

Understanding Responsible Business:

A Study of Norwegian Institutions and Companies.



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Abstract

The way companies understand and address their role in society, the economy, and the environment is critical for a sustainable future and is debated by a number of scholars and policymakers. For a long time, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been the core of understanding and addressing how businesses can contribute to social and economic well-being. In recent years, CSR has been increasingly criticized and is starting to be replaced by the newer concept of Creating Shared Value (CSV) coined by Porter and Kramer (2011). CSV is described as a new way for companies to create value while simultaneously contributing positively to social and environmental goals.

Both concepts are criticized, and there is an ongoing debate over how best to understand responsible business. This study examines the change from CSR to CSV and aims to explore where the understanding of responsible business in Norway is heading. The analysis is based on the Norwegian government's approach to addressing responsible business. The understanding is further examined in two governmental institutions, Norfund and Innovation Norway, and two types of Norwegian companies, GRAS and Yara. The data is based on interviews and governmental, institutional, and company documents.

The findings suggest that the Norwegian government, institutions, and companies, are moving away from understanding responsible business as CSR and are starting to refer to it as CSV. Most informants prefer CSV to CSR because they see CSR as philanthropic, voluntary, and external to the core business and are therefore searching for a new understanding. While CSR is kept in many documents, CSV offers strengths in terms of the appeal of a new concept by evaluating social and environmental concerns more strategically than CSR. Accounting for the weaknesses of CSV, analyzing what is new about CSV, how it differentiates from a broader academic understanding of CSR, and if it solves CSR's limitations, it remains questionable whether CSV really offers a new approach to dealing with the tension between society, businesses, and the complexity of today's global value chains.

In light of the academic approach to CSR, the data demonstrates that the understanding of responsible business is changing in the examined cases away from CSR potentially to CSV. The findings imply that even though CSR remains present to some extent, CSV is at the forefront of replacing CSR as the main concept of understanding responsible business in the investigated Norwegian cases.

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Table of Content

1.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1.	THE THEORETICAL LENS.....	2
1.2.	RESEARCH AIM AND BACKGROUND.....	2
1.3.	RESEARCH OUTLINE.....	4
2.	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	5
2.1.	THE EVOLUTION AND DEFINITIONS OF CSR	5
2.1.1.	<i>The Multifaceted Nature of CSR</i>	7
2.1.2.	<i>Towards a New South-Centered Agenda</i>	9
2.2.	A CHANGE FROM CSR TO CSV	11
2.3.	SUMMARY	14
3.	METHODOLOGY	15
3.1.	ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND THE RESEARCH STRATEGY	15
3.2.	RESEARCH DESIGN	16
3.3.	DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY	18
3.3.1.	<i>Sampling Informants and Conducting Interviews</i>	19
3.3.2.	<i>Document Analysis</i>	22
3.4.	DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY	23
3.5.	ETHICAL CHALLENGES AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES	24
3.6.	SUMMARY	26
4.	UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS	27
4.1.	THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT’S ATTEMPTS TO ADDRESS RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS	27
4.2.	THE GOVERNMENTS GUIDELINES – FROM CSR TO CSV?.....	30
4.3.	RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS APPROACHES BY THE INSTITUTIONS	33
4.3.1.	<i>Norfund – The Responsible Investment Approach</i>	33
4.3.2.	<i>Innovation Norway – The Corporate Responsibility Approach</i>	35
4.4.	CSR AND CSV UNDERSTANDING IN THE TWO COMPANIES.....	39
4.4.1.	<i>GRAS – Following Norfund’s Approach to CSV</i>	39
4.4.2.	<i>Yara’s Approach to CSV</i>	41
4.5.	SUMMARY	44
5.	MOTIVATIONS AND CRITIQUES OF THE NEWER RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS UNDERSTANDING	45
5.1.	MORE THAN CSR – DEVELOPING AN ETHOS.....	45
5.2.	TOWARDS CSV – APPEAL OF A NEW CONCEPT	48
5.3.	WESTERN FRAMINGS IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT.....	52
5.4.	SUMMARY	55
6.	WHERE IS THE UNDERSTANDING OF RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS HEADING?	56
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	61
	APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDE: GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS.....	66
	APPENDIX B - INTERVIEW GUIDE: COMPANIES	67

List of Figures and Tables:

Figure 1: External and Internal Factors Influencing CSV (Menghwar & Daood, 2021, p. 479) . 11
Figure 2: Due Diligence Cycle (OECD, 2018, p. 21) 29

Table 1: CSR vs. CSV (Hoek, 2020) 13
Table 2: Conducted Interviews 20

Abbreviations and acronyms

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

CSV: Creating Shared Value

ESG: Environment, Social and Governance

ETI: Ethical Trade Initiative

GRAS: Green Resources AS

MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NABA: Norwegian-African Business Association

NAP: National Action Plan

Norad: The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

Norfund: The Norwegian Investment fund for Developing Countries

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OECD NCP: OECD National Contact Point

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

UNGPs: United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights

1. Introduction

Environmental and social disasters, as well as corporate scandals, have led to an increasing focus on how best to understand and address the relationship between business, society, and the environment. In this context, scholars, policymakers, and business stakeholders have recognized the need to understand and address the interrelationship for a sustainable future (Anner, 2012; Bair & Palpacuer, 2015; Falck & Heblich, 2007).

