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Stakeholder engagement strategies for impactful corporate social innovation initiatives by multinational enterprises

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ABSTRACT

Research on corporate social innovations (CSI) acknowledges the tensions caused by different stakeholder expectations but is silent on the strategies multinational enterprises (MNEs) adopt to address these tensions. We advance a configurational perspective that recognizes the interdependencies between stakeholder engagement, dynamic capabilities and impactful CSIs. We develop a framework of stakeholder engagement strategies delineating how MNEs manage tradeoffs between conforming to internal stakeholder expectations through strategic intent and being inclusive by routinizing CSIs. The analysis draws on 32 cases of CSI aimed at reducing inequality and enhancing sustainability. These cases were initiated by MNEs headquartered in North America, Africa, Europe, the UK and Australia. We identify combinations of engagement strategies and dynamic capabilities linked to impactful CSI. Our findings highlight the multiple ways in which MNEs can manage different stakeholder preferences to achieve societal impact.

1. Introduction

Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) initiatives have struggled with the challenge of achieving impact at scale given conflicting stakeholder demands (Schrader et al., 2012; Angeli and Jaiswal, 2016). Emulating innovations that create social value by addressing social problems across geographies often relies on a process of experimenting with new ways to meet social needs at a low cost (Huq et al., 2016; Geradts and Bocken, 2019). A significant challenge is to ensure that organizations understand the local context and gain community support externally as well as change strategic and operational routines internally (Olsen and Boxenbaum, 2009; Geradts and Bocken, 2019). Much of the CSI research has focused on describing the tensions caused by different stakeholder expectations due to inconsistent demands that cannot be implemented simultaneously (e.g., Rana and Sørensen, 2021) and the extent to which strategies

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such as institutional entrepreneurship are effective in the implementation of CSI (e.g., [Onsongo, 2019](#)). Conflicting stakeholder expectations in CSI imply a need for tradeoffs. Yet, what choices are made and how those choices help firms reach underserved populations at scale remain unclear. This is despite research on stakeholder governance that has yielded insights for multinational enterprises (MNEs) ([Crilly and Sloan, 2014](#); [Gupta et al., 2020](#)). For instance, the coordination costs of external stakeholder engagement may stifle the adaptation of communication strategies to different external stakeholder preferences ([Nartey et al., 2023](#)) and the development of various multistakeholder agreements with public, private, and nonprofit sectors ([Gatignon and Capron, 2023](#)). MNEs may also struggle to develop internal coordination mechanisms that facilitate stakeholder engagement across different business units ([Crilly and Sloan, 2014](#)) and information and resource flows across locations ([Stan and Puranam, 2017](#)). However, the dominant understanding in such research has been to decouple responses to internal and external stakeholders in managing diverse expectations. A robust explanation of decoupling requires taking into account how both the internal organization and the external environment interact in shaping firms' responses to stakeholder pressures ([Crilly et al., 2012](#)).

Why is this important? The potential negative perceptions of the impact of MNEs on (in)equality ([Oxfam, 2024](#)), on the environment ([Rocha et al., 2021](#)) and, more generally, on democracy and the common good ([Vogel, 2006](#); [Bakan, 2020](#)) highlight the reputational and practical risks with which some MNEs must contend. In combining business acumen with positive social effects, CSI potentially represents an innovative way to reverse such negative perceptions, provided that such innovation is actually impactful and not mere window-dressing. However, given the diversity of stakeholders and the complexity of objectives, tensions inevitably arise around such initiatives. An inability to engage with these tensions raises issues of credibility both internally (for stakeholders within the firm not convinced of the role of CSI in the business, as for CSI change agents who might be frustrated with lack of substantive progress within the corporation) and externally (for those who see this inability as yet further confirmation that the corporation is engaged in window-dressing, as for those who seek to promote collaborative CSI initiatives with MNEs). This highlights that MNEs must manage simultaneously tensions across internal and external stakeholders to gain legitimacy and access to resources in host markets ([Kostova et al., 2008](#)) in generating impactful CSIs.

By developing a mid-range theory ([Merton, 1949](#)) that links stakeholder pressures and organizational attributes, we aim to provide an explanation for the diversity of stakeholder orientation among MNEs. Our study asks: which stakeholder engagement strategies of MNEs are linked to impactful CSI? We understand CSI as initiatives that create economic and social value "with the potential to alter the structure of innovation systems, change corporate identities and strategies to increase competitive advantage while at the same time bringing solutions to societal needs" ([Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020: 1](#)). They are ideas and processes of firms that are proactively initiated and include bottom-up dynamics to address societal challenges by integrating social concerns into business operations ([Stephan et al., 2016](#); [Holmström Lind et al., 2022](#)). CSI requires the deployment of resources through intra- and inter-firm collaborations to co-create sustainable solutions to societal needs ([De Silva et al., 2021](#)). Although CSI differs from the traditional conceptualization of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), where the latter is perceived as philanthropic ([Dembek et al., 2016](#)) and ephemeral without a business model ([Sinkovics et al., 2014](#)), more recent debates, for example on strategic CSR ([Vishwanathan et al., 2020](#)), align with CSI research.

CSI research posits that social initiatives need to be treated as strategic investments that are developed and implemented like a corporate project to generate a socially relevant innovation system of shared value for the long term ([Dionisio and de Vargas, 2020](#); [Tabares, 2020](#)). For innovation to be categorized as CSI, it needs to (1) address social problems, (2) produce shared values, (3) create capacity for change, (4) engage in cross-sectoral partnerships and (5) instigate systems change ([Mulgan, 2019](#)). We add a sixth characteristic—competitive advantage—to capture business goal attainment by corporations. This sixfold conceptualization of CSI represents an integrative understanding of several scholars' reflections ([Dawson and Daniel, 2010](#); [Grimm et al., 2013](#); [van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016](#); [Edwards-Schachter and Wallace, 2017](#)) and is consistent with [Tabares' \(2020\)](#) definition.

Our point of departure is the importance of reconciling tensions between stakeholders for organizations such as MNEs with significant cross-border diffusion of practices. We develop a framework of MNE stakeholder engagement strategies that combines two theoretical premises: (a) multiple, and potentially contradictory, stakeholder demands can create opportunities for distinct stakeholder engagement strategies; and (b) these strategies are facilitated by dynamic capabilities to generate impactful CSIs. The combination of these two premises is significant, because MNEs can achieve impact when they sufficiently meet local expectations ([Audebrand and Barros, 2017](#)) and connect initiatives to business portfolios ([Dionisio and de Vargas, 2022](#)). Accordingly, our framework suggests that MNEs that possess dynamic capabilities can focus their stakeholder engagement for impactful CSI on (a) reducing tensions with external stakeholders through partnerships ("cross-sectoral partnerships"), (b) reducing tensions with internal stakeholders through strategic intent ("strategic intent"), or (c) reducing tensions with both internal and external stakeholders by routinizing CSI ("routinization"). Building on this framework, we develop a configurational model that recognizes that MNEs' stakeholder engagement strategies are linked to impact in combination with dynamic capabilities, i.e., sensing, seizing, and transforming knowledge ([Bocken and Geradts, 2020](#)). Rather than seeing MNEs as a homogeneous group of organizations, we acknowledge the variation in MNEs' adaptive ability to coordinate internal and external stakeholder expectations.

We study this configurational model using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA; [Rihoux and Ragin, 2009](#); [Schneider and Wagemann, 2012](#)). This approach enables us to assess how various stakeholder engagement strategies are linked to impact under different dynamic capability conditions. Drawing on data collected from 32 CSI initiatives aimed at reducing inequality and enhancing sustainability, we identify five configurations of stakeholder engagement and dynamic capabilities that are associated with impactful CSI. These configurations capture different conditions in which complementary engagement strategies are linked to impactful CSIs: MNEs might address the expectations of internal and external stakeholders simultaneously (paths 1–3); or they might prioritize between stakeholder types with emphasis on internal (substitutionary) stakeholder engagement (paths 4 and 5). None of the configurations linked to impactful CSIs involve external stakeholder engagement alone. Accordingly, our main contribution is to demonstrate

that MNEs may adopt various engagement strategies, beyond the acknowledgement of the significance of stakeholder governance for CSI. Drawing on stakeholder theory, CSI scholars discuss stakeholder governance as a vital source of critical information, know-how, capabilities (Huq et al., 2016; Peerally et al., 2019) and legitimacy (Candi et al., 2019; Lashitew et al., 2020) for MNEs, which offers a means to access complementary skills to develop new ways of making, selling, and distributing goods and services (Borchardt et al., 2020). Our findings highlight a key role for strategy, contingent on dynamic capabilities, in linking stakeholder engagement to impact. We find that impactful CSI entails engagement strategies that fit their particular MNE context rather than implement a ‘one best strategy’.

2. Theoretical background

The governance of stakeholders is a vital element of strategy. Studies on the relationship between stakeholder management and impactful CSI are inconclusive, which suggests that this relationship is neither simple nor universal. Accordingly, we build on research recognizing impactful CSI as the outcome of a complex, multi-level process (Candi et al., 2019; Voegtlin et al., 2022), dependent on both internal and external stakeholders within and across geographies. The resulting configurational model acknowledges the combined effects, hence the tradeoffs between costs and benefits, of engaging internal and external stakeholders to explore the implications for social and economic value generation. We focus on internal stakeholders such as employees and shareholders (Halme et al., 2012; Bocken and Geradts, 2020) and external stakeholders in the institutional environment, notably key actors such as governments, NGOs, and communities (Huq et al., 2016; Winterhalter et al., 2017). We describe our model in detail below. We first discuss the different tensions that MNEs can experience, then present a framework of MNE stakeholder engagement strategies, explore how dynamic capabilities capture variation in MNE management of these tensions and, finally, reflect on how intra-firm and inter-firm forces combine to shape responses that cannot be adequately explained by conditions in isolation.

