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Heloïse Berkowitz[1] · Marcelo Bucheli[2] · Hervé Dumez[3]

Abstract Few industries have been pressured to develop corporate social responsibility (CSR) standards and policies like oil and gas. This has translated into the creation of non-governmental organizations and branches of the oil and gas firms focused on CSR. However, given the intrinsic complex characteristics of this industry, its global reach, and the fact that its operations affect and involve a wide variety of stakeholders, CSR issues cannot be defined and implemented exclusively at the industry or firm levels, but require the participation of other actors affected directly or indirectly by oil and gas activities. In this paper we argue, first, that oil and gas CSR issues are collectively constructed through meta-organizations (organizations composed by other organizations), and, second, that the complexity and variety of CSR issues require companies to build industry-specific and non-industry-specific collective actions. Based on how oil and gas firms participate in this multi-level co-construction of CSR issues, we created a typology of meta-organizations as infra-sectoral, sectoral, cross-sectoral, and supra-sectoral meta-organizations.

Introduction

How are corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues defined at the industry level? What kinds of organizations are involved in the process of definition and implementation of CSR issues? What characteristics do these organizations have? In this paper we attempt to answer these questions by analyzing the case of the oil and gas industry. We argue that CSR principles in that industry are created and implemented through the so-called meta-organizations (MOs), or organizations composed by other organizations (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005). In order to analyze how particular CSR issues are defined and implemented, we define the MOs as cross-sectoral MOs (meaning, MOs composed by multiple unrelated industries), supra-sectoral MOs (MOs composed by organizations of related industries, such as oil and gas and mining), sectoral MOs (only composed by organizations of the oil and gas industry), or infra-sectoral MOs (specialized on particular segments of the oil and gas industry value chain). We show that depending on the particular CSR issue, the definition and implementation will be conducted by cross and supra-sectoral, sectoral and infra-sectoral MOs. This responds to the fact that some CSR issues (for instance marine mammal impacts) need to be addressed by organizations in different industries (say, oil, fishing, and tourism), while others such as oil spill responsiveness are considered by the industry something of its own sole concern.

Organization and CSR scholars had paid relatively little attention to MOs. Recent theoretical works have shown the importance of this organizational form in the analysis of

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how general organizational principles are created and diffused (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005; Gulati et al. 2012), while empirical works have shown their role in this creation and diffusion of principles for CSR in particular (Mühle 2010). By focusing on the oil and gas industry, we not only show the role of MOs in the creation and diffusion of CSR principles in a particular industry, but also show the need of constantly analyzing whether such principles were created and implemented only at that particular industry level or whether they were created and implemented in conjunction with other industries or through dialog with stakeholders (Beschorner and Müller 2007). This is particularly important for oil and gas, because firms can deal with some CSR issues at the firm or industry level, but a lot of this industry's activities also affect other industries and stakeholders. As a result, firms also need to get involved in MOs that include a wide variety of actors.

Our focus on MOs allows us to study mechanisms of collective action in the oil and gas industry that have received little attention to date. This does not mean collective action in the oil industry has been under-studied. In fact, few organizations of collective action are as well known, well studied, and influential as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Colgan 2014; Malnes 1983). OPEC is the quintessential example often used to describe what Olson (Olson 1965, pp. 40–41) defined as 'exclusive group,' meaning those collective action groups that seek to restrict output in order to increase prices. In fact, Olson himself studied OPEC to illustrate his own theory (Olson 1988). On the other hand, Olson (1965, p. 39) also defined 'inclusive groups' as those seeking to influence lawmakers and therefore seek to have as many members as possible. Following Di Maggio (1988), Scott (2008), and Meyer and Höllerer (2014), we can add that inclusive groups might also exist to influence other legitimating institutions (different from governments) in order to have their principles and values as the common ones accepted by other actors in the institutional field. As it emerges from our analysis of the role of MOs in the creation of CSR principles in the oil and gas industry, we find that firms and organizations in this industry join both inclusive and exclusive MOs. As we show, even when dealing with non-market issues such as CSR, oil and gas corporations might decide to join or create some exclusive MOs as well as inclusive ones. This fact has both theoretical and managerial implications for both CSR in general as well as for the oil and gas industry in particular.

The paper is organized as follows. The second (next) section discusses extant literature on MOs and CSR in the oil industry. The third section explains our methodology and findings. The fourth section shows how certain principles are created at the infra-sectoral, sectoral, supra-sectoral, and cross-sectoral levels and studies the role of MOs in the definition of CSR solutions. The sixth section

discusses the theoretical and managerial implications of our findings, and the last section concludes.

Literature Review: Meta-Organizations, CSR, and the Oil Industry

Few industries have received the attention of CSR scholars as much as oil and gas. The interest responds to this industry's undeniable environmental impact, its importance in global geopolitics, and its dominance by a few large multinational corporations and state-owned firms (Frynas 2009; Lindgreen et al. 2012; Watts 2005). In this section, we review the literature of MOs in the oil and gas industry in relation to CSR issues.

Assessing CSR Company-Level Initiatives in the Oil and Gas Industry

Most studies that take into account the role of MOs focus on assessing whether they achieve their goals or not. A degree of skepticism (either explicit or implicit) about the good intentions of an industry constantly accused of wrongdoing drives a significant portion of scholarly research of CSR in oil and gas. After all, issues such as a protection of the environment can conflict with the industry's technological demands or basic profit-maximizing strategies (Le Menestrel et al. 2002). In fact, for a number of authors, CSR initiatives in this industry are nothing but rhetorical strategies to legitimize the firms' activities with the local society (Castelló and Lozano 2011; Du and Vieira Jr 2012; Reichert et al. 2000) or with their own employees (De Roeck and Delobbe 2012) developed by executives aware of how harmful their industry is (Cai et al. 2012).

Therefore, it is not surprising that many works studying CSR in oil and gas focus on assessing the real impact of CSR initiatives. In general, most scholarly works bring a bleak picture. Frynas (2010) and Utting and Ives (2006) show that in terms of improving transparency, CSR initiatives have generally failed. In terms of environmental protection and oil spill prevention, however, results are more positive (Frynas 2009, 2012). Examining the effects of poverty reduction partnerships between oil multinationals and local communities in Nigeria, Idemudia (2009) finds no positive effect. Aaron (2012) adds that failures in CSR initiatives by foreign oil multinationals in Nigeria result from an "absentee state" and cultural barriers. Cash (2012) provides similar results for the case of Chad, where she blames failures on a weak domestic state. In Angola, the institutional framework and the profit-driven logic behind CSR initiatives by oil multinationals are blamed for their lack of positive results (Wiig and Ramalho 2005). A lack of coordination with larger development plans impeded positive results in the countries

of the Guinea Gulf (Frynas 2005). Similarly, Pegg (2012) finds cultural barriers within the corporations themselves, when studying Chinese oil multinationals. According to him, the internal culture of these Chinese firms is not consistent with larger global CSR principles. These studies focus their analysis on the firms' and NGOs' activities and do not analyze the role of MOs.