Debates about this relationship mainly occurred due to increasing globalizing trade, sustainability awareness, and the impact of companies from the Global North in countries of the Global South (Bair & Palpacuer, 2015). Understanding how business approaches can improve economic, social, and environmental well-being has changed over the previous decades. Governments, institutions, and companies worldwide have started to recognize that adjustments in understanding what responsible business is must occur in order for businesses to bring the desired relationship of economic success, which goes hand in hand with social and environmental improvement (Lapiņa et al., 2012). Therefore, governments, institutions, and companies in countries, for example, Norway and elsewhere, are now adjusting how they view the relationship between the business side of a company, as well as its impact and contribution to the society and environment for a sustainable future (Lapiņa et al., 2012).

In the following research, the debates surrounding business understandings in today's globalized world, including paying attention to social and environmental aspects, are called responsible business. Two concepts are currently debated to approach the understanding of responsible business, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Creating Shared Value (CSV). Responsible business serves in this study as a neutral term to describe both concepts, CSR, and CSV, as approaches to achieve the goal of a beneficial relationship between businesses, society, and the environment.

1.1. The Theoretical Lens

For long, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was seen as a promising concept and approach to creating a relationship that can contribute to economic, social, and environmental well-being by committing to a set of voluntary standards of corporate behavior (Falck & Heblich, 2007). However, a growing body of research has criticized CSR's broad, philanthropic, and voluntary nature for not bringing the desired change of responsible business practices it sets out to achieve (Nieuwenkamp, 2016; Sarkar & Searcy, 2016). Sarkar and Searcy (2016) argue that the indefinite boundaries and fuzziness of what the concept of CSR exactly entails hinder the understanding and strategies to advance its goals and needs in countries and cultures worldwide. Therefore, how actors involved understand and address the concept differently is crucial to analyze in order to discuss where debates are heading.

Nowadays, some business actors, scholars, and policymakers avoid the concept of CSR and are starting to replace it (Corazza et al., 2017; Porter & Kramer, 2011). At the forefront of potentially bringing forward social and environmental change is the concept of Creating Shared Value (CSV), coined by Porter and Kramer (2011). CSV supposedly describes a new way of how business can simultaneously create economic value and value for society and the environment by incorporating societal and environmental needs at the core of product development and productivity and acknowledging new cluster development (Porter & Kramer, 2011). According to Porter and Kramer (2011), a redefinition of corporations will drive the next phase of innovation and productivity.

However, unclear boundaries and critiques of and between the two concepts and their outcomes remain. This is due to different understandings of the concepts, varying and broad strategies and goals, and rising critiques of the concepts' Western origin (Almatrooshi et al., 2018; Blowfield & Frynas, 2005). The theoretical foundation of this research is based on the two concepts in order to investigate how responsible business is understood today and where it is heading in different cases in Norway.

1.2. Research Aim and Background

A lot is happening worldwide in creating guidelines and strategies for businesses and stakeholders to approach responsible business, and the debate of a change from CSR to CSV is ongoing (Corazza et al., 2017; Crane et al., 2014). Although CSR and CSV are both accused of limitations, debates about their relevance form a critical part of policy and governmental

strategies for developing cooperation and linking business, human rights, and sustainability in a globalized world (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Sarkar & Searcy, 2016), which demonstrates the actuality of this topic.

Scandinavia has been described as one of the global leaders when it comes to CSR (Strand et al., 2015). Therefore, Norway provides an interesting geographical case for analyzing the understanding of responsible business and where it is heading. Taking the above into consideration, the study focuses on the Norwegian government's approach, institutions, and companies understanding of CSR and CSV.

Additionally, concerns about responsible business originated from debates surrounding international trade and often focus on the economic activities of the Global North in the Global South (Bair & Palpacuer, 2015). An interesting case is the African continent and its ties with Norway through trade, which is growing and provides economic opportunities for both Africa and Norway (MFA, 2008). Norway's engagement is spread across the continent, but traditionally East Africa is one of the focus areas and is another investigated geographic location in this study.

More research is needed on how responsible business can be understood and addressed worldwide to lead to the intended positive contribution for everyone (Karam & Jamali, 2017; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). By exploring how the Norwegian government addresses responsible business, the understanding of two institutions, Norfund and Innovation Norway, and the two companies, GRAS AS (hereafter GRAS) and Yara International (hereafter Yara), both operating in East Africa, this research examines and sheds light on four cases of responsible business approaches.

The overall aim of this study is to explore *where the understanding of responsible business in Norway is heading. Why and to what extent does it imply a change from CSR to CSV?* The research focuses on two sub-questions that guide the research:

1. *How do the Norwegian Institutions Norfund and Innovation Norway and the companies GRAS and Yara understand responsible business, and how is it reflected in the way they address it?*
2. *Why and to what extent do the informants and academic debates prefer the CSV concept to the CSR concept?*

First, the study examines the institution's and companies' understanding of responsible business. Secondly, investigating the reasoning behind a change from CSR to CSV in light of the informants' understandings and academic debates aims to discuss why and to what extent a change from CSR to CSV in Norway is occurring.