2.1. Tensions within and across organizational boundaries

Impactful CSI necessitates that MNEs gain the support of members within their organization (Bocken and Geradts, 2020). However, tensions may arise around attempts to balance social and economic goals (Lashitew et al., 2020). The perception of a tradeoff between these goals can trigger tensions, reinforced by an organizational culture of financial risk avoidance and a focus on maximizing short-term profit (Bocken and Geradts, 2020). There is a higher degree of uncertainty in transforming CSIs to commercially viable initiatives (Kennedy et al., 2017; Holmström Lind et al., 2022). Managers may be unwilling and/or unable to devote resources to CSIs (Reficco and Gutiérrez, 2016; Adams et al., 2023). There are also strategic and operational routines that can stifle CSI engagement. Organizational reward systems that focus on key performance indicators such as net present value can further lead internal stakeholders to refuse CSI (Bocken and Geradts, 2020). Such project evaluation criteria can distract internal stakeholders from meeting the social objectives of a CSI (Halme et al., 2012), leading to tensions and the failure to mobilize business units to accept CSI initiatives.

Impactful CSI also requires MNEs to be familiar with the institutional environments in which these initiatives unfold (e.g., Rana and Sørensen, 2021). Initiatives that present fundamentally new business models can fall short of the institutionalized expectations of host regulators and civil society actors, creating legitimacy challenges and restricting access to markets and resources for MNEs (e.g., Ringvold et al., 2023). MNEs may also face challenges in convincing local stakeholders that CSI initiatives meet their needs and create social value (Angeli and Jaiswal, 2016). As MNEs engage in partnerships to offset these challenges, they may face further tensions (Yin and Jamali, 2021). Although cross-sectoral partnerships enable access to critical know-how and capabilities (Peerally et al., 2019) and foster legitimacy with governments, NGOs and communities (Mirvis et al., 2016), they can result in tensions with actors who ascribe different values to a CSI initiative’s social and economic goals (Voltan and de Fuentes, 2016). Whereas MNEs might seek to maximize private benefits, nonmarket actors might look to maximize public benefits from CSI partnerships (e.g., Babu et al., 2020). Tensions can arise when partners perceive these goals as incompatible and seek to ensure the predominance of their goals relative to those of their partners (Yin and Jamali, 2021).

When designing stakeholder engagement strategies, tensions between internal and external stakeholders present MNEs with a choice to substitute or complement coordination mechanisms. This is illustrated by a CSI initiative of a Danish MNE, Grundfos. During his visit to sponsored projects in rural Thailand, the CEO of Grundfos was puzzled to see that safe drinking water was a scarce resource although many villages were situated near a freshwater reserve (Andersen and Esbjerg, 2020). The MNE developed the LIFELINK project to enable access to safe drinking water. Initially, the new business development team encountered performance problems due to the dirt levels of the African river water. Once it was decided that groundwater would be used, the team sought synergies with other product development projects to convince the members of the board and sustain the new project (ibid.). The engagement with internal stakeholders was complemented with external stakeholder governance. Grundfos partnered with *Safari.com* to address payment problems for its social innovation through a layered M-Pesa system. The LIFELINK team and *Safari.com* agreed to lower the price to KES15 per SMS so that the individual SMS charge would not be larger than the individual minimum transaction for buying water credits. The development team added a layer to the system so that bulk purchases of water credits could be performed via the M-Pesa system but banked at the Grundfos server and transferred to users in smaller amounts by loading a key fob with credits. This enabled Grundfos to work with farms and game reserves, small-scale agriculture, small rural centers, (semi-) pastoralists and expand to Tanzania and Uganda (Andersen and Esbjerg, 2020). The MNE could have pursued substitutionary stakeholder engagement by focusing on the interests of shareholders and employees alone, which may have jeopardized its societal impact. We elaborate on these strategies below.

2.2. Reducing tensions with internal stakeholders

MNEs may focus on their engagement with internal stakeholders through strategic intent. This entails striking a balance between strategic and moral motives and aligning CSIs with their core business strategy. The dilemma of balancing commercial goals and the creation of value for society, or the tradeoff between value capture and social value creation, requires developing a new value logic for conducting business and creating new rules and ways of measuring social impact (Holmström Lind et al., 2022). Scholars refer to this as committing to dual motives (Brønn and Vidaver-Cohen, 2009; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2022) and integrating the societal aspect of the CSI into corporate strategy (Herrera, 2015; Mirvis et al., 2016; Mirvis and Googins, 2018; Tabares, 2020).

The specific motive displayed by an MNE can affect how much support is garnered for social initiatives by internal stakeholders (Brønn and Vidaver-Cohen, 2009). These can be moral motives, which refer to a company's ethical duty to give back to society (ibid.) or strategic motives, which are driven by self-interest and can serve to maximize shareholder interest and outcomes (Aguilera et al., 2007). Strategic motives can also be driven by concerns over legitimacy where MNEs respond to institutional and stakeholder pressure to comply with policies to avoid sanctions (Chiu, 2017) and enhance corporate image (Schrader et al., 2012; Rana and Sørensen, 2021). Where these motives receive equal emphasis, senior management might be more inclined to engage in direct, ongoing communication with organizational members (Maak et al., 2016). Such proactive internal coordination efforts are necessary to overcome units' reluctance to share knowledge and own CSIs (Tsai, 2002). As initiatives scale across geographies, local managers can draw on these relationships to support local adaptation (Pongeluppe, 2022).

CSI is more likely to be impactful when it is strategically aligned with business competency, operations, and development (Gold et al., 2013; Geradts and Bocken, 2019). Initiatives can be integrated in MNEs' core operations through cross-functional collaboration (Schönwälder and Weber, 2022). As internal stakeholders develop and share rules that guide the implementation of CSIs, such collaborations can play a critical role in connecting strategic intent and purpose with new processes and results (e.g., Herrera, 2015; Mirvis and Googins, 2017).

2.3. Reducing tensions with external stakeholders

Engaging external stakeholders to reduce unfamiliarity with the local context and sense opportunities for CSI can incur substantial coordination costs. It typically requires identifying the right partners, building trust with them, and coordinating with different stakeholders who span public, private and non-profit sector boundaries. Partnership formation carries the risk of mistrust and fears about how the stakeholders of potential partners perceive the relationship (Odzimekowska, 2022). Once partnerships are formed, the different values driving each sector can conflict in ways that undermine the collaboration (Le Ber and Branzei, 2010), such as different definitions of success (Jay, 2013) and ways of operating (Gatignon, 2022). Reconciling these differences and learning to work across sectors can require substantial effort and time with no guarantee of success (Rivera-Santos et al., 2017; Quélin et al., 2019). However, the returns can also be substantial when tackling problems beyond the scope of any single organization or sector (George et al., 2016).

Tensions between CSI partners can be mitigated by aligning goals from the outset and actively addressing asymmetrical power relationships (Yunus et al., 2010; Kolk and Lenfant, 2015). Partners negotiate their mutual dependence and set clear rules of the game that govern interactions. MNEs can invest in (in)tangible resources in the partnership. These might include financing, equipment, human capital as well as referrals to their networks, all of which could signal commitment to resource-constrained partners (Gold et al., 2013). External partners from across sectors can foster trust with beneficiaries and assist with knowledge of local conditions (Ballestros and Gatignon, 2019).

2.4. Reducing tensions with internal and external stakeholders

MNEs may simultaneously focus on activities that aim to reduce tensions with both internal and external stakeholders by routinizing CSIs. In contrast to strategic intent and cross-sectoral partnerships, routinization is an approach that involves collective process of sensemaking. It is an intentional effort by MNEs to embed CSIs in day-to-day operations through structural and cultural changes and stakeholder capacity building (Huq et al., 2016; Geradts and Bocken, 2019).

Among structural changes, MNEs can adjust project evaluation criteria and incentive systems to display a deeper appreciation of social goals, and reward employees accordingly (Schrader et al., 2012; Pfitzer et al., 2013). This suggests incentivizing and assessing organizational members on both financial targets and long-term social impact (Olsen and Boxenbaum, 2009; Bocken and Geradts, 2020). Techniques such as the Social Return on Investment (SROI)—featuring metrics along with business data, project description and case studies of participants' experiences that translate a social project into financial terms (Hall, 2014)—can be used to measure social impact. They can also support a cultural change towards more risk-taking where new ideas and experimentation are encouraged and employees are trained in CSI skills and attitudes (Herrera, 2015). Although uncertainty avoidance is integral to the functioning of MNEs, risk-taking is important in solving long standing societal issues and navigating conflicting demands of shareholders and stakeholders (Bocken and Geradts, 2020).

As a holistic approach, routinization also requires acceptance of CSIs by beneficiaries (Herrera, 2015). This can be achieved through training and co-creation with local communities (e.g., Hall and Lobina, 2007). MNEs can foster a structural CSI learning capacity through capability building of and setting up evaluation systems that stimulate co-creation with beneficiaries (Ahn et al., 2019; Peerally et al., 2019; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2022). The co-creation of social innovation between those within and outside the MNE can facilitate the recognition of local contextual idiosyncrasies, building legitimacy with and connections to local communities to create value through products and services that suit user preferences (Mirvis et al., 2016).

