and view CSR.

”We want everybody to be on board and that they do this and have the heart at the right place and understand that this is important. But that is not always the case and it will always be like that, because this is very much about personality and background and how long one has been engaged in the business sector.” (*Corp.: 15*)

One can thus conclude that CSR primarily is a tool for risk management in the view of MNCs, but that (some) corporations also are starting to define themselves in new ways, because their commitment to CSR interpellate a subject position in a human rights discourse in addition to the subject position in the business discourse. So is this reason enough to believe that CSR will form corporations to a new kind of political actor? And how will CSR make an influence on areas concerning human rights in China? These are questions that can be examined, but perhaps not completely answered, in the following case study on CSR in China where CSR is appearing in a consumption phase.

5 The Consumption Phase

It is apparent that CSR is a result of an intricate pattern of political, ethical and economical concerns coming from stakeholders with different backgrounds and objectives and that CSR belongs to a discourse order where the struggle to define this concept is intense. The question to answer here is therefore initially which discourses that define CSR in a Chinese context, i.e. which nodes that seem to hold a central position for CSR.

At this stage in the discursive practice the focus is on consumption of a text/concept and though discourse theory emphasize that the consumption phase also constitute a concept, the frames of the concept are a little more rigid than in the producing phase. I therefore find it appropriate to approach the analysis in terms of adoption and rejection with the aim to unmask which discourses and discursive aspects of CSR that are stressed when CSR is welcomed vis-à-vis opposed to in China.

5.1 The Rejection of CSR

In China, as elsewhere, CSR is a debated concept and lacks a unison judgement. Though it is difficult to find any general opinion, the trend seems to be toward increasingly positive attitudes. To begin with I will focus my analysis on discourses that are activated in the rejection of CSR.

5.1.1 A Threat to Profitability and Growth

The initial reaction among suppliers when presented to CSR-policies and CoC generally seems to be annoyance. There are several reasons for this. Often mention are complains on high costs and contradicting demands of compliance to the CoC, lowering prices and last-minute orders (*Acad.: 28, Org.: 17*). CSR thus calls for expensive investments in a short-term perspective and squeezed between compliance to CoC and prices pushed down many suppliers go out of business or get entangled in practices of double records (*Acad.: 28, Org.: 17, Corp.: 10, Org.: 31*). Add to this that different brands have slightly different codes and that many of them require the suppliers to pay for external audits, which may escalate to considerable amounts (*Corp.: 1, Corp.: 15, Org.: 6*). There are also cases where workers have objected to fewer occasions of extensive

hours¹⁶ and demands to wear safety equipment (*Corp.: 25, Corp.: 5*), which have had the result that some factories have had difficulties in attracting and maintaining employees (*Corp.: 25, Acad.: 14*).

“To wear earplugs and the whole health and safety concept is actually not always appreciated by workers. When it comes to working hours managers often claim that workers want to work extensive hours. But they want the money, not the hours.” (*Corp.: 10*).

“If we are strict on excessive hours, the girls will change to another factory where they can work longer hours” (*Corp.25*)

As suppliers are independent small or medium size enterprises, CSR policies interfere with the traditional business relationship between buyer (MNC) and seller (supplier). I.e. usually a buyer makes an order on a certain amount of commodities and mostly concerns about quality. With CSR the buyer tells the seller how to organize production, which safety equipment to use, how many hours of overtime that are allowed, how much employees should be paid, how and where to discard garbage etc. At the same time there is no room for raising prices, but prices are on the contrary pushed down (*Acad.: 28*). As will be discussed in the next section this is presented to the suppliers in terms of consumer demands, but initially many suppliers have felt offended (*Acad.: 16*).

“Some of the Chinese suppliers are also saying that they have all these multinationals coming in with their demands. Some asks for this, some for that and what it is, is not very clear. It is also very expensive. Small companies don’t have the resources.” (*Gov.: 20*).

The discontent with CSR is hence based on fear that it will complicate business and reduce profit, which are arguments that naturally fits in a business discourse and relates to the nodal point of “profitability”. But beside those concerns there are obviously feelings of being treated unfairly and of MNCs breaking the implicit rules of business relationship.