1.3. Research Outline

Chapter two lays out the theoretical foundation of this research. The chapter describes the origin and evolution of CSR, its definition, and its core elements. After discussing the multifaceted nature and South-Centered research agenda of CSR, the chapter introduces the change towards CSV in addressing responsible business. Chapter three then discusses the methodological choices and strategy for data collection and analysis and finishes with an evaluation of the research's ethical challenges. Chapter four first presents the policies and guidelines of the Norwegian government at the ministerial level and international guidelines. The chapter then examines where the Norwegian government's understanding, including the two institutions and companies, stand in current debates about the change away from CSR to CSV and how the actors understand responsible business. Afterwards, chapter five explores the motivations and critiques of changing understandings of responsible business. The discussion is based on data collected in interviews and documents to illuminate why and to what extent the informants' favor CSV to CSR in light of the academic debates. Finally, chapter six provides a conclusion and an outlook of where the understanding of responsible business stands and is heading in the debate by drawing on the core arguments of this research.

2. Conceptual Framework

In the discourse regarding the relationships between society and business, the role of business has come a long way. Many attempts have been made to define the relationship and acknowledge that the two are closely intertwined (Brammer et al., 2012; Falck & Heblich, 2007; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Finding a connection between society and business, which contributes to economic, social, and environmental well-being, is crucial to achieving worldwide for a sustainable future (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

This chapter first presents the origin and development of the concept of CSR. Afterwards, this chapter emphasizes the core elements and multifaceted nature of CSR to understand past and current perceptions of the concept. Then, this chapter highlights critiques of a Western-centric focus on CSR and the complexities and criticisms that arise in theoretical and practical attempts to understand and address CSR. This chapter then briefly presents a new evolving South-Centered research agenda. After that, the chapter presents the change towards the CSV concept as a newer understanding of responsible business by explaining the theoretical elements and critiques. The chapter concludes with a summary.

2.1. The Evolution and Definitions of CSR

CSR is a widely used and discussed concept in the debate on business and society (Bair & Palpacuer, 2015; Gjølborg, 2010; Sarkar & Searcy, 2016). The idea can be traced back to an American management concept (Gjølborg, 2010), and its importance first gained attention worldwide in the 1950s when attention was drawn to environmental issues, human rights, and sustainable development (Sarkar & Searcy, 2016). It gained even more attention in the 1990s in response to the *anti-sweatshop activism*s that addressed child labor, abusive working conditions, and scandals in factories in the Global South (Anner, 2012). In practice, CSR includes, for example, a set of private standards and codes of conduct that are meant to contribute to more socially and environmentally sustainable development (Dartey-Baah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2011). Codes of conduct are standards or regulations mainly imposed by the buyer on the producer, which, for example, refer to health and safety regulations (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011).

The foundations of CSR understanding were laid down by Bowen (1953, p. 6), who describes CSR as “*the obligations of businessmen to pursue those politics, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of actions which are desirable in terms of the objectives and*

values of society". Since these first attempts to define CSR, the debates have constantly been adjusting.

One of many attempts to explain CSR comes from Blowfield and Frynas (2005). They refer to CSR as *culture*, an *alternative to government*, and an *umbrella term*. CSR as a culture focuses on cultural roots, and CSR as an alternative to governmental intervention reflects the voluntary nature (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005). Lastly, interpreting CSR as an *umbrella term* offers the possibility of being applied in different contexts, including various theories and practices, and offers the opportunity to be used from different perspectives and understandings. The umbrella term encompasses three main aspects:

"(a) Companies have a responsibility for their impact on society and the natural environment, sometimes beyond legal compliance and the liability of individuals; (b) That companies have a responsibility for the behaviour of others with whom they do business (e.g., within supply chains); (c) Business needs to manage its relationship with wider society be that for reasons of commercial viability or to add value to society"(Blowfield & Frynas, 2005, p. 503).

In addition to Blowfield and Frynas (2005) definition of CSR, Jamali and Neville (2011) and Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011) point to a slightly different explanation from a Global South perspective. CSR is understood by Jamali and Neville (2011) and Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011) as the obligation of businesses and firms to use their resources voluntarily in a way that balances economic, environmental, and social needs.

The European Commission (2019, p. 3) previously defined CSR as *"the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society"*, whereby companies should *"integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy"*. The Commission addresses its definition with the so-called Responsible Business Conduct, a strategy from the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) referring to the positive economic, environmental, and social contributions of companies (European Commission, 2019; OECD, 2011).

No internationally accepted definition has been agreed upon, and varying explanations are used under different circumstances and local contexts. The explanations presented show that scholars, policymakers, and other stakeholders have numerous perceptions of CSR. How definitions are framed, also in wording, is critical and can influence how CSR is understood and perceived globally (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005). Consequently, the concept is anything but neutral (Gjølberg, 2010).

Certain core aspects have remained the same over the last decades and can serve as the basis for understanding CSR. Sarkar and Searcy (2016) analyze 110 definitions of CSR in their study and demonstrate how the concept has changed and adjusted its meaning, centrality, and themes since the 1950s. The findings suggest that six elements remain central to the concept (Sarkar & Searcy, 2016).