These three strategies (strategic intent, cross-sectoral partnerships, and routinization) reflect different approaches to managing stakeholder tensions. First, strategic intent is a substitutionary strategy that emphasizes internal stakeholder engagement with limited provision of additional resources to external stakeholders affected by CSIs. Second, cross-sectoral partnerships entail a substitutionary approach by focusing on external stakeholders and neglecting internal stakeholders. Third, a routinization strategy balances differences to offer a complementary approach by focusing on both internal and external stakeholders.

2.5. Organizational attribute conducive to impactful CSI: Dynamic capabilities

MNEs managing tensions across internal and external stakeholders do not experience positive or negative effects of CSIs universally. Given firm-level heterogeneity, some MNEs may benefit from particular stakeholder engagement strategies more than others. The dynamic capability or the ability of a firm to appropriately adapt, integrate and reconfigure internal and external organizational skills, resources and functional competencies to address rapidly changing environments (Teece and Pisano, 1994; Teece et al., 1997) determines, in part, the impact of a CSI (Bocken and Geradts, 2020). MNEs need to have the resources as well as actively develop capabilities to harness those resources to formulate an effective solution to a societal problem. Individual resources have a limited capacity to generate impactful CSI. Impactful CSIs principally result from combinations of (in)tangible assets (Mirvis et al., 2016). This is especially evident in initiatives where four types of knowledge are brought together to achieve impact: i) knowledge about the local conditions (know-what), ii) how to produce and implement CSIs in unfamiliar contexts and how to work with partners (know-how), iii) connections to local interests and users or social ties (know-who), and iv) knowledge of the significant social, economic and environmental problems or social purpose being addressed (know-why) (Bocken and Geradts, 2020).

As capabilities that are honed to user need, unique and difficult to replicate, dynamic capabilities can enable MNEs to make sense of, address and learn from stakeholder expectations (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2018). Bocken and Geradts (2020) argue that dynamic capabilities also shape the process of incorporating societal issues into business models by helping craft, refine, and transform business models. As MNEs become aware of emerging sustainability issues (sense), mobilize resources to address emerging opportunities and capture value (seize), and continually renew their capabilities (transform), they are learning and adapting to overcome obstacles and create, deliver and capture value (Massa et al., 2017; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2022). For instance, although Grundfos LIFELINK started out by leveraging its existing resources and competences through intentional strategic planning and management, it abandoned this in favor of an emergent strategy as key personnel gained experience with the environment through their everyday coping efforts. The MNE worked more closely with other actors to develop a good understanding of what the target market wanted and was willing to pay for safe water. It was this innovation-oriented learning and critical reflection that accounted for impactful CSI (Kennedy et al., 2017).

Hence, we argue that the ability to exploit an accumulated base of resources and competences, and develop new ones can produce variation in CSI impact.

2.6. Configurational approach

Since stakeholder engagement strategies are essential for impactful CSIs but imply significant investment in change-oriented capabilities (Massa et al., 2017; Bocken and Geradts, 2020; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2022), it is important to better understand how they interact to influence CSI consequences. As ideas and processes that offer new ways to address social needs (Mirvis et al., 2016), CSIs are “proactively initiated, multilevel in nature and include bottom-up dynamics” (Stephan et al., 2016, p.1252). They involve the development and implementation of a strategic investment that is managed like a corporate project to generate a socially relevant innovation system (Yin and Jamali, 2016; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2020). These strategic investments require the deployment of assets and expertise through deep collaboration across functions within a firm and with external parties to co-create something new that provides a sustainable solution to social needs (Chelekis and Mudambi, 2010; De Silva et al., 2021).

Unlike business innovation, CSI by MNEs is characterized by social and economic goals (Tabares, 2020). For an innovation to be characterized as CSI, it must (1) address a social problem; (2) produce shared values; (3) create capacity for change; (4) forge cross-sectoral partnerships; (5) target systems change (Dawson and Daniel, 2010; Grimm et al., 2013; van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016; Edwards-Schachter and Wallace, 2017; Mulgan, 2019), and (6) generate a competitive advantage (Andersen and Esbjerg, 2020; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2020). As a transformative tool identifying business opportunity and co-creating market-based solutions as part of the business strategy (Mirvis et al., 2016; Tabares, 2020), CSI depends on how MNEs engage with internal and external stakeholders and whether they have dynamic capabilities to manage changing stakeholder relations. Accordingly, MNEs with higher dynamic capabilities stand to gain more from cost savings, new revenue streams and reputational gains that result from being ahead of future stakeholder concerns and legislations (Wang and Ahmed, 2007; Bocken et al., 2014). They may also cope with pressures across institutional contexts differently, affecting which stakeholders they attend to and the impact of stakeholder engagement approaches (Gupta et al., 2020). For instance, MNEs facing high levels of scrutiny or pressure to engage with external stakeholders in the inclusion of marginalized communities can gain more from dynamic capabilities complementing an external stakeholder engagement strategy than MNEs with limited dynamic capabilities, thus increasing the likelihood of an impactful CSI. Similarly, the ability to adapt, integrate and reconfigure organizational skills, resources and competencies can influence the extent to which MNEs can address internal stakeholder interests for an impactful CSI. Higher dynamic capabilities that promote organizational agility can be expected to generate increased retention and productivity that results from superior employee treatment (Harsch and Festing, 2020). Employees are likely to reciprocate with additional effort, knowledge, and/or inputs if they perceive that a firm acts fairly towards them (Bosse et al., 2009).

3. Method and data

3.1. Method

Given our understanding that impactful CSI is achieved through diverse strategies for managing tensions across internal and external stakeholders and the organizational attributes conducive to CSI, we use a configurational approach designed to capture the complexity of managing these tensions (Fiss et al., 2013). Accordingly, we apply fs/QCA (Ragin, 2006) to identify configurations of stakeholder engagement activities and dynamic capabilities that are linked to impactful CSIs. The method combines Boolean algebra, set relations and algorithms to assess each observation as a combination of attributes that are consistently linked to the outcome of interest (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009; Ragin and Fiss, 2008; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). It recognizes the potential for causal complexity underlying organizational phenomena, including how multiple influences are, in combination, linked to an outcome (in the present study, impact) and that there may be multiple pathways linked to a particular outcome (Misangyi et al., 2017).

3.2. Sample and data

We focus on 32 CSI initiatives carried out by actors within MNEs headquartered in North America, Africa, Europe, the UK and Australia in interaction with NGOs, social enterprises, and government stakeholders. The cases were selected along the criteria of the ‘principle of possibility’ for the negative cases (Goertz, 2005), sufficient homogeneity in case characteristics, maximum heterogeneity in the conditions and membership in the outcome (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). They include business solutions aiming to reduce inequality and enhance sustainability in different industries; initiatives for refugee inclusion, human trafficking detection and prevention; sustainable sourcing of produce, supporting economic inclusion and sustainability; improving sustainability and diversity in supply chains; raising standards in animal nutrition; changing habitat for the displaced; access to care; financial inclusion of

Table 1
Tree structure concept.

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators
Impactful CSI	Systems change	Managing or changing institutional logics or systems
	Replication	Other firms in the industry
	Geographic expansion	More affected areas
	Awareness	Making scaling a conscious choice by garnering buy-in/support within and outside the MNE where the product/service has not yet reached the end-user Any buy-in/support within the MNE that has not yet reached the end-users of the product/service
Strategic and moral motives for impactful CSI	Moral/ethical	Doing good for changing the world
		Intention to have more ethical goals
	Institutional	Traceability in the supply chain
		Reputation
		Regulatory compliance
		Meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals
Instrumental	Social licence to operate	
	Public commitment	
Alignment of CSI with core strategy	Receptivity	Risk reduction
		Benchmarking
	Mission and vision	Competitive advantage or business benefits
		Visibility
		Top CEO commitment
		Employee commitment
Corporate strategy	Long-term goals; where the organization is going or aspires to go (vision)	
	Direction of how to achieve long-term goals or objectives; specific strengths and offerings relative to competitors (mission)	
Cross-sectoral partnership	Public sector	Growth strategy
	Private sector	Resource-capability fit with the environment
	Non-profit sector	Government/State-run bodies
Dynamic capabilities	Sensing	For-profit business actors
		Non-governmental organizations
	Seizing	Making an assessment to identify areas of learning
Routinization of CSI	Transforming	Gaining experience/knowledge
		Developing/elaborating the identified areas of learning
	Sustained stakeholder commitment	Extending, leveraging and creating knowledge and routines for scaling
		Internal and external stakeholder acceptance of the CSI
		Training and capacity building (to update skills and knowledge)
Aligned operational structure	Sharing knowledge/insights / regular communication	
	Transformation of organizational culture	Guidelines in business operations supporting the CSI New routines, new rhetoric/ reflexivity Transformation of organizational values and practices

Note: The dimensions and indicators of concepts are extracted from an inductive coding of 96 interviews performed for 32 CSI projects.

disadvantaged groups; empowering indigenous and young people; and granting refugees access to energy.

Data were collected in 2020–2021 using semi-structured interviews with sustainability and operations managers, consultants, government officials and NGOs. A total of 96 interviews were conducted (see Table A1 in the Appendix for an overview of the cases).

Each interview lasted, on average, 1 hour. Information was collected on the motivations for developing the initiatives, resources mobilized, practices deployed by different actors to implement the initiatives, organizational factors that enabled or inhibited these projects, and their consequences (see Section 1 supplementary material). Where necessary, follow-up questions were asked via email to enrich the data. Follow-up interviews were conducted in some cases. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, grey literature and publicly available information from company websites and press releases were examined. These various methods enabled the researchers to capture emerging themes, including the strategies used to engage with internal and external stakeholders. In addition to what was deduced from the CSI literature (notably strategic intent, cross-sectoral partnerships and dynamic capabilities), these strategies included the alignment of CSI initiatives with core strategy and the routinization of CSI initiatives.