Assessing the Success of Meta-Organizations in CSR Initiatives in the Oil and Gas Industry

Analyses on the relationship between MOs and CSR in the oil and gas industry overwhelmingly focus on the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). The majority of these studies aim to provide an assessment of how good or bad these MOs are at achieving their goals. In general, most authors argue that the principles of these MOs are not aligned to the realities of the places in which the oil and gas multinationals operate. For instance, Aaronson (2011) maintains that the lack of effectiveness of EITI's principles responds to the different visions different partners (governments, business, and civil society) have on those principles, unrealistic and no-consistent ideas on how to integrate the civil society in different countries, and, often, the lack of knowledge domestic legislators have on what EITI is. Frynas (2010, 2012) argues that EITI has not improved transparency in the affiliated countries due to high and hard to control levels of corruption and underdevelopment. Kolstad and Wiig (2009, 2010) posit first, that EITI's principles do not deal with the issues defined by the resource curse literature, and second that the way those principles were defined simply do not permit a reduction in existing levels of corruption.

Studies conducted at a more local level are consistent with Aaronson's (2011) and Kolstad and Wiig (2009, 2010) views. Van Alstine's (2014) study on the attempt to implement EITI's principles in Ghana shows that they failed because they ignore issues at the sub-national level. Smith et al. (2012) find that Madagascar's high corruption levels impede proper participation of local communities. In their study of several Sub-Saharan African countries, Hilson and Maconachie (2008) bluntly say that EITI is simply incapable of reducing corruption and mobilizing citizens to hold government officials accountable. Studying the case of China, Mouan (2010) shows that as a Western institution EITI does not have the legitimacy to impose guidelines that conflict with the Chinese culture, business interests, and philosophy. Haufler (2010) brings a more optimistic analysis by arguing that EITI's principles can lead to positive results, provided that members create transnational networks that are coupled with global norms. Another positive outlook is provided by Pitlik et al. (2010) who maintain that a country's decision to adopt EITI's principles can show a real willingness for social reforms.

Scholars studying UNGC bring more diverse conclusions on this MO's success. Interest in UNGC has even led some scholars to develop methodologies to analyze this meta-organization in particular (Arthaud-Day 2005; Baumann-Pauly and Scherer 2013; Giannarakis et al. 2011). When assessing UNGC's operations, Rasche et al. (2013) argue that the general principles by which this MO was created provided good and realistic guidelines for positive social change. Kell (2013) agrees and claims that UNGC has been more successful than other initiatives because it has enjoyed sustained institutional support and operational viability. Other scholars argue that UNGC's potential for long-term success depends on collaboration and mutual trust between different stakeholders (Gilbert and Behnam 2013), an acceptance by firms of their ethical responsibility to their employees (Patrus et al. 2013), the way its members manage challenges of flexibility, stability, and legitimacy of governance (Rasche 2012), the existence of rigorous government oversight (particularly in human rights) (Seppala 2009), the degree of pressure from different stakeholders (Pérez-López et al. 2015), and the existence of external evaluation mechanisms of companies' performance (Bernhagen and Mitchell 2010). Janney et al. (2009) and Cetindamar and Husoy (2007) find a positive correlation between adoption and compliance of UNGC principles and firms' market performance, while Bennie et al. (2007) find the same result for the firms' reputation. When comparing it to other options, Williams (2004) argues that UNGC is the most effective mechanism to reach consensus on the role business organizations should play in society.

Other studies provide a less positive assessment of UNGC. For Mayer (2009) most UNGC principles do not fit within existing legal frameworks making them hard to enforce or implement. Sethi and Schepers (2014) maintain that UNGC has failed to induce its signatory companies to improve its CSR activities leading to frustration and lack of trust among affected constituencies. Studies conducted at the country-level are also critical. Hamann et al. (2009) do not find any effect on adoption of UNGC's principles and improvement in behavior by South African oil and gas firms. Chen and Bouvain (2009) study firms from the US, UK, Australia, and Germany and only find some positive effects on the environment and labor relations, but not in all the other issues covered by UNGC. Kilgour (2007) does not find any positive effect in terms of improving gender inequality. Nason (2008) adds that most multinationals simply do not have much respect for UNGC's principles, and therefore, are not likely to follow them. Knudsen (2011) posits that only very large companies join these principles, while smaller ones are more likely to delist themselves. This is a particularly serious issue in times when independent companies are playing an increasingly important role in the oil and gas industry (Jaffe and Soligo 2007). Gilbert and Rasche (2008) say that the way UNGC

principles are stated limit their expansion. Thérien and Pouliot (2006) remind us that, in the end, the process of creating principles for economic and social development is more political than technical, and this is reflected in the way the UNGC operates.

Meta-Organizations and the Creation of CSR Principles in the Oil and Gas Industry

There are some common elements in the literature of UNGC and EITI worth highlighting. First, they focus on analyzing whether their principles work or not (Sethi and Schepers 2014), but do not analyze their role in creating industry-wide principles and self-regulating mechanisms (Beschorner and Müller 2007). Even existing theoretical works neglect how those principles are created and assume their implementation as result of pressures on firms from different stakeholders (Aguilera et al. 2007; Campbell 2007; Husted and Allen 2006). We agree with Kostova et al. (2008) who maintain that when analyzing the legitimization of practices developed by firms that operate at the global level, we need to understand the role of organizations that operate at the meta-level in defining general principles that legitimate both global and local practices. We contribute to extant literature by taking the meta-organization as the unit of analysis to understand how general CSR principles emerge before they are either adopted or implemented. The shift in our analytical focus allows us to have a better understanding of how the industry as a whole works in terms of developing particular CSR initiatives and why different stakeholders play different roles in different meta-organizations.

This literature review focused primarily on EITI and UNGC. As we show in the rest of this paper, we are aware of the existence and importance of other MOs relevant to the oil and gas industry. The literature relating them to issues of CSR and ethics, however, is scant. In this essay, we hope to bring in an analysis of these MOs as relevant creators of the general principles guiding this particular controversial industry at the global level.