“The industries have also gone through huge changes. Many of them are family run companies that started with 300 employees and two managers. Now they have about 7000 employees and still two managers. You can imagine the pressure this put on them. And then multinationals come in and try to change management as well. It is obviously that this top-down approach doesn’t work fully.” (*Acad.: 28*).

I cannot here easily place these feelings in a discourse, but to my mind they – together with the economical concerns – constitute the ground for the suspicion that behind CSR lays western protectionism. This is a theme that has been elaborated on also by media and authorities.

“At first CSR was mainly regarded as western standards and as intervening in China’s internal affairs” (*Org. 27*).

“Authorities dealing with export tend to consider CSR as a trade barrier.” (*Org.: 19*)

Most often mentioned is the concern that CSR complicate production, which will raise production costs and make China loose its most competitive advantage. To local

¹⁶ Note however that overtime is not always paid.

officials the primary aims are social stability and to have a good rate of economic growth. Their performances are measured by the rate of Foreign Direct Investment and there might be a concern that raising the standards of labour conditions and enforcing rights of workers will undermine economic development (*Acad.: 13, Org.: 17*).

“The fear is that it will be costly for business and that there will be less western investments. Such a development would perhaps cause the responsible local officers to lose their promotion. So reluctance towards CSR is probably more about economical reasons and individual winnings and less of political reasons.” (*Org.: 17*).

“Most business and factories lack the means to implement law. They cannot afford social security and the authorities know this. If they go ahead and implement the law, this means that many enterprises will go bankrupt” (*Acad.:13*).

“Western consumers want to buy very cheap commodities, but CSR costs more money and the price will raise... Developing countries have to compete with cheap labour since they have no technology...so maybe we need more understanding and comprehending from west...surviving is the most important thing.” (*Acad.: 9*)

“So what I want to say is that compliance cost and the question is who pays? Consumers don’t want to pay, multinationals don’t want to pay and suppliers don’t want to pay – but who will then?” (*Corp.10*).

5.1.2 A Threat to Stability

There are however interviewees that also find political concerns behind governmental push-backs on CSR. If workers learn their rights this might lead to strikes and protests which might affect social stability (*Org.: 17, Acad.: 28*). Though there are a growing interest and engagement on CSR among authorities, there have also lately been cancellations of CSR-events that signal uncertainty and discontent with some of the areas CSR touch on. Important sponsors and participants have suddenly withdrawn from conferences and titles in seminars get changed in last minute to exclude words like human rights (*Acad.: 12, Gov.: 7*). Except for cancellations, arrangers are sometimes met with practical problems when a subject is considered sensitive. Rather often venues get doubled booked or have to change in a short advance or foreign participants experience delaying visa-processes.

“The American Federation of Trade Unions was supposed to have a meeting with ILO and Chinese delegates on the topic of CSR. The meeting was not officially cancelled by the government, but the AFTU-members did not get their visa-applications approved.” (*Acad.: 28*)

“Some [MNCs] are also starting to focus more on training in the factories. In the Pearl River Delta I would guess that about one million workers get training on workers rights and/or health and safety. If government sees this they can put two and two together with the increasing strikes in the area.” (*Acad.: 28*)

Since I have not been able to get any first hand information on the reasons behind these actions it is difficult to draw any qualified conclusion on signs and discourses that this reluctance actually builds on. A look at the topics on the cancelled or adjusted seminars and conferences do however show a certain pattern. Human rights, collective bargaining and development of trade union activities all refer to sensitive areas (c.f. Country Report 2005) that might challenge the existing political order. Clearly, all these are signs easily found in a human rights discourse. One might thus draw the conclusion that CSR not

only is defined in a business discourse, but that also the human right discourse is defining CSR in China. However, there is no way to be sure that this actually are the concerns by *authorities* since there quite often seem to be the case that other actors are guessing where the limits might be set and act on this.

5.1.3 Private - Public

Another angle to the reluctant approach is the discussion on private and public responsibility that is certainly not specific to China. This thus ties back to the basic discussion on CSR and its challenges to fundamental divisions between public and private, to the organisational structure of our society in states and to some extent to the Westphalian system. However, these issues increase in tension since there are foreign corporations and foreign consumers pushing for this solution. Once again, this gives reason to suspect foreign interference in internal affairs.