Following the transcription of the interviews and secondary data, an abductive coding approach was employed to facilitate theory building. The coding method included three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, thus generating meaningful categories and themes from the data. The open coding entailed the close examination of the data, thus identifying initial codes or concepts in the process and consequences of CSI. The axial coding grouped related codes into categories, such as those related to replication, geographic expansion, and systems change, and identified new concepts, such as the creation of awareness for impactful CSI. Finally, the selective coding stage identified a core category or concept that tied together other categories and codes, such as ‘impactful CSI through scaling’, further distinguishing between scaling-out, scaling-deep, and scaling-up. We decided on which codes to use and how to group them based on the strength of the evidence, ensuring that our findings were both theory-informed and data-driven. The resulting concepts were organized in a tree-structure format (see Table 1).

3.3. Operationalization and calibration of conditions

We calibrated the conditions and the outcome based on theoretical knowledge on CSI wherever possible (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). Where this was not possible, we based calibration on a combination of insights from theory and empirical data (Ragin, 2000), akin to earlier work (c.f. Saka-Helmhout et al., 2022). We identified the measures and attributes of significant constructs (Adcock and Collier, 2001) and grouped data into set membership scores, which assign cases or observations to different sets based on their combination of values across the conditions (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012; Oana et al., 2021). We used a four-value fuzzy set to calibrate the outcome and causal condition sets (Ragin, 1987; Misangyi et al., 2017). As we used fs/QCA, set membership could vary between 0 (full nonmembership) and 1 (full membership) (see Table A2 in Appendix).

3.3.1. Outcome: impactful CSI

Based on Moore et al. (2015) and Westley et al. (2014), we conceptualized impactful CSI as scaling that ranges on a continuum from creating awareness to “attempting to affect more people and cover a larger geographic area” (Westley et al., 2014: 237; Westley and Antadze, 2010) and identifying “opportunities and barriers at broad institutional scales, with the goal of changing the system that created the social problem in the first place” (Westley et al., 2014: 237). A CSI initiative is seen as more impactful when an organization has: (i) scaled-out, where the initiative has geographically expanded (impacting more areas) or been replicated (adoption by other firms in the industry) to increase the number of beneficiaries, what Moore et al. (2015) call ‘impacting greater numbers’; and/or (ii) scaled-up, i.e., its initiative has transformed laws and policies for a systems change as well as scaled-deep, i.e., the initiative has penetrated the cultural roots of the society to change beliefs and norms, what Tabares (2020) labels the institutional condition of normative commitment or legitimacy. While (i) scaling-out generally focuses on enhancing the scope of the initiative by reaching out to more beneficiaries, (ii) scaling-up and scaling-deep encompass efforts to change (in)formal institutions, suggesting long-lasting and sustainable impact (see Table A2 in Appendix for the (non) membership anchors).

For example, in the AC case, CSI has enabled the enrolment of locals in the insurance system, making correct claims in an African country. Such scaling-deep also benefits the government in terms of higher revenues from the health insurance system. In the OT case, scaling-up manifests as sustained efforts to transform the tech industry by promoting investment in people of underserved communities across the UK. As OT’s managing director puts it, the initiative is not ‘about setting up something that would sit outside the mainstream ecosystem. We really wanted this to be right at the heart of the mainstream ecosystem’ (OT_01). Case B is an example of CSI scaling-out where activists in financial institutions seek to engage more investee companies in the movement for living wage payments. The coalition has grown from having fewer than 10 members in 2018 to having near 20 members at the time of our research and the total assets under management have quadrupled. In Canada, the financial sector’s human rights initiatives (i.e., SW and its predecessor PRO) represent both scaling-up and scaling-out. The first CSI, PRO, has led to multiple deliberate replications, including SW. The following interview excerpt illustrates the lasting changes to the policies and practices of the regulator in the financial sector: “*And at the end of the project, if you’re successful, [financial intelligence agency] will publish an operational alert, which will memorialize the project by way of indicators and red flags. Today, we have five operational alerts across five PPPs.*” (SW-1).

3.3.2. Conditions

a) *Strategic and moral motives*. As MNEs may focus on their engagement with internal stakeholders through strategic intent, we looked for evidence for a balance between *strategic and moral motives for scaling*.¹ Strategic motives include both instrumental (risk reduction, benchmarking, competitive advantage or business benefits, visibility indicators as revealed by our cases) and institutional motives (traceability in the supply chain, reputation, regulatory compliance, meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals, social licence to operate and public commitment as highlighted by our cases). As moral motives, we include indicators such as *doing good for society to change the world and more ethical goals*.

b) *Alignment of initiatives with core strategy*. Indicators for this condition, as revealed inductively by our cases, include receptivity (top leadership commitment, employee commitment), vision and mission (long-term goals; the direction in which the organization is headed or aspires to go, and the means of achieving long-term goals including specific strengths and offerings relative to competitors), and corporate strategy (growth strategy, capability fit with the environment), which our cases display through their sustainable business models.

c) *Cross-sectoral partnerships*. In accordance with our theorizing, we focused on attributes reflecting attention to three external stakeholder groups of actors in the public sector (government/state-run bodies), the private sector (for-profit businesses) and the non-profit sector (non-governmental organizations, community). The calibration of this construct concerns the extent to which the MNE collaborated with a diverse set of external stakeholders.

d) *Routinization of CSIs*. In line with our theorizing, we looked for evidence on the extent to which CSIs are accepted by stakeholders (sustained stakeholder commitment), aligned with policies, structures, and processes (aligned operational structure) and embedded in new organizational routines (transformation of organizational culture). The indicators for this condition are stakeholder commitment (training and capacity building, sharing knowledge/insights/ regular communication), operational structure (guidelines in business operations, such as frameworks, booklets), and transformation of organizational culture (new routines, new rhetoric/ reflexivity, transformation of organizational values and practices).

e) *Dynamic capabilities*. Following our theoretical reasoning, we conceptualized dynamic capabilities as sensing (being aware of emerging sustainability issues), seizing (mobilizing resources to address emerging sustainability issues) and transforming (renewal of corporations' capabilities and implementing new sustainable business model concepts). Our indicators point to sensing as making an assessment to identify areas of learning and of gaining experience or knowledge. Seizing is captured through developing or elaborating the identified areas of learning. Transforming is manifested in extending, leveraging, and creating knowledge and routines for scaling.

3.4. Analytical technique

We used software R² to run fs/QCA. First, we ran the test of necessary conditions where the score for a condition should be 0.9 or above for it to be consistent (Ragin, 2006). A necessary condition means that the outcome cannot occur without it. Thus, when the outcome is present, the condition is always present (Ragin, 1987; Rihoux and Ragin, 2009; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). Second, we identified configurations of conditions that were sufficient for impactful CSI. We used the truth-table algorithm to achieve this. A truth table offers all logically possible combinations of conditions which contains the empirical evidence (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). Configurations resulting in the outcome condition are identified based on this truth table (i.e., conservative, intermediate and parsimonious solutions). To reduce the truth table, we used a frequency cut-off of 1 and a consistency threshold of 0.8 (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). Finally, we applied a robustness check procedure (theory evaluation and robustness check) to our findings, following the QCA good practice (Oana et al., 2021). All the analytical procedures can be found in the supplementary file.

4. Findings

As no necessary conditions were found, we focus on the sufficient conditions. Table 2 provides an overview of the results and shows the intermediate solution. We used the heuristics of 'evoking the essence of configurations' (Furnari et al., 2021) to capture the distinctiveness and holism of attributes that explain impactful CSI. Using the notation suggested by Ragin and Fiss (2008), a full circle indicates the presence of a condition, whereas a crossed-out circle (⊗) indicates its absence. Large circles represent core conditions (part of the parsimonious and intermediate solutions), whereas small circles indicate peripheral conditions (part of the intermediate solution). A core condition signals a strong relation, and a peripheral condition signals a weaker relation. An empty cell denotes a 'don't care' situation, i.e., the condition can be present or absent.

The analysis revealed five configurations of stakeholder engagement and dynamic capabilities that are consistently linked to impactful CSI (see Section 6 in supplementary material). These include complementary (Configurations 1, 2 and 3) and substitutionary (Configurations 4 and 5) stakeholder engagement strategies. No configuration links cross-sectoral partnership engagement strategies alone to impactful CSI. Specifically, Configurations 1, 2 and 3 show that complementary engagement strategies are associated with impactful CSI, either through strategic intent as displayed in dual strategic and moral motives and/or in the pursuit of CSIs aligned with core strategy. Such MNEs facilitate impact by forming cross-sectoral partnerships, leveraging their dynamic capabilities and/or routinizing their CSIs. Configuration 4 represents a substitutionary engagement strategy in a context of strong strategic and moral

¹ This is consistent with the theoretically espoused 'equal focus on the economic and the social logic' for scaling (van Lunenburg et al., 2020).

² We performed these analyses in R (version 4.3.2), R Studio (version 2023.12.1) with the QCA package (version 3.21) and the SetMethods package (version 4.0) (Oana and Schneider, 2018; Dusa, 2019).

Table 2
Configurations for impactful CSI.