Methodology

A Case Study of the Oil and Gas Sector

Given that CSR principles in this industry tackle global issues such as environmental sustainability or human rights, their definition and implementation involve a series of actors, both individual ones such as firms (both domestic and multinational, private and state-owned) and governments as well as groups like UNGC or EITI. This means that there is a strong element of collective action and coordination

involved. While MOs have been analyzed as a key concept to understand collective action (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005; Gulati et al. 2012), they have not been studied empirically in their role of important players at designing CSR principles in the context of a specific industry. To that purpose, we conceive a general orienting framework as a starting point (Whyte 1984) stating that CSR solutions are collectively defined at different sectoral levels. Our methodology is in line with Yin's guidelines on case studies (2003), especially since our objective is to study the dynamics of a case that is precisely "a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context," and where "the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (1981, p. 59). Our case study deals with MOs in the oil and gas industry but, as we will see, MOs are sometimes industry specific (meaning they only deal with oil and gas issues), and sometimes non-industry specific (meaning they deal with areas that are not particular for the oil and gas industry), which blurs the lines of the case.

The oil and gas industry has two important characteristics relevant to our analysis. First, as we discuss in the literature review section, when it comes to CSR issues, this is one of the most strongly criticized industries (Frynas 2005, 2009; Perks et al. 2013). Second, oil and gas is one of the most global industries and is dominated by some of the world's largest corporations. This makes all CSR issues more complex than in other industries, because the corporations involved have to deal with a wide variety of societies, political systems, cultural norms, levels of corruption, levels of economic and social development, and others. And third, this is an extremely fragmented and complex industry (Dess 1987; Mascarenhas and Aaker 1989). The value chain is subdivided into three major businesses: the upstream business that comprises exploration and production of oil and gas; the midstream business, constituted of storage, trade and transportation of crude oil and natural gas; and the downstream business that includes refining, distribution, retail, and wholesale (Adelman 1972). Resulting from this division, CSR issues dramatically differ, from offshore operations to land transportation, health and safety management, human rights and economic development. For instance, current debates on the environmental impact of the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline between Canada and the United States differ from those around environmental impact of new drilling in the Ecuadorian jungles. In the same lines, issues on gender equality in the work place for white collar workers in the main multinationals' corporate headquarters will have very little to do with those around human rights abuses of oil workers in Nigeria.

Data Collection and Analysis

In order to analyze the construction of CSR issues and policies, we first went through 10 years of CSR annual reports published by six super-majors (Total, Shell, BP,

ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips and Chevron)—from 2002 to 2012—to define the main CSR topics reported by these firms. Noting the emergence of MOs dealing with CSR issues, we then created an exhaustive database of MOs that had oil and gas companies as members. We completed this list by systemically checking every country potential oil and gas association as well as MOs' and firms' websites to find cross-references. We created a database of ninety-three MOs and built a selective directory, which displays the name, date of creation, organizational form, purpose, membership, CSR topics, and CSR subtopics when relevant. In addition, following Piore (2006), we carried out interviews in order to verify ideas that were emerging from the material.

We conducted eighteen one-hour-plus semi-directive interviews with heads of research centers within MOs, senior managers and directors, or the General Secretariat when such a position existed in the MO, and MO representative managers in a major oil and gas company. The reason why the majority of interviews were conducted at the MO level responds to the fact that we aim to understand the definition and implementation of CSR issues at the collective and not the individual level. Given that we are studying the collective construction of CSR self-regulatory mechanisms, we chose to exclude actors that deliberately decided not to join the MO or those that were denied membership. Interviews began by asking about the respondents' background and the role they played in the organization. We then moved to the creation of the MO:

when it was launched, in which context, and to answer what need. We subsequently questioned the respondent about the internal structure of the MO and how it might have changed throughout the years. Our purpose was to gain understanding of the MO's functioning. We first focused on the MO's membership in order to identify the different companies represented and the sector level of the MO. The objective was to understand whether the organization aimed at remaining strictly within the oil and gas industry, or at extending the dialog across industries, and across stakeholders. We also asked about the definition of guiding principles and standards, how they were designed, in order to understand the collective action dynamics behind CSR definition. We stopped interviewing when the saturation point was reached (Glaser and Strauss 1967), that is, when additional questions did not add to our understanding of the MO's role in CSR design.

Findings

We classify the MOs into three groups: traditional MOs (trade associations), specialized business MOs (business only association dealing with specific problems for which firms collectively researches a solution), and multi-stakeholders MOs (meaning those that gather companies, governments and civil society actors). Table 1 highlights the main CSR MOs and their CSR focal points: we selected supra-national or international MOs, with the largest

Table 1 Main CSR meta-organizations in which oil and gas associations are represented

Organization	API (American Petroleum Institute)	Sector level
Date	1919　　Organizational form　　Traditional meta-organization	Sectoral
Purpose	Advocacy, research and statistics, standards, certification, education	(industry specific)
Membership	550 members, all segment of the industry, at the national and international level: producers, refiners, suppliers, pipeline operators and marine transporters, as well as service and supply companies	
Main topic	Environment, Social & Accountability	
Sub topic	Clean air, climate change, clean water, health and safety, energy efficiency and recycling, process safety, environmental performance	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Low cohesiveness, low specialization	
Organization	CONCAWE (CONservation of Clean Air and Water in Europe)	Sector level
Date	1963　　Organizational form　　Specialized business meta-organization	Infra-sectoral
Purpose	Research on environmental issues relevant to the oil industry	(industry specific)
Membership	Companies that own crude oil refining capacity within Europe	
Main topic	Environment & Social	
Sub topic	Fuels quality and emissions, air quality, water quality, soil contamination, waste, occupational health and safety, petroleum product stewardship and cross-country pipeline performance	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	High cohesiveness, high specialization	

Table 1 continued

Organization	ARPEL (Asistencia Recíproca Petrolera Empresarial Latinoamericana)	Sector level
Date	1965 Organizational form Specialized business meta-organization	Sectoral
Purpose	Developing, sharing and disseminating best practices; carrying out studies that translate into information of value; broadening knowledge and helping build required competencies	(industry specific)
Membership	Membership in ARPEL is open to companies and institutions of the oil & gas, biofuels and consulting sectors, with operations in Latin America and the Caribbean	
Main topic	Environment, Social & Accountability	
Sub topic	Occupational health, prevention of accidents in the workplace, integrity of operations, environmental performance, oil spill preparedness and response	
	Human rights, relations with neighboring communities and indigenous people, social risks management, gender and cultural diversity, labor practices	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	High cohesiveness, low specialization	

Organization	IPIECA	Sector level
Date	1974 Organizational form Specialized business meta-organization	Sectoral
Purpose	Improving the industry's environmental and social performance	(industry specific)
Membership	36 companies, comprising all 6 super majors and 7 national oil companies	
	16 associations, forming a network who represent over 400 oil and gas companies	
	IPIECA members account for over half of world's oil production.	
Main topic	Economic, Environment, Social & Accountability	
Sub topic	Biodiversity and ecosystem services, climate change, fuels and products, health, oil spill preparedness, reporting, social responsibility, water	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	High cohesiveness, medium specialization	