“To be honest, when multinationals come with their codes and standards and CSR it is external critique against the enforcement of law.” (*Corp.:10*).

“Secondly it has nothing to do with you; it is us doing the resettlement. So you have to say: How can we do it together in a way that we can understand and that is as transparent enough to satisfy our stakeholders and shareholders outside” (*Corp.: 5*).

To sum up, reluctance towards CSR are primarily based on signs from business discourse, but there are also a considerable amount of the resistance that seem to be based on objections to foreign interference and suspicions of a hidden western agenda. One could thus conclude that CSR is objected to when it in a business discourse is defined as an obstacle to perform business and when it is defined through a human rights discourse. In the later case it might challenge the existing political structure or, in a discourse theoretical perspective, the dominant discourses for what can and cannot be discussed.

In addition to this CSR also seem to be defined in a discourse that stresses its foreign and western nature, and as such it is rejected. What then does this imply? The Westphalian system of sovereign states is of course at stake here and the structure referred to when talking about foreign interference. Related to this, but not completely integrated, is a nationalistic discourse. The sign “foreign” only bear significance in relation to something that is not foreign, something domestic or well-known, in this case probably the sign “Chinese”.

There are thus not one but several definitions of CSR that is rejected. CSR is apparently still positioned in an order of discourse where many discourses are active. Or as one of the interviewees puts it:

“There are many that still view CSR as protectionism. So put together: The top-down approach, suspicions of protectionism, and the interchanged roles between government and multinationals, where multinationals take on responsibility that traditionally lay with government and which might be embarrassing to the government and hurt its reputation. It looks bad that the MNC and not the government deal with these issues. And then it is politically problematic issues. Put all this together and one can understand why there is a push back on CSR right now.” (*Acad.: 28*)

5.2 The Adoption of CSR

The interest for CSR in China has increased over the last couples of years and has recently boomed, which also coincident with a growing affirmative approach towards the phenomenon (*Gov. 20, Corp.: 18*). In the discussion above it was conclude that CSR was rejected when defined through a business discourse and through a human rights discourse. Beside this, one could also suspect elements from a nationalistic discourse, and perhaps from a discourse building on the Westphalian system. Through which discourses then is CSR defined when *adopted* in China? As we shall see, it is actually pretty much the same discourses involved in the definition, but the signs relate to each other in a different way.

5.2.1 Profitability, Growth and Adjustment to Market

The positive values that CSR might bring are often described in economical terms. As multinationals increasingly demand international standards and compliance to their codes, CSR is viewed as investments that will bring long term profit (*Corp.: 29*). I.e. especially to corporations that are doing audits and training themselves, CSR entails investments in time and money. For the supplier this denotes a commitment from the multinational and a mutual long term perspective on the relationship (*Corp.: 15*). Since CSR seem to be an expanding phenomenon the supplier can also hope to attract more big brands with CSR-policies (*Gov.: 20*). There are also examples of manufacturing plants that have been engaged in CSR work for a longer period and that can now show a record of greater efficiency and lower labour turnover (*Corp.: 18*).

“Chinese companies care for CSR because western buyers require certain standards. If Chinese companies do not provide this maybe they will move there production to other developing countries” (*Acad.: 9*)

“There have been some conferences on CSR, but some have also been cancelled. The government is definitely interested in the issue, but it is a difficult one. They are interested because there are a big push from companies on these issues and because they want to enforce their own brands.” (*Gov.: 30*)

Clearly, CSR is here defined through a business discourse as a business case. The change from when CSR is rejected is that CSR in these cases are considered to contribute to profitability, or at least it is accepted as a new circumstance that will not go away and that one has to adjust to (*Acad.: 14, Acad.: 28*). As Chinese brands grow stronger they also have to adjust to new consumer demands if they want to compete on the global market, which involve that demands for CSR-standards now also are coming from Chinese MNCs, though still in a small scale (*Gov.: 30, Org.: 22*).