Firstly, the economic dimension (1) refers to the “*economic responsibility, law abidance, business strategies and firm ownership*” (Sarkar & Searcy, 2016, p. 1431) that companies must fulfill to maximize shareholder returns. Due to the economic goal of corporations to maximize profits, the economic dimension must be included in the understanding of CSR. Moreover, social elements (2) have been crucial since the beginning. The basic idea of CSR lies in the responsibility of businesses to act socially and pay attention to incorporating benefits for society (Sarkar & Searcy, 2016). Moreover, the stakeholder element (3) and the voluntary nature of CSR (4) are crucial. Whereas the stakeholder dimension refers to groups that affect or are affected by companies, voluntariness draws attention to the non-legally binding idea behind CSR (Sarkar & Searcy, 2016). In addition to these four elements, exact ethical aspects (5) remain unclear and broad but crucial to CSR (Sarkar & Searcy, 2016). Finally, sustainability (6) is receiving growing attention worldwide and has influenced the concept by referring to environmental aspects (Nieuwenkamp, 2016; Sarkar & Searcy, 2016).

2.1.1. The Multifaceted Nature of CSR

After much research and a lack of clarity on a universal definition of CSR and what the concept means, there is still no consensus, resulting in issues in implementation, success, and reporting strategies (Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016). Major challenges in applying CSR and related concepts arise from definitional challenges and its use in combination or interchangeably with other terms (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016). Emerging terms and strategies in the debate include corporate responsibility, Responsible Business Conduct, Environment, Social and Governance (ESG), responsible investment or sustainability (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016; Strand et al., 2015). The blending of these terms can lead to confusion, misuse, and no clear boundaries, which contributes to the flexibility and broadness of CSR and responsible business understanding (Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011).

In the debate on whether CSR should be defined, Sarkar and Searcy (2016) accuse the concept of being meaningless because there is no agreed-upon basis or universal definition. They argue for further studies on a universally accepted definition, which they believe could contribute to a sustainable future of CSR. However, other scholars, such as Brammer et al. (2012, p. 21), state that *“the historical and political nature of institutions suggests that a universally valid definition of CSR is not only unlikely but, in some ways, not even desirable”*. The definition should remain broad enough to accommodate different variations, conditions, and outcomes since local factors, different cultural, environmental conditions, and legal frameworks lead to inconsistent understanding and operationalizations (Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011)

According to Nieuwenkamp (2016), several aspects besides the definitional challenges lead the debates about newer concepts and referring to CSR as outdated. CSR is now usually associated with philanthropy and volunteer work instead of focusing on long-term sustainable development (Nieuwenkamp, 2016). Furthermore, critiques describe that CSR has not brought the desired change. Nieuwenkamp (2016) states that CSR is often used as a PR tool to create an illusion of responsibility. Some scholars also see issues in the management and business focus of the concept (Brammer et al., 2012; Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016). The management and business focus of CSR, for example, the creation of codes of conduct, is necessary due to the nature of businesses as economic actors on the one hand. On the other hand, CSR is criticized for not including social and institutional aspects enough and only treating them as external requirements (Brammer et al., 2012). The business-centered focus complicates the concept, and issues arise when translating the goals and guidelines into policies that contribute positively to societies and the environment (Brammer et al., 2012). The debate that businesses need to take social and environmental concerns seriously builds the base of CSR and, therefore, should receive more attention. These are just some critiques that have led to a negative connotation of CSR.

Overall, CSR remains a contested and controversial concept – theoretically and practically (Brammer et al., 2012; Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016). Limitations of the CSR concept also remain when discussing who and what is possibly overlooked (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005). This is relevant when applying the concept in societies that do not share Western culture and societal norms. Other cultures and societies may understand CSR differently than intended by scholars or policymakers.

2.1.2. Towards a New South-Centered Agenda

Alongside a recent focus on the evolution away from CSR, attention is also shifting to how responsible business is practiced and perceived in countries of the Global South and how it can contribute to socio-economic development (Almatrooshi et al., 2018; Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016; Inekwe et al., 2021). Further research is needed on the relationship and interests between responsible business, its perceptions outside of the Western world, and the promotion and implementation processes which are mainly generated by Western criteria (Almatrooshi et al., 2018; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011; Strand et al., 2015).

CSR particularly shows weakness when meeting development goals due to the fuzzy and broad explanation, the origin in Western cultures, and how it is perceived and operationalized worldwide (Blowfield & Frynas, 2005; Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016). These differences lie, for instance, in the fact that CSR in the Global South is not as embedded in corporate strategies as in the Global North. It is further described as less formalized and politically rooted than most Western countries (Jamali & Neville, 2011).

To further understand the strengths and weaknesses of CSR and new concepts, scholars such as Adanhounme (2011) and Khan and Lund-Thomsen (2011) refer to the concept of imperialism as standing in the way of successfully addressing responsible business. The imperialistic character of CSR has its origins in the idea that the West is calling for sustainable development, and it reiterates a difference between the civilized (West) and the natives (Global South), according to Khan and Lund-Thomsen (2011). This is the context for referring to CSR as a new form of cultural and economic imperialism (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). Adanhounme (2011, p. 94) states that *“all that happened after post-colonial was that different actors revisited the colonial legacy and redefined their mission in terms of sustainable development”*.