Organization	IOGP (Oil and Gas Petroleum)	Sector level
Date	1974 Organizational form Traditional meta-organization	Infra-sectoral
Purpose	Representing the upstream industry	(industry specific)
	Improving its performance and knowledge sharing	
Membership	82 upstream companies, including all majors	
	National and other associations	
Main topic	Environment & Social	
Sub topic	Arctic environment (climate change), Aviation safety, Biodiversity, Diving operations, Environmental, social & health impact assessment, Gas from shale, Geomatics, Health management, Human factors, Land transport safety, Lifting & hoisting safety, Oil Spill Response, Performance indicators (Safety & Environment), Process safety, Sound & marine life, Well safety	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	High cohesiveness, medium specialization	

Organization	WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development)	Sector level
Date	1992 Organizational form Specialized business meta-organization	Cross-sectoral
Purpose	Sharing best practices on sustainable development issues and to develop innovative tools that change the status quo	(non-industry specific)
Membership	Membership is open to companies committed to sustainable development and to promoting the role of eco-efficiency, innovation and corporate social responsibility.	
	Including oil and gas companies (176 companies as of 2014)	
Main topic	Global sustainability challenges	
Sub topic	Natural capital (Ecosystems Solutions, Forest Solutions, Water Solutions, Energy and Climate, Electric Utilities, GHG Management), Social Capital (Inclusive Growth, Performance & Valuation), Financial capital (Reporting & Investment), Capacity Building, Business Applications (Cement Sustainability Initiative, Chemicals, Tire Industry Project, Energy Efficiency in Buildings 2.0, Sustainable Mobility 2.0, Urban Infrastructure Initiative)	

Table 1 continued

Organization	WBCSD (World Business Council for Sustainable Development)	Sector level
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Low cohesiveness, low specialization	

Organization	BSR (Business Social Responsibility)	Sector level
Date	1992 Organizational form Specialized business meta-organization	Cross-sectoral
Purpose	We lead business collaboration as well as multisector efforts to achieve systemic progress	(non-industry specific)
Membership	250 members, including supermajors in the oil and gas industry	
Main topic	Global sustainability challenges	
Sub topic	Bettercoal, Business Coalition for Population Health, Center for Sustainable Procurement, Clean Cargo Working Group, Ecosystem Services, Future of Fuels, Future of Internet Power, Healthcare Working Group, Human Rights Working Group, Maritime Anti-Corruption Network, Pharmaceutical Supply Chain, Sustainable Lifestyles Frontier Group, Sustainable Luxury Working Group	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Low cohesiveness, low specialization	

Organization	UN Global Compact	Sector level
Date	2000 Organizational form Multi-stakeholder meta-organization	Cross-sectoral
Purpose	A practical framework for the development, implementation, and disclosure of sustainability policies and practices	(non-industry specific)
Membership	10 000 companies (including some oil and gas majors) and stakeholders	
Main topic	Global sustainability challenges	
Sub topic	Human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption, reporting	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Low cohesiveness, low specialization	

Organization	VPSHR (Voluntary Principles for Security and Human Rights)	Sector level
Date	2000 Organizational form Multi-stakeholder meta-organization	Supra-sectoral
Purpose	A set of principles designed to guide companies in maintaining the safety and security of their operations within an operating framework that encourages respect for human rights.	(non-industry specific)
Membership	Extractive industry companies, government and civil society actors in extractive countries	
Main topic	Social	
Sub topic	Security and human rights	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Medium cohesiveness, high specialization	

Organization	EITI (Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative)	Sector level
Date	2002 Organizational form Multi-stakeholder meta-organization	Supra-sectoral (non-industry specific)
Purpose	A global coalition of governments, companies and civil society working together to improve openness and accountable management of revenues from natural resources	
Membership	Extractive industry companies, government and civil society actors in extractive countries	
Main topic	Economic	
Sub topic	Transparency of payments	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Medium cohesiveness, high specialization	

Table 1 continued

Organization	WOC (World Ocean Council)	Sector level
Date	2008 Organizational form Specialized business meta-organization	Supra-sectoral
Purpose	Bringing together the diverse ocean business community to collaborate on stewardship of the seas (fisheries, oil and gas, shipping, aquaculture)	(non-industry specific)
Membership	Ocean industry companies, including oil and gas companies	
Main topic	Environment	
Sub topic	Ocean's sustainability (invasive species, ocean noise, marine mammal impacts, marine debris, the Arctic…)	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Medium cohesiveness, high specialization	
Organization	GBI (Global Business Initiative)	Sector level
Date	2008 Organizational form Specialized business meta-organization	Cross-sectoral
Purpose	Advancing human rights in a business context around the world	(non-industry specific)
Membership	18 major corporations, cross-sector, including oil and gas companies	
Main topic	Economic & social	
Sub topic	Human rights policy commitment, human rights due diligence and remediation, enterprise risk, responsible procurement, compliance	
Voluntary self-regulation dimensions	Low cohesiveness, high specialization	
Organization	WEP LG (Women Empowerment Leadership Group)	Sector level
Date	2010 Organizational form Multi-stakeholder meta-organization	Cross-sectoral
Purpose	Guiding companies on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community	(non-industry specific)
Membership	Cross-sector companies, including oil and gas ones	
Main topic	Social	
Sub topic	gender equality and women's empowerment	
Voluntary self -regulation dimensions	Low cohesiveness, high specialization	

membership and outreach, specifically dedicated to CSR or that included working groups specialized on CSR. Following Sethi and Schepers (2014), we also classified the MOs based on their level of cohesiveness and specificity in a three-level scale (low, medium, high). We constructed the cohesiveness scale based on membership criteria, e.g., number of members, heterogeneity of types of members and sectors. We built the specificity scale based on how specific the topic of concern of the MO is, ranging from low when the MO deals with CSR issues in general to high when it specializes in one particular topic such as human rights. For instance, EITI is a multi-stakeholder MO gathering companies from two sectors, civil society participants, and local governments on the topic of corruption, and therefore qualifies as a MO with low cohesiveness and high specificity. In Table 2, we compare and summarize the main characteristics of the different MOs we consider, in terms of sector classification, industry or non-industry specificity, cohesiveness and topic specificity.