I find it reasonable to assume that development towards increasing engagements in CSR, expectations that the introduction of CoC actually might raise efficiency and that CSR-investments imply long term business relations together have affected the attitude towards CSR in a more favourable direction. As such it shows the relation between discursive and social practice. New demands and expectations on business practice – which is located to the discursive practice – are triggering changes in the social practice by enforcing certain standards and policies, which in turn affect how signs organise in the discursive practise and the attitude towards CSR changes.

Looking at Chinese economy as a whole there are also those that hope that CSR will contribute to necessary adjustment of China's market position.

"China's foreign trade increase mainly relies on quantity increase. This has already caused many deficiencies, such as lack of core competitiveness compares to big market share, the weakness on R&D and marketing capacity compares to strong processing capacity, slow progress on service trade compares to rapid development on commodity trade, high social and environmental costs compares to low corporate operation costs, weak capacity on controlling international price compares to big sales volume, etc. Emphasis on CSRs could indirectly help to reshape the trade increase mode to the healthier." (*Gov.: 26*)

"Local authorities want to have a good economic development in the area. Therefore they are keen on attracting more foreign investments, to get more orders and industrial growth. One way of attracting foreign investments is to comply with international labour standards and therefore they support CSR-training." (*Org.: 4*).

Signs here refer both to business discourse where arguments tie in to the nodal point of profitability and to an extended business discourse where growth and the well being of the economy seem to be central arguments. In both cases CSR is viewed as a business case. This is also how most MNCs seem to communicate CSR:

"But one of the things that we try very hard to promote among the suppliers is the business reasons behind having those things. Very seldom when I talk to the supplier I talk about the code itself, I talk about the business reason why we want them to have a good work force and safe workplace. So we are talking about the core business reasons." (*Corp.: 1*).

"We have business principles that we discuss like human rights and corruption. We often talk to our partners and to the government about our principles. Because any project we get here we have to get our partners to sign on our principles. And then together to find a way for them to mean something and not just be a piece of paper...So our discussions with government or partners are mainly about business and how we can work together and part of that discussion is the standards we use..... We integrated them into an economic debate." (*Corp.: 5*)

Interestingly to note here is how employees at MNCs are able to chose which discourses to use in different situations. Towards consumers and media CSR is defined in a human rights discourse, but when speaking to Chinese suppliers and authorities they use a business discourse. The reader should here remember the discussion on subject position and discourse psychology from the chapter on theory, which stresses that there are no true or false attitudes and opinions. We are simply all carriers of many different and sometimes contradicting discourses. It is therefore possible to view CSR both as a business case and have a normative stand point in a human rights discourse. However, the manner in which CSR is presented has implications for the social practice and that is interesting not least for the purpose of this study. One may thus conclude that the business reasons essentially make up the growing interest for CSR and the business discourse have an advantage over the human rights discourse in defining CSR in a Chinese context.

5.2.2 The Chinese Resemblance

There are however other aspects for CSR-engagement in China. Especially when it comes to protection of the environment CSR is viewed as a progressive force, but law enforcement is also an important aspect (*Acad.: 9, Org.: 19*). Many of the interviewees have also stressed that CSR complies well with the policy for a harmonious society that

has recently been adopted by the central government (e.g. *Gov.*: 26, *Acad.*: 9, *Org.*: 19). Both environmental protection and social responsibility fits well with the ambition of sustainable development (*Gov.* 7). One of the interviewees also stress that in building a harmonious society one has to re-picture what we view as capital and give greater protection to natural capital, which the Chinese government increasingly are doing (*Org.* 19). Interestingly, especially in a discourse analysis, he also stresses the origin of the economic model that is dominating the practice, which he finds has severe shortcomings:

“Chinese business leaders have Western education and they believe in the traditional Western theory that the way towards a modern society is to grow fast to reach a developed standard and then one can deal with environmental pollution and integrate business with community” (*Org.*: 19).

As has been discussed earlier, reluctance towards CSR was often formulated in terms of foreign, trade barrier, protectionism and imperialism. When discussing the growing positive approach to CSR in China a theme often repeated is how well CSR integrate to a Chinese context and that there are many aspects of CSR that are found and deeply founded in Chinese tradition.