Hereby, economic imperialism refers to the pressure to meet Western requirements, ideals, and standards through international market pressure and competition (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). Western collaborations are accused of misusing responsible business concepts as tools to generate an economic surplus by demanding high standards without adequate assistance (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011).

In addition, cultural imperialism may arise through the exposure and transferal of cultural and symbolic values, ideals, and norms by conceptualizing responsible business strategies that originated in the West (Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016; Dartey-Baah & Amponsah-

Tawiah, 2011; De Neve, 2009; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). The ideas of responsible business are criticized for often being implemented without considering local conditions and cultural norms, which can lead to dependencies and failure of improvement (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). De Neve (2009) also draws attention to establishing new social regimes of power and inequalities between individuals, companies, and states due to imposed standards and leverage from the West.

Overall, it is important to acknowledge that both the different interests of stakeholders and the Western origin of CSR initiatives strongly impact the understanding of responsible business approaches, particularly in the case of the Global South (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). Despite all theories, analyses, and definitions, it is evident that CSR does not precisely include how companies and people view, understand, and practice it differently worldwide (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). The concept is not neutral and comes with power differences and the spread of values (De Neve, 2009; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011).

As a result, a new South-Centered CSR research agenda is discussed to address some of the concept's shortcomings (Karam & Jamali, 2017; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). The CSR concept continues to need representative empirical studies with detailed descriptions of practices of CSR and data from the Global South to develop a new research agenda that is more responsive to local conditions and incorporates how best to understand responsible business practices (Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016; Inekwe et al., 2021; Jamali & Mirshak, 2007). Jamali and Mirshak (2007) emphasize the need for a better understanding and including national and international realities, conditions, and institutional dimensions when understanding how responsible business is understood and practiced in other countries than the ones in the West.

The discourse on Western legacies frames today's South-Centered CSR agenda. According to Karam and Jamali (2017), the new focus should discuss a more diverse typology of CSR and provide enough space for new forms and expressions.

2.2. A Change from CSR to CSV

For decades, CSR was seen as having great potential. This view has morphed into recent attempts to label CSR as outdated (Nieuwenkamp, 2016). Out of the many critiques, Creating Shared Value (CSV) presents a new concept for business, society, and the environment and is described by the inventors as holding *“the key to unlocking the next wave of business innovation and growth”* (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 17).

Porter and Kramer (2011, p. 6) define CSV as *“policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates”*. At the core of CSV lie societal and environmental issues that serve as drivers for profitable shared-value business (Hoek, 2020). Figure 1 shows that internal and external aspects, such as the state and national factors, industry, and individual factors, influence the CSV strategy. For Porter and Kramer (2011), CSV is not about philanthropy, sustainability, or social responsibility anymore but a new way of economic success. The concept supports the idea of simultaneously positive impact (value creation) for all parties involved. Hereby the value is not *“shared”* but expanded to all factors involved (Hoek, 2020; Porter & Kramer, 2011). This situation can be achieved when companies succeed financially and competitively while positively contributing to society and the environment (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

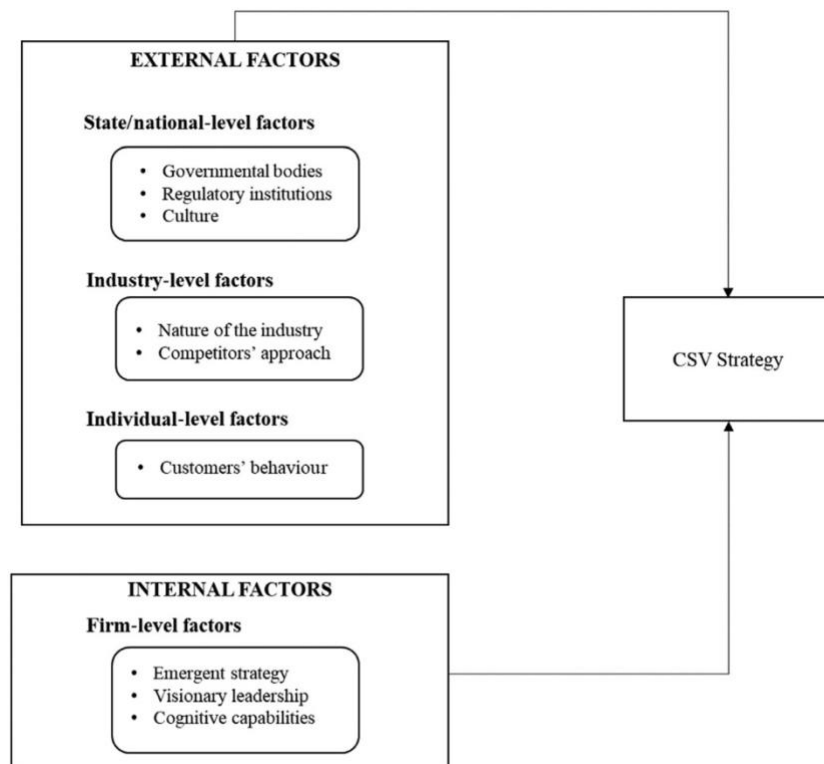


Figure 1: External and Internal Factors Influencing CSV (Menghwar & Daood, 2021, p. 479)