In the next section, we discuss the role of these MOs in the co-construction between firms and stakeholders of the CSR definition, principles, and standards. Using our classification of the MOs based on the categories we defined in Table 1, we show how the concepts and policies on CSR in oil and gas are (and need to be) constructed at four different levels through different types of MOs: (a) infra-sectoral; (b) sectoral; (c) supra-sectoral; and, (d) cross-sectoral. Infra-sectoral designates MOs in which corporate members focus on one line of business (upstream, midstream or downstream). Sectoral MOs cover the whole industry. Supra-sectoral MOs include other industries that share similar CSR concerns. For instance, mining, oil, and gas are part of the supra-sector of extractive industries; offshore oil exploitations, fisheries and shipping belong to the supra-sector of marine industries. Even though they are involved in very different activities, they can share similar CSR issues such as marine sound pollution of activities and ships. Finally, cross-sectoral MOs are those in which members belong to more than two industries that do not necessarily display common characteristics: retail, oil and gas, services, finance. Based on the Industry Classification Benchmark (ICB)—designed by the FTSE International Limited and Dow Jones & Company, Inc— supra-sectoral and cross-sectoral MOs qualify as non-

Table 2 MOs compared in terms of cohesiveness level, specificity level, topics, and industry specificity

MO name	CSR topic	Sectoral classification	Industry specificity	Cohesiveness level	Topic specificity level
API	Environment, Social & Accountability	Sectoral	Industry specific	Low	Medium
CONCAWE	Environment & Social	Infra-sectoral	Industry specific	High	High
ARPEL	Environment, Social & Accountability	Sectoral	Industry specific	High	Medium
IPIECA	Environment, Social & Accountability	Sectoral	Industry specific	High	Medium
IOGP	Environment & Social	Infra-sectoral	Industry specific	High	High
WBCSD	Global sustainability challenges	Cross-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Low	Low
BSR	Global sustainability challenges	Cross-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Low	Low
UN Global Compact	Global sustainability challenges	Cross-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Low	Low
VPSHR	Social	Supra-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Low	High
EITI	Economic	Supra-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Low	High
WOC	Environment	Supra-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Medium	High
GBI	Social	Cross-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Medium	High
WEP	Social	Cross-sectoral	Non-industry specific	Low	High

industry specific since their sectors members belong to different industries. This shows that the analysis of how CSR issues are collectively defined in this specific industry requires scholars to consider other industries (both related and non-related ones).

In order to analyze the multi-level co-construction of CSR issues, we also study the specific or general topics addressed by the different MOs, which we display in Table 3. For each four levels of MOs, Fig. 1 displays the breadth of CSR activity, based on MOs' focus as highlighted on Table 1. We used the triple bottom line to classify CSR topics (environment, social, economic development), and added a fourth one under accountability. With accountability we cover reporting rules, due diligences, CSR performance assessments and guiding principles definition. Based on the list of CSR subtopics of MOs (Table 3), we allocated points by sector level and then computed an average mark for each theme. The web form of Fig. 1 helps understand the prerogatives and focus of each level of MOs. This figure shows how infra-sectoral MOs are mostly dealing with environmental issues and accountability recommendations. Sectoral MOs, on the other hand, display the broadest scope of CSR prerogatives while supra and cross-sectoral MOs have lower scope of action.

A Multilevel Meta-Organizational CSR Co-Construction

Our findings show that the definition and implementation of CSR issues in the oil and gas industry result from a collective multilevel effort between firms and stakeholders. MOs are the main devices used by all these actors in this effort. The complexity of CSR issues in this industry, given its characteristics and its global reach, leads the actors involved to act through MOs working at the four different levels we defined above: infra-sectoral, sectoral, supra-sectoral, and cross-sectoral. In the following section we discuss and illustrate with some examples how this definition and implementation of CSR issues is conducted at these four levels.

Sectoral and Infra-Sectoral Meta-Organizations and the Co-Construction of Industry-Specific CSR Issues in the Oil and Gas Industry

Our study shows that MOs play a significant role in defining CSR solutions at the industry-level meaning a collective level that shares historical origins, economic characteristics and structures, stakeholders' types, and general production features. These characteristics require MOs operating at two levels, infra-sectoral (inside a particular sector) and sectoral (encompassing a full sector). As mentioned earlier, because of the nature of this industry many CSR issues involve other stakeholders and therefore need to be tackled at more encompassing levels.

The main characteristics of industry specific infra-sectoral and sectoral MOs are the following ones. The infra-sectoral MOs deal mainly with environmental issues, and therefore design standards and reporting guidelines in that domain (Table 3). Sectoral MOs have the largest scope of prerogatives (see Fig. 1), addressing all three pillars of the sustainability bottom line, and making recommendations for accountability and reporting. Both sectoral and infra-sectoral MOs are business MOs, meaning that all members are firms. These MOs can take the form either of trade associations as for the case of the American Petroleum

Table 3 Allocations of CSR themes and subthemes addressed at different meta-organization levels

| Theme	Sub-theme	Industry specific		Non-industry specific	
		Infra-sectoral	Sectoral	Supra-sectoral	Cross-sectoral
Environment	Air Quality	x	x		
	Climate change	x	x		x
	Emissions (GHG)	x	x		x
	Water	x	x		x
	Soil contamination	x			
	Waste	x			
	Oil spill	x	x		
	Biodiversity and ecosystems	x	x	x	x
	Ocean sustainability	x	x	x	
	Environmental performance	x	x		
	Gas from shale	x			
	Geomatics	x			
	Fuel and products	x	x		
	Fuel stewardship	x			x
	Energy efficiency		x		x
Social	Health	x	x		x
	Safety (processes, operations, land transportation..)	x	x		
	Gender equality		x		x
	Labor		x		x
	Human rights		x	x	x
	Security and human rights		x	x	
	Social risks management		x		
Economic	Procurement		x		x
	Local communities and indigenous people		x	x	
	Anti-corruption/transparency			x	x
Accountability	Reporting	x	x		x
	ESH Impact assessment/due diligences	x	x	x	x
	Standards and norms production	x	x	x	
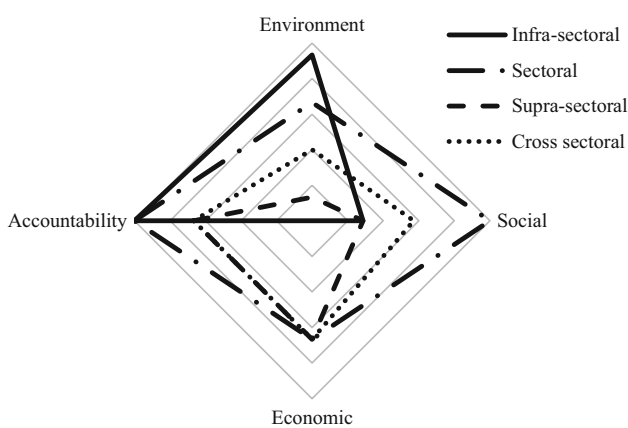
Fig. 1 Definition of CSR solutions at different meta-organization levels

Institute (API) or the form of specialized MOs as in the cases of CONCAWE and IPIECA. Thus, for both infra-sectoral and sectoral MOs, CSR issues are exclusively discussed between firms. Regarding those specific environmental topics, infra-sectoral MOs display the highest level of prerogatives (Fig. 1) as well as the highest level of cohesiveness and topic specificity (Table 2).