“CSR includes labour rights, human rights and environment, but you know we have a labour law and an environment law so these values are very common in the Chinese society... The government has always been interested in CSR issues, but it has not been called CSR.” (*Acad.*: 9)

“CSR comply well with Confucianism, so it is not correct to say that Chinese culture don’t embrace the values of CSR” (*Org.*: 27).

I have already mentioned the policy for a harmonious society to which CSR easily is assimilated, and strengthening of the enforcement of Chinese labour law. In addition to this there are also more historical similarities. Before the reformation to market economy in the late 1970s, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) were run as so called *corporate acting communities*, meaning that a corporation were taking on responsibility for the community it was located to, by building and funding schools, hospitals etc (*Org.*: 19, *Org.*: 27). Though this have more of a philanthropic character then the defining frames of CSR that I operate with, the tradition of corporate acting community is often referred to when discussing CSR in a Chinese context (*Org.*: 17, *Org.*: 19). CSR is here defined by nodes referring to Chinese tradition and socialist ideology and this is put in contrast to undesirable conditions defined as foreign and especially Western:

“With the reform came a new way of operating. SOEs had to adjust to a competitive way of doing business and could no longer take on functions outside the business sphere. A lot of workers got laid off and it created social problems. The main goal for SOEs is now to assure good profit. So the cost of the reform to use the Western system with profit as the only goal was weaker social security” (*Org.*: 19).

“Open market policy and foreign companies in China push for competition and the labour conditions grow bad.” (*Acad.*: 9)

“TNCs want to cut their costs and therefore they place orders in cheap labour cost countries. It becomes a race to the bottom where already low labour cost countries push the costs for labour intensive production even lower in competing with each other. In China this means that workers not even have the basic labour rights... This is a result of race to the bottom globalization.” (*Org.*: 6).

When CSR is positively judged arguments essentially build on a business discourse, using signs as profit, competitiveness and investment. In addition to this CSR is linked to Chinese in words of Chinese law, Chinese tradition and socialism. Beside the business discourse, CSR is apparently defined by a nationalistic discourse where the nodal point is Chinese and around which other arguments arrange. The Chinese characteristics of CSR are further emphasized by connecting situations that CSR is meant to resolve as foreign, Western, capitalism. The result is thus that CSR, though a western concept reflects Chinese values and oppose to a foreign system. One may thus conclude that an affirmative approach to CSR use less signs from a human rights discourse and that CSR is defined in a business case and as a new name on domestic phenomenon.

When defined as Chinese, CSR widens to embrace issues also outside the business discourse. The question is then which issues that can be discussed? In areas, such as the recently changed perspective on HIV/AIDS (*Corp.*: 34) and the rights of migrant workers, where the government now recognizes the problems (*Org.* 23), CSR is viewed as part of the solution (*Corp.*: 29). When it comes to sensitive issues, like freedom of association, there still seem to be little room for action (*Acad.*: 32, *Org.*: 31). There are also those who question the framing of different phenomenon as Chinese or foreign and are afraid that the Chinese frames (Chinese CSR, Chinese human rights), which are the acceptable ones, will suppress seeds of a freer political development that might grow without the framing (*Org.*: 21).

6 Concluding Summary

6.1 CSR through Different Discourses

In the Chinese case it is apparent that MNCs explain CSR through a business discourse and they are thereby avoiding the political sphere. In some cases, like in the discussion on trade unions and training of workers in labour rights, multinationals are however touching on political ground. Even though there is some progress in areas concerning human rights, these are still sensitive issues in a Chinese context, which sometimes is expressed by authorities through delaying administration processes or cancellations of particular events. More common though, is that the involved parties know the limits themselves. CSR is thus defined also in a human rights discourse, but this definition is held back through the discursive practice of self-censure and through actions of authorities in the social practice. When corporations discuss CSR in China they are primarily doing so through a business discourse, and also issues like workers health and safety and possibility to organize in trade unions are defined in economical terms.