<i>OUTCOME: Impactful CSI</i>	<i>Enhanced Intermediate solution</i>				
	Path 1	Path 2	Path 3	Path 4	Path 5
Emphasis on strategic and moral motives (MOTIV)	●	●		●	●
Alignment of CSI with core strategy (ALIGNING)	●		●	●	●
Cross-sectoral partnership (PARTNER)	●	●	●		
Dynamic capabilities (CAP)		⊗	●	●	
Routinization of CSI (ROUT)		●	●		●
<i>Consistency</i>	0.857	0.908	0.920	0.873	0.827
<i>PRI</i>	0.788	0.833	0.887	0.814	0.757
<i>Raw coverage</i>	0.645	0.306	0.708	0.630	0.661
<i>Unique coverage</i>	0.000	0.031	0.125	0.016	0.015
<i>Solution consistency</i> 0.809					
<i>Solution coverage</i> 0.847					
CASES	BP; ET, SS_1, MP; B, Rincl_1, RO, Syi, AC, H_sust, K, OT, SL, SW, MC	ETSA, HTD; ET,SS_1,MP	PRO, RA, Pr_L, BTB, DA, H_surv; B, Rincl_1, RO, Syi, AC, H_sust, K, OT, SL, SW, MC	V; SS_2; B, Rincl_1, RO, Syi, AC, H_sust, K, OT, SL, SW, MC	DI; SS_2; ET, SS_1, MP; B, Rincl_1, RO, Syi, AC, H_sust, K, OT, SL, SW, MC

Note: Blank spaces indicate the irrelevance of a condition. Crossed circles indicate the absence of a condition. Large circles: conditions that appear in the parsimonious solution, enhanced causal interpretability. Small circles: conditions that only appear as causally relevant in the enhanced intermediate solution. Parameters of fit and cases displayed for the enhanced intermediate solution. **Bold**: some deviant case consistency in kind.

motives and CSI alignment with core strategy that is supported by dynamic capabilities. In contrast, Configuration 5 represents a substitutionary engagement strategy, without the support of high dynamic capabilities, where MNEs engage internal stakeholders through strategic intent combined with CSI routinization.

4.1. Complementary stakeholder engagement through strategic intent or routinization

Configurations 1, 2 and 3 show that MNEs focus on their engagement with internal and external stakeholders through strategic intent or routinization to achieve impactful CSI. They uphold strategic and moral motives and/or align CSIs with their core strategy to reduce tensions with internal stakeholders. This engagement is complemented by a peripheral involvement in cross-sectoral partnerships alone (Configuration 1) or in conjunction with the routinization of CSIs (Configurations 2 and 3). The peripheral emphasis on external stakeholder engagement applies even to MNEs with low dynamic capabilities, which can simultaneously engage internal stakeholders (through strategic and moral motives) and external stakeholders by routinizing their CSIs (Configuration 2). Whereas MNEs with high dynamic capabilities can reduce internal and external tensions by underscoring the importance of alining CSIs with their core strategy (Configuration 3) (see Table 2).

The complementary stakeholder engagement Configuration 1 is exemplified by project Syi, a European MNE subsidiary initiative to promote social inclusion in a Latin American slum. The MNE subsidiary’s moral purpose of helping people in the slum and building a more inclusive world of employment aligned with their strategy of becoming the market leader in developing best practices in people work management. The MNE subsidiary addressed internal stakeholder tensions by pursuing strategic and moral motives and aligning its initiative with core strategy through the key principles of knowledge, serving and trusting, and promoting the interest of those involved in the initiative. Public-private partnerships, facilitated by the economic development centre of the regional government, supported the MNE’s internal stakeholder management through strategic intent in generating impact. As the Public Affairs and Sustainability Manager argues, “when you have a public/private articulation and the responsibilities of each one of those stakeholders is very well defined and they have their clear objectives like what role they have to play in that project, then the outcome is great, it’s fantastic.” (ML Syi – see raw data in online dataset). The impact of the project can be seen in the reduction of stigmatization and change of beliefs among the slum’s dwellers, which helped ease the burden of living in a slum. The project was expanded to other slums within the same city and other regions in the country.

Configuration 2 is a complementary stakeholder engagement strategy. For instance, in an impactful project (HTD) in Europe, the MNE took a proactive role in preventing human rights abuses related to human trafficking. The MNE’s moral purpose of “identify[ing]

suspicious activities and transactions” [HTD_A] was driven by a desire to address the problem in a holistic manner and learn from other actors’ experiences. There was not an organizational approach to improving the (re)use of resources, i.e., dynamic capabilities, to propagate change. Rather, the social change agents did not have any resources except for their personal time to dedicate to developing the initiative: *“The resources we had were more or less limited. The people who gave the resources were in this programme from the beginning. We were super lucky, because the head of the department is a police commissioner. So when we started this, he immediately said I’m in. He was also connected to the Public Prosecution. He was easy with permitting his people to work on it”* (HTD_MA). Similarly, HTD_JC argued *“well in many ways we were lucky, because there wasn’t a real time pressure. We did this on our own initiative and almost like a hobby. And that’s helpful too. So we weren’t locked down in all sorts of let’s say smart KPIs and the like. Just OK we will work together, we will see if this works”*.

The project was routinized through the MNE’s investment in capacity building and garnering the commitment of external stakeholders to find cases of human trafficking in bank data. Interviews with stakeholders in the project revealed that the Modern Slavery Act played a crucial role in prioritizing the project and enforcing *“new themes or new stuff upon us which we also have to deal with, so you have limited resources you have to shift resources...”* [HTD_VAP]. The MNE also aimed to enhance its reputation as a responsible company. It partnered with both a governmental authority, a law enforcement entity, and a higher education institution to *“implement or develop queries to find cases of human trafficking in bank data”* [HTD_SV]. As highlighted by one of our interviewees: *“The reason was that we knew that neither the public sector nor the private sector would have sufficient information to do so on their own, so they needed to partner up (...)”*. [HTD_B].

Another facet of this HTD project saw this MNE enhance integration by shifting the CSI from the Sustainability to the Risk Department: *“There are many more people working for the Risk Department, so we have now integrated this role as well, which means that we, at Group Sustainability, have more room for projects working with different business lines and also a lot with external stakeholders and platforms, NGOs but also the governments”* (HTD_RZ). The HTD project’s impact extended beyond the MNE, with other actors involved in the development of know-how and tools to prevent human trafficking. For instance, other MNEs were seen to *“ha(ve) changed [their] course”* (HTD_MA), integrating new logics on board. The project is being expanded to other firms, thanks to the engagement of other banks, facilitated by the media and financial expertise, local banks, market authorities, police, and Ministries. As one of our informants mentioned: *“We see now it’s taken up globally”* (HTD_MA).

Configuration 3, similar to Configuration 2, represents a complementary stakeholder engagement strategy, which is illustrated by project PR_L. It is a case of access to services and knowledge. The MNE behind Pr_L identified a gap between the provision of pro bono services by law firms and the needs of social enterprises and NGOs for the betterment of communities and the environment. To address this gap, Pr_L was developed as a mechanism to match law firms with social enterprises and NGOs to carry out projects at different scales. This CSI program has successfully facilitated projects that have resulted in changes to national regulatory frameworks, such as drafting and implementing laws protecting women from violence, as well as successful social projects on a smaller scale. The success of Pr_L can be attributed to various factors, including its alignment with the MNE’s long-term goals of advancing the agenda on human rights, media freedom, and inclusive economies, as well as its alignment with the MNE’s growth strategy of reaching more partners in new geographic areas to strengthen its position in growing markets. As highlighted by one of our interviewees, *“the organization as a whole is looking to focus on moving the needle on human rights and media freedom and inclusive economies”* (Pr_L_03 – see raw data in online dataset). By sensing and seizing knowledge from NGOs in need of pro bono services, the MNC could transform this knowledge into a robust vetting system and networking platform: *“And we, whilst speaking to them, would run through other sorts of issues that they might be having so we could (...) work out what the one issue they were talking about was and then test out whether there are more, again to try and build up the pipeline. And that process had to change relatively quickly because suddenly people realised there were lots of issues and we didn’t want 15 projects from one organisation because the optics of that look terrible”* (Pr_L_02).

The Pr_L Project also invests in cross-sectoral partnerships with policy makers, academics, journalists, and NGOs. This sustained external stakeholder commitment, which involves training and capacity-building actions, helps routinize the CSI program: *“We’re also looking at some of our events and convenings to see how we could deepen those engagements or make those engagements more effective”*. (Pr_L04 – see raw data in online dataset). Illustrating its dynamic capability, the knowledge seized through regular engagement with internal and external stakeholders informed a two-year review process in which the MNE sought to integrate the initiative with its foundation’s strategy and the work of other divisions. An interviewee explained that they *‘worked in silos previously’* but now, there is a transformation process underway where the initiative is *‘core to everything’*, *‘because it really is what’s guiding how we reorganize the team, (...) as well as how the team understands the scope of their work, how they approach their strategies’* (Pr_L_03).

4.2. Substitutionary stakeholder engagement through strategic intent

Another pathway to impactful CSI (Configuration 4) sees MNEs engage just internal stakeholders but where they are characterized by high dynamic capabilities facilitating this process (Configuration 4). Where they do not leverage their dynamic capabilities, MNEs can resort to routinizing CSIs in their internal stakeholder engagement to realize impact (Configuration 5).