Companies can create shared value in three ways. Firstly, by reorganizing products and markets in line with societal needs. This first way refers to creating new products and markets by companies questioning how their product is good for societal needs, e.g., health, housing, or nutrition (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Secondly, redefining productivity in the value chain by taking societal and environmental aspects as the point of departure of productivity. For instance, energy use, resource use, or distribution may support more productivity along the value chain (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Thirdly, by allowing new local clusters, e.g., Silicon Valley, to develop, the productivity and innovation of companies can improve (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

However, according to Porter and Kramer (2011), most companies remain with the idea of “*social responsibility*” as something at the periphery and not the core of the business. Therefore “*the purpose of the corporation must be redefined as creating shared value, not just profit per se*” (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 4). The concept of CSV is widespread and growing, and it is supposed to include the creation of new products, new needs, and, most crucial, a new way for value chains to be configured (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Furthermore, Porter and Kramer (2011) describe that implications for the companies to contribute to responsible business also count for the government’s policies and civil societies. Interdependence between public policies and the productivity and competitiveness of companies is highly relevant for companies’ success, and the active participation of governments is necessary (Almatrooshi et al., 2018; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Regulations and policies created by the government influence how CSV (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and also CSR (Almatrooshi et al., 2018) are understood and operationalized.

CSR research has already addressed several different roles of public policies and guidelines for addressing responsible business (Almatrooshi et al., 2018). Nevertheless, Porter and Kramer (2011) argue that they propose new regulations and policies which support and enhance goals towards shared values. Enhancing CSV regulations can be expressed very differently, but certain characteristics should be included. These refer to setting clear and measurable social goals, proposing performance standards (but leaving the method to achieve them to the companies), defining reflection periods, universal measurement and performance-reporting systems, and regulations that can be efficiently and timely reported (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Both concepts focus on a beneficial relationship between businesses and society (Lapiņa et al., 2012) but the clear differentiation between the two concepts remains debated. In contrast to CSR, pro-CSV scholars argue that CSV is not the same as CSR, but they might, however, overlap (Kramer, 2011). For example, CSV not only addresses societal needs and challenges but integrates them within the business model as profit maximization (see Table 1) (Porter & Kramer, 2011). As a result, societal and environmental challenges are an integral part of the profit and are company, sector, and market-specific (see Table 1) (Hoek, 2020). Pro-CSV scholars see the CSR impact as limited through an extra budget. CSV reorients the company’s budget, resulting in a distinction between CSR as a responsibility and CSV as creating value (Kramer, 2011). Lastly, the agenda in CSV is not determined through external factors or personal presence (Hoek, 2020) (see Table 1).

Table 1: CSR vs. CSV (Hoek, 2020)

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CSR	CREATING SHARED VALUE CSV
Addressing societal needs and challenges by giving back + doing no/less harm	Addressing societal needs and challenges with a business model
Doing good	Doing well by doing good
Discretionary or in response to external pressures, no relation with competitiveness	Integral to competing: propels competitive advantage in new, unlocked markets
Separate from profit maximizing, philanthropy	Integral to profit maximizing
Agenda determined by external factors and often personal or departments’ preference	Agenda company, sector and market specific
No real influence on innovation, other than incremental	Initiates radical innovation and incremental innovation at scale
Operational and tactical issue	Strategical priority, at the heart of business
Scalable, but from cost perspective	Scalable, with profit increasing
Seen as costs and legitimization of operations for investors	Seen as commercial opportunities for investors

Even though CSV is currently an influential concept, it is also criticized and controversial (Corazza et al., 2017; Strand et al., 2015), and the line between the two concepts remain unclear. Crane et al. (2014) argue that the idea itself is not original. In contrast, it is quite similar to the literature associated with the stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory describes that all company actors, individuals, and groups affected by the operations are necessary to consider for successful economic operations (Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016). CSR also refers to and discusses the stakeholder theory. A body of research has discussed who is affected by business operations and, therefore, also makes clear references to the stakeholder theory (Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016).

Additionally, the authors who first presented CSV, Porter and Kramer (2011), have been criticized for publishing the model for a business administrator and management audience by publishing it within the Harvard Business Review (Beschoner & Hajduk, 2015). CSV is accused of not revealing much new, remaining within a purely economic perspective (Beschoner & Hajduk, 2015), and ignoring the tensions between social and economic goals (Crane et al., 2014). Some scholars, such as Beschoner and Hajduk (2015), criticize the concept arguing that a new paradigmatic change requires more ideas. Crane et al. (2014) criticize that CSR is presented in the CSV concepts as too simplistic to make the CSV idea bigger. Therefore, Porter and Kramer are accused of describing CSR to suit their concept. Lastly, CSV remains also open enough to include a variety of frameworks and concepts and again stands as an umbrella concept (Crane et al., 2014), similar to critiques of CSR.

2.3. Summary

By presenting the evolution, elements, definitional challenges, and new research agenda of CSR, as well as the core elements and critiques of CSV, this chapter provides the theoretical framework for this study. The chapter demonstrates that responsible business understanding is complex. Whether a broad or more precise definition should be the goal remains debatable.