We illustrate some relevant characteristics of both infra-sectoral and sectoral MOs by looking at specific environmental issues. On the one hand, infra-sectoral MOs deal with very industry-specific issues, such as environmental contamination by oil, safety problems in oil fields or refining plants, etc. On the other hand, sectoral MOs consider a broader range of CSR issues with medium to low topic specificity. For instance, the American Petroleum Institute (API), the world's largest sectoral oil and gas trade association covers all environment, health and safety questions, from air and water quality, to energy efficiency, processes safety. On the other hand, the sectoral MO, IPIECA, is a specialized oil and gas business MO, whose interests are less narrow than those of organizations such as API. For instance, IPIECA not only deals with

environmental issues (such as oil spill preparedness), but also with social responsibility issues. They also provide guidelines and workshops on human rights, local development, and non-financial performance reporting rules, among other topics (IPIECA 2014).

These issues are all related to the way the industry does business (Porter and Kramer 2006). For instance, oil and gas operations increasingly occur in areas where they have impacts on indigenous people. Developing and enhancing companies' interaction with indigenous communities is one of the goals of IPIECA. Through that MO, "we try to find the best practices for the sector and to share them" explains a manager in an Oil & Gas company. Figure 1 shows that infra-sectoral and sectoral MOs, combined, assume most of the stewardship for environmental, social and economic issues.

Supra-Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Meta-Organizations and the Co-Construction of CSR Issues in the Oil and Gas Industry

CSR solutions are not only constructed at the industry level by infra-sectoral and sectoral MOs (as explained above), but also they are constructed at the non-industry specific level through cross sectoral and supra-sectoral MOs. These two levels are important for the oil & gas industry as cross and supra-sectoral MOs allow diversification and information sharing.

First of all, cross-sectoral MOs deal with global sustainability issues with a non-industry specific approach. These include gender equality, human rights, corruption, or energy efficiency in physical plant. Some of these MOs such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) or the UN Global Compact display many working groups concerned about a wide variety of topics. This explains why these MOs have a very low specificity (Table 2). At the same time, however, other cross-sectoral MOs such as the Women Empowerment Leadership Group (WEP LG) address very narrow topics—in this case, gender equality and women empowerment in business—that are nonetheless non-industry specific as they need to be addressed across industries. A manager of a cross-sectoral interviewed for this research explained the reasoning behind dealing with particular issues across industries by saying that "there are some interests in exploring what is being done out there in other companies sectors: best practices co-learning." The cross-sectoral MO Global Business Initiative for Human Rights (GBI) follows a similar rational by gathering selected companies from various sectors in order to get a wide range of issues and solutions across industries and to diversify the sources of information and in this way reduce risks. Indeed,

diversifying members optimizes best practices and information sharing based on each industry's specificities and specialty.

Second, supra-sectoral MOs focus on a narrow number of non-industry-specific issues (Tables 1, 2). For instance, the MO Voluntary Principles for Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) is concerned about maintaining safety and security of operations within an operating framework that ensures respect of human rights (Freeman 2002, 2003). This is a multi-stakeholder, tri-partite MO set up in the extractive industry, that gathers governments, civil society, and companies in mining, metals, oil and gas. Similarly, EITI tackles the specific issue of corruption. Also organized as a multi-stakeholder tri-partite group, EITI implements transparency of payments mechanisms in the countries where mining and oil and gas companies operate. The World Ocean Council (WOC) conversely is a business only MO, that seeks common answers across industries, to ocean sustainability issues, especially in Arctic. Similarly to what we find for cross-sectoral MOs, the strategy followed by these MOs aim to reduce risks by diversifying industries, actors and approaches on a given, specific topic.

MOs and Collective Action Mechanisms to Define and Implement CSR Issues in the Oil and Gas Industry

MOs are the main collective device for the co-construction of a multi-level CSR issues. This section discusses how these MOs serve three different purposes in this co-construction process: (1) setting guiding principles; (2) definition of CSR reporting; and (3) building firms' capacity.

Definition of CSR Set of Principles

The main issue that brings firms together is the definition of a set of principles that members have to comply with, as well as its related self-regulating mechanisms (Beschorner and Müller 2007). As mentioned by a MO's director, "the initiative in itself was launched in 2000 around a set of principles." This is the case of cross-sectoral or supra-sectoral MOs such as UN Global Compact, EITI, VPSHR, and the Women Empowerment Principles. The principles and guidelines, which fall into the category of "soft law" (Brunsson et al. 2012) or self-regulating mechanisms (Beschorner and Müller 2007), are becoming worldwide standards. As a MO's Secretariat General explained for this research, "the guidelines have become the *de facto* standards by which companies are being held to account." While this clearly applies to non-industry specific CSR definition, it is also relevant for industry-specific MOs. Trade associations define traditional technical standards for

the industry (Bradley 1965), and specialized business MOs such as IPIECA also design industry specific standards.

Definition of CSR Reporting and Accountability

MOs provide rules and guidelines on reporting and accountability to stakeholders. Extra-financial reporting crystallizes CSR definition. The IPIECA, API, and OGP published the second edition of the *Oil and Gas Industry Guidance on Voluntary Sustainability Reporting* in December 2010. Indeed, "IPIECA member companies recognize that managing sustainability impacts associated with producing fuels and other energy products is an important responsibility" (IPIECA Website). Indeed, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has become the main international cross-sectoral reference in terms of sustainability reporting. However, specific issues in the oil and gas industry created the need for industry-aware reporting practices. That is why in 2012, the GRI published the *Oil and Gas Sector Supplement* (OGSS). While GRI and IPIECA have developed different approaches to reporting methods, both tried to integrate the other's indicators to show their alignment and reduce redundancy and reporting costs.

Capacity Building

In addition to setting CSR standards and reporting guidelines, MOs aim to share the best practices among members in order to help them build their capacity on sustainability issues. As a result, they contribute to the homogenization of CSR practices inside the industry and across industries as well. For instance, the Global Business Initiative for Human Rights (GBI) brings together eighteen major corporations from various sectors: ABB, BASF, Bechtel, Cerrejon, Chevron, Flextronics, GE, HP, JSL, Maersk, Motorola, Novordisk, Shell, Sime Darby, Syngenta, Total, The Coca Cola Company, Valeto. The workshops discuss human rights in relation with issues such as due diligence and remediation, enterprise risk and responsible procurement. Companies gather together in small groups and exchange on their issues, on the way the organizations solved their problems, or ask for advice from their peers.