Project B, where the MNE promotes the adoption of a minimum living wage policy among its investees and their supply chains and is part of a coalition of financial institutions that engages with companies around living wage payments and assesses their performance, illustrates the substitutionary stakeholder engagement typical of Configuration 4. As a result of the umbrella initiative, five out of 250 FTSE companies targeted became living wage employers within 18 months, and other employers in different countries are introducing living wage policies. This initiative was driven by the MNE’s own strategy of promoting ESG investing and its commitment to human and labour rights. Plans to expand the MNE’s business to new geographies also prioritize breaking down barriers to inclusion, investing in communities, and respecting fundamental human rights, demonstrating dual strategic and moral motives and consistency with the MNE’s core strategy. The MNE’s focus on reducing internal stakeholder tensions is facilitated by high dynamic capabilities, as

evidenced by staff learning points and, according to sustainability reports, the application of frameworks to determine the allocation of funds by the MNE’s investees. As one of our interviewees describes it, “really looking at many different other social benefits and issues and try[ing] to get the companies to understand how they can hear their employees’ voices even if they don’t have unionized shops.” (O1 B – see raw data in online dataset). Meanwhile, the MNE learns and adapts itself, as illustrated by another interviewee: “hopefully we play our part also internally because we have colleagues checking on financial returns as well. And that’s where the crux of the matter is of course that you have to also make sure that internally you sometimes take a little bit of loss financially but still invest in more sustainable companies.” (O2 - B)

Similar to Configuration 4, the substitutionary stakeholder engagement characteristic of Configuration 5 emphasizes addressing tensions among internal stakeholders alone which, when combined with the routinization of CSIs, generates impact. This is observed in a project (K) that strives for social inclusion by enhancing the employability of refugees through training and language skills. The initiative was motivated by both the MNE’s commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and strategic considerations, such as the reputational benefits of publicizing the company’s support for refugees and the potential to address labour shortages by securing loyal employees. As one informant candidly put it: “statistically, refugees have really good retention and are really loyal. And so obviously we want to add [them] into our workforce” (K_01 – see raw data in online dataset). This example highlights how the MNE’s culture of making a positive social and environmental impact is reflected in its commitment to supporting refugees’ employability. It also shows how the HQ’s support and brand positioning, which, according to an informant, “wants to be known as the world leader of equality” (K_01 – see raw data in online dataset), have facilitated the rollout of the CSI in other countries. The following excerpt illustrates how the initiative is embedded in the structure and culture of the MNE and to lasting effect: “It’s connected to who we are as an organization and the business benefits from it. Then it’s going to be connected to all the largest business planning for the year. Everybody at every level knows from global downward [...], they know the [SI initiative] is a big initiative” (K-2 – see raw data in online dataset).

4.3. The non-impactful CSI

We conducted an analysis of non-impactful CSI in order to verify the inherent asymmetry of QCA. The limited scope of analysis should not be interpreted as a dismissal of the importance of non-impactful CSI but, rather, a recognition of the need for further inquiry into a complex phenomenon. The absence of outcome points to the need for further investigation using a different theoretical lens.

Out of the 32 cases of impactful CSI initiatives, nine cases did not have the intended impact (see Table 3). Two configurations explain a non-impactful CSI initiative. Configuration 1 reveals a lack of engagement with internal stakeholders (low emphasis on strategic and moral motives) and low routinization of the CSI as MNEs with low dynamic capabilities emphasize external stakeholder engagement (cross-sectoral partnerships) alone. The EBB case, involving access to services and knowledge, is explained by this combination of conditions.

Non-impactful CSI is also explained by configuration 2 where MNEs, regardless of whether they have high or low dynamic capabilities, solely engage external stakeholders, ignoring internal stakeholders (low emphasis on strategic and moral motives and

Table 3
Configurations for non-impactful CSI.

Outcome: Non-impactful CSI	Enhanced Intermediate solution	
	Path 1	Path 2
Emphasis on strategic and moral motives (MOTIV)	⊗	⊗
Alignment of CSI with core strategy (ALIGNING)		⊗
Cross-sectoral partnership (PARTNER)	●	●
Dynamic capabilities (CAP)	⊗	
Routinization of CSI (ROUT)	⊗	⊗
Consistency	0.801	0.801
PRI	0.602	0.670
Raw coverage	0.257	0.258
Unique coverage	0.065	0.0066
Solution consistency 0.771		
Solution coverage 0.323		
Cases	EBB	Rincl_2, AN

Note: Blank spaces indicate the irrelevance of a condition. Crossed circles indicate the absence of a condition. Large circles: conditions that appear in the parsimonious solution, enhanced causal interpretability. Small circles: conditions that only appear as causally relevant in the enhanced intermediate solution. Parameters of fit and cases displayed for the enhanced intermediate solution.

misalignment of CSI with the core strategy) and the routinization of the CSI. The cases explained by this configuration are Rincl_2 (social inclusion) and AN (animal nutrition) (see Section 6 in the supplementary file for details).

4.4. Robustness of QCA results

We checked for the sensitivity of our results by evaluating their robustness. The two methods employed, including theory evaluation and robustness checks, confirm the credibility and trustworthiness of our findings. As can be seen in the supplementary file (Sections 8 and 9), they show that thematic diversity is not an issue, most cases are aligned with theoretical expectations, and our initial solution is relatively robust in terms of fit.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The primary contribution of this study is to advance a configurational perspective on stakeholder engagement by MNEs in generating impactful CSI. We develop a framework of stakeholder engagement strategies to map the different approaches that MNEs, with varying dynamic capabilities, can use to generate impact through engagement with internal and external stakeholders. Our framework proposes that MNEs can pursue stakeholder engagement in a manner that is complementary or substitutionary given their respective dynamic capabilities. Guided by this framework, our analysis helps to unravel the complexity underlying the link between impactful CSI and stakeholder engagement.

We find that various engagement strategies are linked to impactful CSIs at MNEs with different dynamic capabilities. At MNEs with low dynamic capabilities, a complementary strategy is linked to impactful CSI (Configuration 2). MNEs that see a strong strategic business case for engaging in CSI, hence emphasize strategic and moral motives, tend to believe that CSIs can build competitive advantage, provide new business opportunities and help the company meet shareholder interests (Brønn and Vidaver-Cohen, 2009). However, for a social agenda to become visible and generate shared value, MNEs need to interact and co-create with stakeholders to solve mutual problems (Borchardt et al., 2020). Given the difficulties in ensuring commercial viability and high scrutiny from stakeholders (Kennedy et al., 2017), MNEs with limited change-oriented capabilities can benefit from sharing the uncertainty and risk of developing CSIs by combining internal stakeholder engagement strategies with those of external stakeholder engagement.

In contrast, at MNEs characterized by high dynamic capabilities, complementary and substitutionary strategies are linked to impactful CSI (Configurations 3 and 4). These strategies are also used by MNEs regardless of their dynamic capabilities although the outcome of an impactful CSI is explained to a lesser extent by this (lower unique coverage) (Configurations 1 and 5). MNEs rich in dynamic capabilities that display strategic intent by aligning CSIs with their core strategy are more likely to achieve long-term sustainability when this intent is combined with cross-sectoral partnerships and an effort to routinize CSIs. The resources of such MNEs can be pooled with those of external partners to reduce uncertainty and speed up the process of learning (Reficco and Gutiérrez, 2016; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2022). External partners can provide access to target markets and are already accepted by local communities (Winterhalter et al., 2017). Therefore, an MNE with high dynamic capabilities can, more easily, increase its resource endowment by combining internal stakeholder engagement strategies with those of external stakeholder engagement when tackling social challenges in developing markets (Ahn et al., 2019). However, it is also likely for MNEs with high dynamic capabilities to focus on internal stakeholder demands alone, i.e., adopt a substitutionary strategy, to find solutions to deep-rooted societal issues. This suggests that MNE change-oriented capabilities can suffice in the provision of a social good given ready access to extensive financial resources, management expertise, and global supply chains (Sinkovics et al., 2014).

Moreover, we find that no configuration that is consistently linked to impactful CSI entails a substitutionary stakeholder engagement strategy through cross-sectoral partnerships. This could be because reducing tensions with external stakeholders alone does not guarantee the ownership of CSIs within MNEs for a sustained innovation. MNEs can be expected to develop new value logic for conducting business and create new rules and ways of measuring social impact internally (Mirvis and Googins, 2018; Holmström Lind et al., 2022) before they engage external stakeholders. This reinforces the stages that CSIs evolve through for impact. As Murray et al. (2010) and Herrera (2015) argue, CSIs are instigated by defining a social need, which triggers a proposal for an idea. Ideas are piloted or prototyped for alignment with local community needs before they can be scaled up (Reficco and Gutiérrez, 2016; Andersen and Esbjerg, 2020). As firms learn and continually adapt, scaled-up CSIs may result in systems change or impact (Peerally et al., 2019; Reinecke and Donaghey, 2021). External stakeholder engagement largely occurs in the piloting stage to secure buy-in (Reficco and Gutiérrez, 2016; Kennedy et al., 2017). Given the focus of CSIs on the needs of both the business and society, partnering with stakeholders and co-designing and co-producing with them are reported to be critical to the creation of shared value (Geissdoerfer et al., 2018; Candi et al., 2019; Tabares, 2020).

From a CSI perspective that emphasizes the need for MNEs to meet multiple stakeholder needs for shared value creation (Lusch et al., 2016; Vargo and Lusch, 2017), our findings imply that a strategy may provide different value across different firm contexts, because its results are dependent on a combination of coordinating stakeholder expectations and MNE ability to manage stakeholder tensions. Thus, the theoretical and empirical connections we forge between stakeholder engagement, dynamic capabilities and impactful CSI advance research at the interface of CSI and stakeholder theory. Our configurational model informs efforts to disentangle the conditions under which different forms of stakeholder engagement are linked to achieving impact by MNEs with their CSIs (Tabares, 2020; Holmström Lind et al., 2022) across different dynamic capabilities.