This study takes the broad definition of CSR, including the six core elements (see p. 7), as the point of departure to analyze where the Norwegian government's understanding is heading and why. The study acknowledges the multifaced nature of CSR and the limitations of the two concepts. CSV is seen in this study also as a broad umbrella concept. Its main difference from CSR is its description of taking social and environmental concerns into the overall business strategy.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents and reflects on the methodology choices throughout the research process of this study and describes how the research has been conducted. Firstly, the ontological and epistemological assumptions and the research strategy are elaborated on. The research is then positioned methodologically by outlining the research design and presenting the data collection and analysis strategy. The design and strategies chapters include a presentation of the techniques and approaches leading through the research. The chapter concludes with a critical reflection on the data collection, ethical considerations, analysis process, and data quality.

3.1. Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions and the Research Strategy

As presented in the introduction, the research aim is to explore *where the understanding of responsible business is heading in Norway. Why and to what extent does it imply a change from CSR to CSV?* To do so, the research is guided by two sub-questions to discuss the overall objective (see p. 3).

First of all, ontology seeks to understand how the social world exists (Blaikie, 2007). Ontological philosophical branches range from the idealist to the realist perspectives. The first one thinks of the social world as only consisting of thoughts, and the latter describes reality as independent of human actions and observations. Epistemology deals with how knowledge is produced (Blaikie, 2007). Hereby, assumptions span from knowledge production as only through senses versus the philosophical branch of humans having to make sense of their social world (Blaikie, 2007).

This study's ontological and epistemological point of departure lies in its aim to understand a *“product of the interpretations of social actors”* (Blaikie, 2007, p. 17). These interpretations refer to the understanding of responsible business as different concepts. The assumptions are therefore based on a *“material and socially constructed world within which everyday life occurs”* (Blaikie, 2007, p. 13). The research adopts a *social constructionism* view, where meaning and knowledge production is the product of actor's active contributions to making sense of their world (Blaikie, 2007). I believe that the individual actors involved drive the process of how responsible business is interpreted, understood, and addressed.

Aiming to uncover where responsible business understandings and concepts are heading, this research follows an abductive research strategy. The abductive research strategy intends to “*understand social life in terms of social actors’ motives and understanding*” (Blaikie, 2007, p. 68). Consequently, this research strategy contributes to the study’s aim of analyzing the understandings, motives, and critiques of the various actors involved in the change by taking the actor’s views as the starting point.

3.2. Research Design

The following presents the research design and strategy to understand how this study, its findings, and its analysis came to be. As the study aims to understand social interactions, this study is based on a qualitative method. Social interactions are one of the core goals of qualitative research (Ragin & Amoroso, 2019). Therefore, this method supports the aim of the research to understand human interactions and understandings of concepts in real-life. A qualitative analysis is the most suitable choice by speaking with relevant actors and hearing about their understanding and experiences of working with responsible businesses and how a change away from CSR is occurring. It further supports understanding the topic from many different perspectives, such as advisers or governmental representatives. Discussing how actors understand and address responsible business supports the aim of examining existing theories and surrounding concepts of CSR and CSV in specific cases.

The research uses *oral and textual qualitative* data. The *oral data* is crucial for the voices of individuals (Winchester & Rofe, 2016), and the *textual data* is important to investigate the focus of governmental institutions, international regulations, and companies’ strategies and how they approach responsible business and represent themselves. Institutions, governmental organizations, and companies publish numerous documents, such as white papers, regulations, or reports. In addition to individual experiences, the document analysis offers a rich data set.

Case studies generally offer the opportunity to investigate a case in-depth with all its nuances and influences and support understanding a broader societal issue (Vennesson, 2008). According to Yin (2009, p. 4), the case study method opens up to investigate “*holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events*”. Therefore, case studies suit this research to analyze how concepts reflect in real-life understandings.

This study is divided into four selected cases within one overall case. The subcases are analyzed in-depth by dividing the larger phenomenon of how the Norwegian government understands and addresses responsible business into smaller units. This strategy supports the aim of examining a larger phenomenon (understanding responsible business), by including different in-depth studies (Mills et al., 2010). The sampling of cases was guided by criteria sampling, which is the process of selecting cases that meet some criteria relevant to the research (Neuman, 2000; Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). These criteria included work with responsible business and a connection to the government. While all governmental institutions have different roles, all are expected to contribute to information sharing and competence building on responsible business (MFA, 2009). Since this study focuses on Norwegian institutions and companies operating abroad, Norfund, the Norwegian Investment Fund, and Innovation Norway, the government's instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises, are chosen for this study. Norfunds and Innovation Norway's main aim is to contribute to business and value growth as a primary goal. Norad, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, was not part of the oral data collection due to a limited research scope. Some references to Norad are made in this study, and Norad's understanding should also be analyzed in the future.

In addition to the two subcases of the institutions stated above, this study also includes cases of the companies GRAS and Yara. Both are connected to either the institutions or the government directly. This research design and the different cases help to gain insights into the overall debate of a changing conceptualization of responsible business understanding. Based on the findings, this study sheds light on why and to what extent the informants prefer CSV to CSR. Choosing four cases within the overall case of the Norwegian government shows what might also be the differences in different cases (Mills et al., 2010). This refers to the differences in the institutions' and companies' aims, which reflects how responsible business is understood.