> We have some small group dialogues with only twenty people who focus on different topics like community land acquisition or security issues, employee engagement, and so on. How do you develop human right policies on those topics, what do your due diligences look like, what do your implementations look like? (Interview with a Program Manager at a MO).

The Voluntary Principles for Security and Human Rights (VPSHR) is a supra-sectoral MO on security of

extraction sites and the respect of human rights (see Table 1). This MO not only defined its own founding principles but it also helps its members build capacity on this issue. This MO, also called the "Voluntary Principles," articulates risk assessment, interaction between companies and public securities, and interaction between companies and private security. The VPSHR's main actions consist in conducting an assessment of human risks associated with security, in engaging with public and private security services providers surrounding operations and communities, in providing human rights trainings for public and private security forces. One of its main tasks also includes developing systems for reporting and investigating human rights abuses:

> The practicality is that all companies commit to the principles, which include due diligences on private security, training, and all such things, so that it respects human rights […] Companies are the ones who have to conduct risk assessments, human life treatment records, and so on, to ensure that they have well trained security forces (A manager at VPSHR).

This collaborative organizing through peer learning is wide spread across MOs. IPIECA for instance, also has working groups on biodiversity or oil spill detection and responsiveness. Our results show that sectoral MOs such as IPIECA or API can combine the three identified CSR mechanisms—setting guiding principles and standards, defining rules of reporting, and building firms' capacity. Conversely, infra-sectoral, supra-sectoral and cross-sectoral usually focus on one or two of those mechanisms (Tables 1, 3; Fig. 1). In addition, the deeper we get into industry-specific MOs, the more practical their activities become. From general best practices sharing on systemic challenges (in the GBI), to reporting and training on security and human rights respects (VPSHR), and to due diligences and grievance mechanisms dedicated the oil and gas companies (IPIECA) or even collective research on infra-sectoral issues (CONCAWE).

At their different levels, all four MOs aim to provide solutions by combining different CSR mechanisms. Companies gathered in infra or in sectoral MOs leverage on their collective experience and practical knowledge of the sectoral issues—such as community development and indigenous people's rights and build on the three CSR mechanisms (standards, reporting, capacity building). In cross-sectoral MOs the diversity of profiles and industry of origin allows for knowledge pooling, in order to tackle complex, recurring issues and to design a non-industry specific collective answer. In that case, the GBI is mostly a capacity building dedicated MO that diversifies industry members to cover all kind of potential risks. In supra-sectoral MOs, which appear to be in-between cases,

companies from different sectors build on their different experience to common challenges, to design a practical answer and therefore combine standards setting and capacity building.

Discussion and Implications

MOs' Significance as a Unit of Analysis of Collective Action

In recent times, several scholars have shown the benefits of explicitly including the MO as the unit of analysis for organization studies (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005; Gulati et al. 2012; Meyer and Höllerer 2014) as well as for the analysis of the creation of CSR principles (Kolleck 2013; Mühle 2010). This paper shows that the CSR issues in the oil and gas industry are collectively defined and implemented through MOs that deal with those issues at four different levels: infra-sectoral, sectoral, supra-sectoral, and cross-sectoral. Given the diversity of approaches to the wide variety of subjects, these MOs have different levels of cohesiveness and topic specificity. These collective action initiatives take place through MOs that limit membership to firms in the industry, or others open to a larger number of stakeholders, and MOs dealing with industry-specific issues to non-industry specific ones. The existence of these MOs provides firms with some degree of leverage on the definition of guiding principles, on how to report these issues, and on the building of capabilities around those principles among other organizations.

Our findings and methodology have implications for both bodies of scholarship as well as for particular studies on CSR in the oil and gas industry. Recent studies have called to greater emphasis on collective efforts undertaken by organizations (Greenwood et al. 2014). Besides the literature on business groups (Colpan and Hikino 2010; Granovetter 2005; Guillén 2000; Khanna and Palepu 2000), organization scholars have left collective action mechanisms as originally analyzed by Olson (1965) to those analyzing strategies such as lobbying or cartelization (Barley 2010; Hillman et al. 2004). As recent scholars posit, organizational collective action through MOs brings lights on how organizations relate to other stakeholders and solve organizational problems that cannot be solved through contracts or market mechanisms (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005; Gulati et al. 2012; Meyer and Höllerer 2014). In their criticism to the current state of the organization literature, Greenwood et al. (2014) and Meyer and Höllerer (2014) argue that excessive attention to issues of isomorphism and diffusion have been detrimental to the discipline, because it does not allow scholars to focus on collective action mechanisms. Suddaby et al. (2014) add

that a tendency to de-contextualize the operations of organizations lead scholars to conduct analyses in which the interests of other actors and stakeholders is neglected. On the other hand, scholars focusing on MOs (Ahrne and Brunsson 2005; Gulati et al. 2012) posit that studying diffusion of particular practices and principles at the organizational level is not enough because many organizations use MOs as the mechanism to create common principles to be adopted by other organizations in the field. Both the articles by Ahrne and Brunsson (2005) and Gulati et al. (2012) call for empirical research that shows how MOs can play a role in the creation and diffusion of common principles. Our research responds to that call and shows the need to take into consideration the different types of existing MOs (cross-sectoral, supra-sectoral, sectoral, infra-sectoral) in the analysis. Not all common principles can be created and addressed at the industry level (or at the institutional field level (in Scott's (2008) terms)) and require organizations to act in conjunction or approach other stakeholders.

Ahrne and Brunsson (2005) and Gulati et al. (2012) mention the importance of MOs in an increasingly global economy, but they do not discuss the implications of globalization in the analysis of MOs. We show how the quintessential global industry (oil and gas), which deals with a large web of different environmental, political, and social issues in conjunction with an extremely complex technology, requires different types of MOs for the creation and diffusion of certain common principles (in the case of our study, CSR issues). We agree with Ahrne and Brunsson (2005) and Gulati et al. (2012) that those issues cannot be defined and/or solved through contracts, but add that they might require the participation of related or unrelated industries and stakeholders. As our findings show, when including MOs in the analysis diffusion and legitimacy of practices go beyond the organizational field as envisioned in the classic works of DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991).

MOs' Strategic Importance for Companies and Industries Operating Globally

This paper also has implications for international business scholarship. Kostova et al. (2008) posit that the study of diffusion and legitimization of practices in the global economy cannot be analyzed under the lenses developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991), because of the great diversity of legitimating actors in the world economy. In fact, they argue that multinational corporations cannot legitimize their activities at the global level unless the legitimating actors operate at a global ("meta") level. Our paper proposes the MOs as one of the legitimating actors discussed by Kostova et al. (2008).