In cases where CSR is seen as obstructing business, the concept is, not surprisingly, rejected. The interesting thing to note here is that, aside from arguments like reduced profitability, CSR is described as western protectionism and as western interference in internal affairs through a nationalistic discourse. Also when CSR is experienced as good in a business perspective, it is defined in a nationalistic discourse and similarities to Chinese tradition are emphasized. One may hence conclude that in a Chinese context CSR is positioned in a discourse order where there are mainly three discourses struggling to define the concept. The business discourse seems to hold the strongest position and defines CSR as a business case (or in a few cases as a trade barrier). This is perhaps not surprising since CSR is a business policy by and for the business sector and huge multinationals, as well as small and medium sized enterprises, are constantly looking for business cases. More unexpected to me has been that the nationalistic discourse takes such a determinant part in the development of CSR in China. When it is described as foreign the reaction is almost entirely negative, but when links are established to Chinese tradition and policies the reaction is suddenly affirmative. This is further illustrated as signs for foreign and Chinese are changing position when attitudes to CSR changes. I.e. when CSR is rejected it is viewed as western protectionism and patronizing directed toward Chinese economic growth and society. When CSR, on the other hand, is welcomed it has strong ties to Chinese objectives and values and is considered as a tool to deal with inferior conditions that is a result of foreign exploitation and western economical theories.

6.2 CSR and Human Rights in China

From a political perspective it has been interesting to study how and when the human rights discourse define CSR. In the Chinese context the human rights discourse has been quite low voiced, but (as has been discussed above) it still exists. Interestingly, the nationalistic discourse opens up for values and definitions of CSR that is uncovered by the business discourse and that are actually closing in to the definitions of the human rights discourse. It is almost like the nationalistic discourse is driving issues in the Chinese consumption phase that the human rights discourse was promoting in the production phase. In other words, there are reasons to believe that CSR might have an influence on areas concerning human rights in China even though the human rights terminology is missing. The combination of “business” and “Chinese” seems to be a successful definition of CSR that give space to greater agency, than if CSR was solely presented as western and human rights-oriented.

6.3 MNC as Political Actors?

What can then be said on multinationals as a new kind of political actor? When CSR is defined through a human rights discourse corporations are interpellated in new subject positions. Big MNCs are powerful actors and their investments make a great difference to the growth and wealth of countries. Great parts of the globalization debate that led to the development of CSR in the 1990s were treating the responsibilities of MNCs for the exploitation of poorer countries with governments competing in push standards and regulations lower and lower to attract investments. If MNCs with CSR-policies instead are using their influence to raise standards and push for political changes they are emerging as a new kind of actor in an international context. One should however remember that very few corporations have adopted CSR policies and only a minority of those is actively engaging in CSR-work.

However, the case study on CSR in China shows that MNCs have an opportunity to discuss sensitive issues that NGOs and other organizations are lacking. In addition to the economical power corporations might exercise it seems to be an advantage that these issues are formulated in economical terms. Corporations that are interpellated in a subject position by a human rights discourse, as well as by a business discourse, hence show tendencies to take on a role that include more than traditional business concerns. Though it from a discourse theoretical point of view might seem problematic that MNCs are avoiding to define CSR as ethics in China, they are still defining it in both ethical and economical terms to themselves, which affects their actions. If this will develop corporations with strong engagement in CSR to a new kind of political actor on the international stage, future will show.

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Appendix 1

Presentation of Interviewees

Corporations

adidas-Salomon International Sourcing Limited

William Anderson, Head of Social & Environmental Affairs, Asia Pacific

Interview: June 16 2005, Hong Kong

adidas-Salomon International Sourcing Limited

Hilde Gunn Vestad, Regional Manager (South Asia) Social & Environmental Affairs

Interview: June 16 2005, Hong Kong

H & M Hennes & Mauritz AB

Lars-Åke Bergqvist

Interview: May 4 2005, Stockholm

H & M International Ltd

Nanna Engquist, COC Manager

Interview: June 28 2005, Shanghai

IKEA

Dan Brännström, Head of Compliance and Monitoring

Interview: May 2 2005, Helsingborg

IKEA

Anders Lidholm, Compliance Manager Asia

Interview: June 27 2005, Shanghai

KappAhl – Far East Ltd

Agnete Sundén, Managing Director

Interview: June 17 2005, Hong Kong

KarstadtQuelle – (Far East) & Co.

