

Workshop on CSR Regulation and Global Governance, 18-19 June 2010, Berlin

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On June 18th and 19th, 2010, undergraduate and Ph.D. students, university professors and practitioners gathered in Berlin to participate in the workshop “CSR Regulation and Global Governance”. Thomas Hajduk and Jan Hendrik Quandt, both members of the Transatlantic Doctoral Academy on Corporate Responsibility, organised the workshop in cooperation with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology and the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy in Berlin. The workshop not only served as a forum for discussion and exchange between the international participants coming from different academic and professional backgrounds, but also offered Ph.D. students the opportunity to present the subject, key questions and ideas of their research. Linking the debates on global governance and CSR regulation, the practitioners and scholars discussed the new roles of governments and companies, modes of cooperation and private authority.

Timea Pal, Ph.D. student and research fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, opened the workshop on the first day at the Humboldt University. She presented her work on social and environmental responsibility in the supply chain of the electronics industry. Looking at the implementation of CSR in production facilities in Mexico and the Czech Republic, she observed that the improvements through CSR of global companies are limited. According to her research, the enforcement of local labour law, for example, often depends on “alternative” institutions that exist in a national context alongside enterprises. Focusing on the issue of human rights in weak states (Nicole Janz, University of Cambridge) or on the relation between CSR, intra-firm-bargaining and asset specificity (Christian Thauer, Free University Berlin) other presentations also dealt with the problem of the global regulatory gap and the possibilities to compensate it through CSR.

The academic research on CSR and its practical implementation in the political and economic context were integrated in a Practitioner’s Panel, which was hosted by Thomas Melde, consultant at Akzente GmbH. Within the panel, Dr. Torsten G. Christen (European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs), Cornelia Heydenreich (Germanwatch), Dr. Markus Scholand (WestLB, Sustainability Management) and Dr. Michael Wimmer (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs) dis-

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cussed frameworks such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises or the Equator Principles (financial sector) and questioned among other thing whether CSR should rely on voluntary corporate actions or be rather regulated by law and why many companies went beyond minimum standards.

After the lunch break Thomas Hajduk (European University Viadrina) and Jan Hendrik Quandt (University of Bielefeld) presented some general reflections on research in the field of CSR, concluding that more reflexivity, more modesty and more intellectual honesty were needed in the academic field of CSR.

The second day of the workshop took place at the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy (ICD). The ICD is a not-for profit organisation that fosters intercultural interaction at all levels in order to promote global peace and stability. After a warm welcome and an introduction to the ICD's role and programme, given by its Development Director Peter Rees, two doctoral presentations held by Luc Brès and Christoph Stamm (both from Université de Montréal) addressed the CSR standard ISO 26000, which has not yet been published. Based on the theory of neo-institutionalism, Luc analysed the norms' elaboration, whereas Christoph discussed possible ways of its diffusion and institutionalisation.

Gathering data about the CSR engagement of foreign companies investing in the Balkans, Birgit Kunrath (University of Salzburg) aimed at identifying the reasons for the non-existence of "human rights CSR" in this region. Finally, Christina Müller (University of Bremen) presented her ambitious thesis project, raising the broad question underlying all CSR issues: "Why do transnational corporations engage in social and environmental self-regulation?"