Strategies to navigate tensions between internal and external stakeholders have implications for MNE efforts to balance the need to conform to a dominant stakeholder group with the need to be inclusive for a sustained impact. As our five configurations show, MNEs consistently conform to the expectations of their internal stakeholders through strategic intent. They display some inclusivity,

regardless of their dynamic capabilities and additional efforts to routinize CSIs, where they combine conformity to dominant stakeholder demands with managing external stakeholder needs in a peripheral way. Hence, each engagement strategy in our taxonomy represents a different approach to managing tensions between conformity and inclusivity. Research on CSI highlights the benefits derived from meeting external stakeholder needs in piloting and evaluating CSIs (Murray et al., 2010). The buy-in from stakeholders minimizes the risk of derailing CSI activities (Altuna et al., 2015). This risk is particularly high in developing economies where formal institutions are underdeveloped (Borchardt et al., 2020; Lashitew et al., 2020) and market barriers to creating value are pervasive (Andersen and Esbjerg, 2020). From this perspective, there are benefits to being inclusive. However, our findings demonstrate that MNEs can also accrue benefits from conforming largely to internal stakeholders, captured by the substitutionary engagement strategy, despite the arguments that firms should attain a balance between conformity and inclusivity by reconciling tensions with both internal and external stakeholders (Lashitew et al., 2020; Pless et al., 2021; Montiel et al., 2021; Dioniso and de Vargas, 2022).

5.1. Managerial implications

Our study shows multiple ways in which MNEs can manage different stakeholder preferences to achieve impactful CSIs. MNE managers can successfully reduce tensions with stakeholders by emphasizing strategic intent or CSI routinization for societal impact. This may or may not be facilitated by dynamic capabilities. Of particular interest is that low dynamic capabilities do not hinder the generation of impactful CSIs by MNEs. By focusing on a complementary stakeholder engagement strategy through routinization, managers can emphasize the allocation of scarce resources to where they are most needed.

The range of complementary and substitutionary strategies highlighted by the study can help MNE managers make informed choices about where to invest resources to coordinate stakeholder expectations and adapt communication approaches to reach underserved populations at scale.

5.2. Future research directions

A first direction for future research is suggested by our finding that complementary stakeholder engagement is more salient than substitutionary engagement in configurations that are linked to impactful CSI (as indicated by slightly higher unique coverage scores of Configurations 2 and 3 and the absence of a configuration representing a substitutionary strategy through cross-sectoral partnerships in our solution). Stakeholder theory suggests that firms that invest in their stakeholders are in a better condition to create economic value than competitors with adversarial stakeholder relationships (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Hillman and Keim, 2001). This corroborates the notion that value creation is a collective endeavor that requires the participation of multiple stakeholders (Garcia-Castro and Francoeur, 2016). However, this collective endeavor does not require a well-balanced allocation of resources between internal and external stakeholders for impactful CSIs. Future research can examine whether a well-balanced coordination of stakeholder engagement would reveal CSIs that are scaled-up and scaled-deep.

Second, it may be that the indicators of our operationalized concepts may be specific to our corporate social innovation cases. While this choice was justified by our previous inductive work, these indicators require further investigation as regards their generalizability to other types of CSI. We would encourage future researchers to try different concept structures by integrating more cases into the study. By the same token, new conditions can also be added to the analysis. For instance, although we considered the spread of a CSI to other geographies in generating impact, we did not factor in the influence of different (in)formal institutional and market pressures. As Huq et al. (2016), Bowie (2019) and Lashitew et al. (2020) argue, MNEs provide a means to understand the influence of institutional contexts on innovative practices. For example, CSI initiatives can be a response to policies and principles to avoid sanctions (Chiu, 2017), to gain legitimacy as a credible partner (Dioniso and de Vargas, 2022), or to enhance corporate reputation for accessing new markets (Schrader et al., 2012). MNEs also face coordination risks in institutionally weak countries (Basu et al., 2021). Such institutional contexts can exert pressure on MNEs to forge trustworthy relations with stakeholders, as to substitute for weak institutions (Doh et al., 2017), thus creating further challenges or opportunities in stakeholder engagement.

Finally, our configurational approach explains the variation in the combinations of conditions but does not highlight the processes for impactful CSIs by MNEs. It is also limited in the number of conditions it can include due to expected ratio of model conditions to sampled cases (Marx and Dussa, 2011). Future research can combine fsQCA with process-tracing (Beach and Pedersen, 2019; Alamos-Concha et al., 2022) to unpack the process of achieving impactful CSI as well as explore further contingencies that explain the stakeholder engagement-impactful CSI relationship. Such research may consider that MNEs originating from institutional systems that privilege certain key stakeholders (Hall and Soskice, 2001), such as shareholders in liberal market economies, may have greater leeway to pursue substitutionary engagement strategy than those originating from coordinated market economies that protect labor.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

Ayse Saka-Helmhout: Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Conceptualization. **Priscilla Álamos-Concha:** Writing – original draft, Software, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Mabel Machado López:** Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Julie Hagan:** Investigation, Data curation. **Gregor Murray:** Resources, Project administration, Investigation, Funding acquisition. **Tony Edwards:** Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Investigation, Funding acquisition. **Philipp Kern:** Investigation. **Isabelle Martin:** Investigation. **Ling Eleanor Zhang:** Investigation.

Data availability

The data are made available in a supplementary file.

Appendix A

Table A1

Overview of the cases of corporate social innovation.

Case	Topic, project start date, HQ	Case description	Data collection	Interviewee role
AC	Access to services and knowledge, 2014, Europe	An MNE and partners are collaborating to strengthen the level of care and to make the health system more effective and efficient in Africa.	Interviews (4), Secondary sources (Firm's website [4])	Programme manager, Venture leader, Business solutions manager, Business development manager
AER	Access to services and knowledge, 2018, Europe	An MNE is helping to build local energy markets for remote communities through its social investment projects.	Interviews (3), Secondary sources (Firm's website, Agenda SDGs 2021 document) [2]	Director of Service Access, Social Investment manager (twice)
AN	Environmental impact reduction, 2008, Europe	A global science-based company involved in BoP projects to create an industry that provides sustainable nutritional solutions and health.	Interviews (2), Secondary sources (Partner working paper, Website about project information, Firm's annual report 2009, Master thesis about the project) [5]	Project consultant, Application development manager
B	Sustainable sourcing, 2017, North America, Europe, UK	A member of an industry coalition, an investment bank is promoting and monitoring living wages payments among investees and supply chains.	Interviews (3), Secondary sources (Project's website [5])	Director for Responsible Investment, Human Rights advisor at participating bank, Inclusive Economies Manager at participating MNC
BP	Social inclusion, 2021, Australia	An MNE in the resource extraction sector is working to support diversity and economic inclusion of indigenous peoples.	Interviews (2), Secondary sources (Firm's website, Document (online media, 2022)) [4]	Education Engagement Strategy, Former Programme Manager, Programme Manager
BTB	Access to services and knowledge, 2013, UK	An MNE and partners in the education sector are working to improve digital literacy in the country and to make computing accessible to everyone.	Interviews (2), Secondary sources (Firm's website, Report, News websites [4])	Manager, Director
DA	Sustainable sourcing, 2009, Europe	An MNE in the food sector promotes more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable sourcing through regenerative agriculture.	Interviews (2), Secondary sources (Firm's website [4])	Senior manager, Executive, Senior associate
DI	Sustainable sourcing, 2021, North America	An MNE in the health and beauty sector aims to develop new practices that promote sustainability, diversity and inclusion in the supply chain.	Interviews (2), Secondary sources (Firm's website [1])	Director, Environment and Sustainability Specialist
EBB	Access to services and knowledge, 2018, UK	An MNE and a social enterprise are collaborating in a project to support capacity and community building based on a trading time methodology.	Interviews (4), Secondary sources (Document (2019 annual report), Document online about modern slavery, Visual about negotiation, Website about due diligence [2])	Former Responsible Investment Analyst
ET	Sustainable sourcing, 2017, UK-based NGO, MNC - Africa	An MNE in the health and beauty sector aims to develop new practices that promote sustainability, diversity and inclusion in the supply chain.	Interviews (2) - no secondary data	Senior Worldwide Influencing Network Advisor
ETSA	Sustainable sourcing, 2018, UK, Africa	An investment management firm is working on improving labour standards in supermarkets and supply chains. A charity promoting responsible financial investment is among the partners helping develop the initiative.		