Esther Tse, Manager Environment and Social Standards

Interview: June 16 2005, Hong Kong

Lafarge

Nicolas Lecerf

Interview: June 22 2005, Beijing.

Nike Inc.

Jeremy Prepisci, Director of Compliance North Asia Region

Interview: June 13 2005, Guangzhou

Pentland Group plc

Ruilian Huang, Group Business Standards Officer

Interview: June 11 2005, Shenzhen

Shell Companies in China

Nick Wood, External Affairs Director

Interview: June 22 2005, Beijing

Tetra Pak

Helen Shi, Marketing Communications Manager

Interview: July 1 2005, Shanghai

Academics and Journalists

CELAP

Amos Ding

Interview: July 1 2005, Shanghai

China Perspectives – French Centre for Research on Contemporary China

Chloé Froissart, Research Fellow

Interview: 24 June 2005, Beijing

Context

Mats Wingborg, Journalist/Researcher

Interview: May 4 2005, Stockholm

CSR Asia / City University of Hong Kong

Stephen Frost, Journalist/ Research Fellow

Interview: June 14 2005, Hong Kong

The Raul Wallenberg Institute

Dennis Driscoll, Professor in Law

Interview: May 17 2005, Beijing

(Independent Journalist)

Tim Pringle, Journalist

Interview: June 17 2005, Hong Kong

University of Oslo – Faculty of Law, NCHR, China Programme

Cecilie Figenschou Bakke, Project Coordinator/Head of Beijing Office

Interview: June 22 2005, Beijing

Governmental Representatives and Intergovernmental Organizations (IGO)

European Chamber of Commerce in China

Rhian Kelly, Business Manager

Interview: July 6 2005

European Union Delegation of the European Commission

Petra Kiel, Project Officer Development and Co-operation

Interview: July 5 2005, Beijing

ILO (International Labour Organization) and Governments

Samina R. Hasan, Programme Officer

Interview: July 5 2005, Beijing

MOFCOM – Research Center on Transnational Corporations

Carol Wang Qian, Project Director – Dean Assistant

Interview: July 8 2005, Beijing.

UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)

Ghita Roelans, Research Fellow

Interview: June 1 2005, Beijing

Organizations, Association, Trade Unions and Consultancy Firms

ASrIA – Association for Sustainable & Responsible Investments in Asia

David St. Maur Sheil, Director

Interview: June 15 2005, Hong Kong

Canadian International Development Agency – Civil Society Program

Li Zhen, Civil Society Program Coordinator

Interview: July 8 2005, Beijing

China National Textile and Apparel Council

Lucy Lu, Deputy Director – Office for Promoting Social Responsibility

Interview: July 28 2005, Beijing.

ERM – Environmental Resources Management China

Kate Larsen, Senior Consultant Social Strategies

Interview: June 24 2005, Beijing

Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee – HKCIC

Pak Nang Parry Leung, Researcher

Interview: June 14 2005, Hong Kong

Industrial Worker's Union

Mats Svensson, International Secretary

Interview: May 4 2005, Stockholm

Institute of Contemporary Observation (ICO) / Migrant Workers Community College

Kaiming Liu, Executive Director

Interview: June 10 2005, Shenzhen. Lectures: June 7-9 2005, Shenzhen.

Institute of Contemporary Observation (ICO) / Migrant Workers Community College

Jane Liu, Assist Executive Director / Outreach and Public Affairs

Interview: June 9 2005, Shenzhen.

Institute for Environment and Development/ Leadership for Environment and Development

Bill Zhang, CSR Advisor

Interview: June 25 2005, Beijing.

Metall

Lars Jonsson

Interview: April 25 2005, Stockholm

Metall

Josefin Larsson

Interview: April 25 2005, Stockholm

Migrant Women's Club

Zhi Qiang Zhang

Interview: June 23 2005, Beijing

Rena Kläder / Clean Cloth Campaign

Joel Lindefors

Interview: May 9 2005, Stockholm

The Asia Foundation

Stephanie Yan, Corporate Affairs Manager

Interview: June 23 2005.

WWF China

Geoff Gilmore, Associate

Interview: July 6 2005, Beijing