Our results show the existence of both inclusive and exclusive MOs dealing with CSR issues in the oil and gas industry. We show how both types of MOs serve different goals not related to output restrictions as originally envisioned by Olson (1965). Why, then, do we have both types of MOs? In her analysis on the rise of CSR issues at a global level, Mühle (2010) shows that MOs served as a 'bridge' to connect the interests of international multilateral organizations, NGOs, and large private corporations. If we consider that by the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of CSR was considered as detrimental to business and even as a hostile initiative (Mühle 2010), then we can argue that the creation and growth of the MOs was a way for firms in the oil and gas industry to decrease new uncertainties. In their classic studies on vertical integration of domestic firms and multinational corporations, Williamson (1971, 1973, 1979) and Buckley and Casson (1976) argue that by integrating several segments of the value chain a corporation reduced uncertainties in the market. If we combine this rationale with the one developed by neo-institutional scholars studying legitimization (Oliver 1991; Suchman 1995) and the logic of collective action (Olson 1965), we can argue that MOs also play an important role at bringing the definition and implementation of CSR policies under the oil and gas corporations' collective control. This would, in turn, reduce uncertainties originating from leaving those issues in other (and potentially hostile) actors' hands. In sum, MOs would be actors that serve both as legitimating institutions as well as means to reduce uncertainties. This would open a new question for further research: can CSR issues and policies be considered transaction cost firms would need to minimize?

Our findings also have implications for some of Ahrne and Brunsson's (2005) main points. These authors argue that MOs can be tools for influential actors to "impose" on others common principles and rules that serve their own purposes. Our analysis does not allow us to test this point. However, when taking into account the fact that the oil and gas industry is dominated by a relatively small number of very large corporations, it would be necessary to test whether these firms have a disproportionate say on how CSR issues are defined and, if so, in which way.

MOs' Multilevel Role in the Design of CSR Solutions

We also contribute more general ideas on how CSR principles at the industry-level have been built. In her analysis of the rise of CSR issues at the global level, Mühle (2010) maintains that it was only through MOs that they went from local and not implemented principles to global and implemented ones. She argues that until the 1970s, most CSR principles were defined at the international organizations' level, in which certain multilateral institutions

created the CSR principles without participation of businesses or governments. By the 2000s, however, she argues that the creation of MOs brought together different actors permitting the general acceptance of some basic principles. We contribute to her study by showing the role of MOs at creating general CSR principles in the oil and gas industry, and add to her analysis the importance of differentiating between cross, supra, infra, and sectoral MOs. As our results show, for some issues the main actors of the oil and gas industry do not want the participation of other stakeholders in the definition and implementation of certain principles, while for others they do. Therefore, we believe that our classification of MOs as sectoral, infra-sectoral, supra-sectoral and cross-sectoral is crucial for understanding how these entities operate and define general frameworks. We also show the relevance of looking at these different types of MOs in the context of their levels of cohesiveness and specificity.

Our findings also have implications for the study of CSR issues in the oil and gas industry in particular. An industry that is both the target of criticisms and the creator of many CSR initiatives requires industry-wide analyses. The complexity and variety of social, environmental, and political problems faced by this industry have led it to create mechanisms to determine and implement solutions through MOs. Industry-specific and non-industry-specific CSR solutions that are collectively constructed through MOs are actually risk management practices: global practices for cross and supra-sectoral MOs, and specific practices for sectoral and infra-sectoral MOs. This is why using MOs is an efficient way to collectively build CSR response: they translate sustainability principles into actions through transcription as a risk.

Our findings and our methodology centered on different MOs, show how industry-level CSR issues cannot be studied solely through company case studies or even through analyses of a single MO. As shown above, not all issues relevant for the oil and gas are only the interest of this industry, but need to be defined and tackled in conjunction with other firms or industries. We also show how for some particular issues, the major players in the industry do not consider a discussion with other industries or other stakeholders as necessary, while for others they reach out and construct solutions in conjunction with other players.

As discussed in the literature review, many of the MOs assessments are negative and blame poor results on the lack of alignment between the principles created by those MOs and the reality on the ground. We believe those assessments can benefit from taking into consideration the way different stakeholders and firms interact in the creation of those principles through the MOs. Is the lack of alignment or understanding the same when we compare infra-sectoral, sectoral, supra-sectoral, and cross-sectoral MOs?

Comparative studies between MOs are certainly needed. Some of the supra-sectoral MOs we defined in this paper can guide other scholars to research how principles in other industries are defined and implemented. The brief comparison we conduct in this paper between different MOs dealing with human rights can also serve as a guideline for other studies analyzing other CSR issues and how corporations, stakeholders, and MOs deal with them.

Our study can also provide lights to both CSR practitioners in private corporations, as well as activists and other stakeholders. Not all CSR principles emerge at the industry level, nor are they always the result of negotiations between firms and stakeholders at the domestic level. In some processes of CSR principles creation more or less stakeholders are involved, so the degree of involvement or bargaining power within particular MOs might be more crucial than the influence within particular organizations.

Implications of the Collective Co-Construction of CSR Issues for Practitioners

Finally, our findings also have some relevant managerial implications. There are some CSR issues that are better dealt at the collective level rather than at the individual firm one. However, as we have shown in this paper, some collective mechanisms can generate constraints because they impose self-regulation on members. Therefore, the decision of what type of MO join or create is a complex one in which the aims of the MO (e.g., reporting, capacity building, or standard creating) or the MO's breadth and coverage (in terms of sectoral, infra-sectoral, supra-sectoral, or cross-sectoral) need to be aligned to the strategic goals of the firm. For instance, in some industries or business developing communication channels with a variety of stakeholders can be a great means to provide legitimacy to the firm's operations and reduce the potential hostility to CSR policies defined in closed-door meetings between members of the industry. However, it can also become inoperable and even chaotic if the MO's level of cohesiveness is too low. Executives can also approach their membership to MOs as way to diversify their access to information and coverage of emerging trends and issues as well as to share resources (Trist 1983). In this way, executives would be reducing potential risks by collectively acting with other firms and other stakeholders. Related to this and particularly important is the fact that by joining MOs firms can achieve some degree of power over how CSR issues are defined and implemented instead of being subject to whatever other actors define. In this way, strategically joining a variety of MOs can reduce uncertainties particularly in highly contentious industries operating at a global scale.

Conclusion

This paper shows the relevance of using the MO as the main unit of analysis when studying how CSR answers are created and implemented at the industry-level. Focusing on the oil and gas industry, we show that given this industry's global scope, political influence, environmental impact, and technical complexity, CSR issues have to be defined and tackled through different sets of MOs (infra-sectoral, sectoral, supra-sectoral, cross-sectoral). We propose comparative studies between MOs to assess the success, viability, sustainability, and credibility of their programs.

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