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Table A1 (continued)

Case	Topic, project start date, HQ	Case description	Data collection	Interviewee role
H_surv	Social inclusion, 2017, UK	A retail bank is enabling financial inclusion for survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery. Key partners include an international NGO.	Interviews (3), Firm's website [2]	Head of Global NGO Engagement, Customer Experience - Financial Inclusion and Vulnerability, Director Compliance
H_sust	Environmental impact reduction, 2005, UK	A retail bank is transforming business culture and strategies in response social effects of climate change. Allies include international NGOs.	Interviews (2), Firm's website [2]	Head of Global NGO Engagement, Former Global Head, Operational Sustainability (now private sustainability consultant)
HTD	Anti-slavery, 2018, Europe	An MNE with partners is developing know-how and tools to prevent human trafficking as a global organized crime and violation of human rights.	Interviews (9), Firm's website; podcast about modern slavery; online report about Human Rights 2021 [3]	Fraud Detection Specialist, Senior Financial Crime Specialist, Customer Due Diligence, Head of Social Issues at Principles for Responsible Investment, Associate Professor, Head of Environmental & Social Risk, Head of Intelligence, Social Sustainability Advisor, Strategic Advisor at the Labour Inspectorate
K	Social inclusion, 2019, North America and Europe	An MNE in the retail sector partners with NGOs to roll-out a program aimed at the training, employability and integration of refugees.	Interviews (6), Firm's website; document (firm report) [2]	Project Lead, Project Lead, Deputy Director, Manager, Senior Manager, Executive
MC	Social inclusion, 2019, North America	An MNE in the food sector develops a refugee integration program and cultural sensitivity training.	Interviews (2), Firm's website; partner's website [2]	Manager, Manager
MP	Anti-slavery, 2017, North America	Professionals working across MNEs use their purchasing power to raise awareness of human trafficking among their suppliers.	Interviews (3), Firm's website; document about project report (2)	"Manager, Manager, Founder"
OT	Social inclusion, 2018, UK and North America	An investment bank and partners are opening opportunities in the IT industry for under-served groups and communities.	Interviews (2), Partner's website; annual project report 2019, 2022) [3]	Managing Director, Global Philanthropy
PR_L	Access to services and knowledge, 2009, UK	A global conglomerate created a network to provide pro bono legal support to social enterprises and NGOs.	Interviews (4), Media company's website) [2]	Former Programme Manager UK & Ireland, Operations Foundation. Previously Programme Director, Programme Director, Head of Programmes
PRO	Anti-slavery, 2016, North America	A public-private partnership is formed in the financial sector to develop methods to detect human trafficking.	Interviews (1), Document SDGs related to the project; document (report) regarding indicators; document (bank) report 2021; short document regarding the project) [3]	Executive
RA	Social inclusion, 2008, Europe	An MNE in the resource extraction sector develops a program at one of its sites to support the employability and economic development of indigenous people.	Interviews (3), Firm's website; document (firm's agreement); firm partner website [3]	Director, Director, Assistant director
Rincl_1	Social inclusion, 2017, Europe	An MNE committed to refugee inclusion, connecting refugees to full time employment, while addressing the MNE's challenge of finding skilled employees for a variety of roles across the organization.	Interviews (3), Firm's website; Partner's website; Firm's website with beneficiaries' evidence; partner's document under embargo. [8]	Director of European Partnerships, Diversity & Inclusion Consultant, Business Advisor
Rincl_2	Social inclusion, 2019, Europe	An MNE that aims to hire, support and better serve refugees in its home market and abroad.	Interviews (2), Firm's video website; Partner's website; partner's document under embargo [3]	Project manager
RO	Access to services and knowledge, 2021, North America	A telecommunication MNE is working to facilitate access to cellular and internet connectivity for indigenous peoples.	Interviews (2), document, report about the project. [1]	Manager, Director
SHD	Environmental impact reduction, 2012, Europe	An MNE and partners are delivering a program with a sustainable and environmental focus to change habitats of the displaced by natural disasters and pandemics.	Interviews (2), project's website, partner website [2]	Global Sustainability Director, Senior Project Manager
Syi	Social inclusion, 2018, Europe	An MNE with a branch office in Latin America supports slum youth inclusion in the job market with a focus on training and employability.	Interviews (6), firm's website, visual data on YouTube, government data, firm project report [6]	Sustainability Manager (twice), Advisor in the Directorate of Economic Integration of the local government, Consultant, President of an NGO1, Coordinator of an NGO2
SL	Social inclusion, 2016, Europe	A cooperative bank, focused on international business and rural activities,	Interviews (2), online document about green loan principles and	Head of Capital Markets, Head of Risk Sustainability

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Table A1 (continued)

Case	Topic, project start date, HQ	Case description	Data collection	Interviewee role
SS_1	Sustainable sourcing, 2001, Europe	that aligns sustainability with commercial logic by offering sustainability loans. A food retailer that has pioneered the responsible sourcing of fresh fruits from developing economies with the aim to contribute to poverty alleviation and selling of new and cheaper products.	sustainability (2020), online news webpage about sustainability principles (2019) [3] Interviews (3), Book chapter (n. 17, 2006); firm’s website, media website.[3]	Former Sustainable Trade Development Manager, Sustainability Manager, Former NGO partner
SS_2	Sustainable sourcing, 2012, Europe	An MNE is working with its partners to make its supply chain traceable to reduce modern slavery and improve the quality of life of the local farmers.	Interviews (2), Firm’s website; visual data (YouTube); documents case study. [9]	Head of Impact, Consultant
SSurv	Social inclusion, 2019, North America	An MNE in the finance sector develops a program to promote financial inclusion for survivors of human trafficking.	Interviews (2), Online annual report 2020 about modern slavery and human trafficking statement. [1]	Senior manager, Project Director
SW	Anti-slavery, 2020, North America	A public-private partnership is formed in the financial sector to develop methods to detect child exploitation.	Interviews (4), Firm’s website. [3]	Executive, Senior manager, Executive, Director
V	Social inclusion, 2020, UK	A trade body in the tech industry and a social enterprise are working to remove barriers for disabled people in the business sector.	Interviews (4), Firm’s website [1]	Founder, CEO

Note: Cases are classified by topic, with their case description, approximate start date of the CSI project and HQ; number of interviews conducted per project and type and number of secondary data; and the informant role.

Table A2

Calibration of outcome and conditions.

Outcome	Measures	Attributes	fsQCA 4-value point
Impactful CSI	Systems change Replication Awareness	Managing or changing institutional logics or systems	1.00
		Other firms in the industries (replication); more affected areas (geographic expansion).	0.67
		Creation of awareness about CSI societal and economic relevance; making scaling a conscious choice by garnering buy-in/support within and outside the MNE where the product/service has not yet reached the end-user.	0.33
	Unintended or failed	Any buy-in/support within the MNE that has not yet reached the end-users of the product/service. No scaling strategy or failed scaling strategy	0.00
Conditions	Measures	Attributes	fsQCA 4-value point
Strategic and moral motives	Moral, institutional and instrumental	Moral (ethical, philanthropy) and instrumental (profit) and institutional (compliance, reputation or legitimacy)	1.00
		Moral and instrumental	0.67
		Instrumental and institutional	0.33
Alignment of the initiative with core strategy	Receptivity, mission-vision and corporate strategy	Only moral, only instrumental, or only institutional	0.00
		Alignment with core strategy (resource-capability fit or growth strategy) and with mission-vision, and receptivity (employee commitment or top leadership commitment)	1.00
		Alignment with core strategy (resource-capability fit or growth strategy) and with mission-vision, OR extensive alignment with core strategy (resource-capability fit or growth strategy) and receptivity (employee commitment or top leadership commitment) OR extensive alignment with mission-vision and receptivity (employee commitment or top leadership commitment)	0.67
		Alignment with core strategy (resource-capability fit or growth strategy) or with mission-vision, or receptivity (employee commitment or top leadership commitment)	0.33
Cross-sectoral partnership	Multi-stakeholder partnerships from public, private and non-profit sectors	Unclear or lack of strategy	0.00
		Government/State-run bodies, participation of non-governmental organizations and community, educational sector and for-profit business actors.	1.00
		Two sectors involved but not a tripartite engagement	0.67
		Single sector involvement	0.33
		Informal or weak interactions with only one sector	0.00

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Table A2 (continued)

Conditions	Measures	Attributes	fsQCA 4-value point
Dynamic capabilities	Sensing, seizing and transforming (Improvement of the way of thinking, strategies, practices and use of resources to scale CSI)	Extend, leverage and create knowledge and routines for scaling	1.00
		Developing/elaborating the identified areas of learning	0.67
Routinization of CSI	Sustained stakeholder engagement, aligned operational structure and transformation of organizational culture	Making assessment to identify areas of learning or gaining experience/knowledge	0.33
		No changes oriented to scaling, no adapting, learning and evolving practices	0.00
		Routinization of a sustained stakeholder engagement, aligned operational structure and transformation of organizational culture.	1.00
		[Sustained stakeholder commitment: Internal and external stakeholder commitment OR Training and capacity building (updating skills and knowledge) OR Sharing knowledge/insights / regular communication AND Aligned operational structure: Concrete written policy (e.g., frameworks, booklets, long-range plans with clear targets, evaluation) AND Transformation of organizational culture: New routines, new rhetoric/reflexivity or Transformation of organizational values and practices]	0.67
		'Sustained stakeholder engagement and aligned operational structure', OR 'Sustained stakeholder engagement and transformation of organizational' OR 'Aligned operational structure and Transformation of organizational culture'	
		[Sustained stakeholder commitment: Internal and external stakeholder commitment OR Training and capacity building (updating skills and knowledge) OR Sharing knowledge/insights / regular communication AND Aligned operational structure: Concrete written policy (e.g., frameworks, booklets, long-range plans with clear targets, evaluation)] OR [Sustained stakeholder commitment: Internal and external stakeholder commitment OR Training and capacity building (updating skills and knowledge) OR Sharing knowledge/insights / regular communication AND Transformation of organizational culture: New routines, new rhetoric/reflexivity or Transformation of organizational values and practices] OR [Aligned operational structure: Concrete written policy (e.g., frameworks, booklets, long-range plans with clear targets, evaluation)] AND Transformation of organizational culture: New routines, new rhetoric/reflexivity or Transformation of organizational values and practices]	
Routinization of a sustained stakeholder engagement OR aligned operational structure OR transformation of organizational culture.	0.33		
		[Internal and external stakeholder commitment: Training and capacity building (updating skills and knowledge) OR Sharing knowledge/insights / regular communication OR Aligned operational structure: Concrete written policy (e.g., frameworks, booklets, long-range plans with clear targets, evaluation) OR Transformation of organizational culture: New routines, new	

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Table A2 (continued)

Conditions	Measures	Attributes	fsQCA 4-value point
		rhetoric/reflexivity or Transformation of organizational values and practices] Lack of routinization	0.00

Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2024.101159>.

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