Generalizing the findings of this study is not the aim. Cases within a case study can be generalized on an analytical level (Yin, 2009), and therefore, how responsible business is understood and where the understanding of it is heading can later help to "*expand and generalize theories*" (Yin, 2009, p. 15).

The site (geographical location) of Norway and East Africa were chosen out of my academic and personal focus prior to selecting the exact cases. My academic interests lie in a

specialization in African Studies, Business, and Human Rights, and also generally in traveling in the areas. The exact cases developed and emerged during the research period through extensive reading and initial interviews with informants.

At the outset of this study, imperialistic tendencies, and motives, as an aspect of CSR and in connection with CSV, were one of the focus areas. However, it soon presented itself to be difficult to gather enough data without conducting fieldwork on-site in East Africa or reaching informants. The planned fieldwork was not advised due to the outbreak of the global covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, which resulted in a more Norwegian-focused study. Developing the cases during the research process allowed the study to remain open enough for new input and adjustments while constantly narrowing down the research questions and exact topic.

3.3. Data Collection Strategy

The empirical data collection strategy is guided by a triangulation strategy, which means including multiple sources and strategies for collecting qualitative data (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). In this study, *oral* and *textual data* are included. Following and applying not just one data collection strategy offers several advantages. For instance, crosschecking data from interviews with publicly available documents helps to ensure rigor and credibility and reduces the risk of bias (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). Furthermore, combining different data sources is useful when identifying patterns, themes, and relations (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). In this study, the four cases and multiple data sources support gaining an in-depth overview of where the understanding of responsible business in the Norwegian context is heading and why.

Due to the ongoing covid-19 pandemic and its uncertainties, most data collection was conducted digitally via Zoom and Teams. The digitalization of data collection can bring opportunities and challenges (Thunberg & Arnell, 2021). According to Dunn (2016), the relationship between the interviewer and the informants is critical for data collection. On the one hand, many informants could be reached, and it was easier to make appointments. On the other hand, the relationships between the interviewer and informant, expressions, and gestures need to be critically analyzed since they differ in the online format due to the physical distance between the researcher and the participant (Dunn, 2016; Thunberg & Arnell, 2021). The online format furthermore led to limitations since I could not see the informants in their social environment or meet them in person. These limitations might affect the data since the body language and interactions cannot be analyzed as in real life (Thunberg & Arnell, 2021).

This might also result in issues such as less trust and misinterpretation of expressions or gestures. The topic of this study is not strongly related to personal issues, and therefore the data is not significantly influenced by such digitalization issues. Furthermore, each participant was asked to turn on their camera for a more personal interview to deal with this issue. Overall, the digital format was applied as best and most suitable as possible for all informants to receive quality data.

3.3.1. Sampling Informants and Conducting Interviews

Interviews provide insights into societal structures, behaviors, and motivation (Dunn, 2016). Consequently, this type of data offers understanding and insights into informants' perspectives of the topic. Selecting participants for this research is known as sampling, where the participants can be understood as a sample. A sample means to divide a large case into smaller selected units or cases (Neuman, 2000). Sampling for research participants began with reaching out to the most relevant actors in the institutions, such as Norfund's CSR specialists, Innovations Norway's CSR specialists, the relevant Ministries, and the OECD National Contact Point (NCP). All of them were chosen by applying the criterion sampling strategy. The main criterion for the sampling was that the informants were involved with the government's approach to addressing responsible business. Most informants work directly with responsible business and hold a director, advisor, or other representative position (see Table 2, p. 20). Some informants, such as Mwakipesile and Næss, do not work in-depth with the concepts, which reflects in the data. Most informants addressed and spoke positively about their work since they are, in a way, representatives of the institutions. This way of speaking about responsible business influenced how they addressed the topic.

In addition to the offices in Oslo, the office of Innovation Norway in East Africa also replied welcoming. However, the office of Norfund in East Africa declined the request for an interview. From there on, the sampling for informants also followed a snowball sampling strategy. This strategy refers to the network or connections between the informants (Neuman, 2000), and it makes it easier to be referred to others when already having earned the trust of some of the informants (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016). Hereby, I selected two companies, GRAS and Yara since they had been referred to me by other informants and suggested as relevant. Both companies suit the research since they have a long history of operating in East Africa and are closely connected to Norwegian institutions and the government. GRAS is a

wood processing company that receives investment from Norfund, and Yara is a fertilizer company that has already been mentioned in white papers by the Norwegian government as an example of governmental ownership and its expectations (MFA, 2009). Even though the companies differ in sectors and ownership, they serve well as cases for examining possible changes in responsible business understanding in combination with the institutions' analysis.

Table 2: Conducted Interviews

Name	Date, Place	Position
1. Hans Lemm	16.02.22, Zoom	Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Green Resources AS
2. Ellen Catherine Rasmussen	28.02.22, Zoom	Executive Vice President (EVP) Green Infrastructure and Scalable Enterprises, Norfund
3. Cathrine Halsaa	03.03.22, Zoom	The Head of Secretariat of the OECD National Contact Point (NCP)
4. Øystein Botillen	10.03.22, Teams	Stakeholder Relations and Business Development Manager, Yara
5. Simen Høy Dypvik	25.03.22, Office in Oslo	Advisor, Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI)
6. Arnfinn Lundberg Bakke and Tron Andres Svanes	31.03.22, Zoom	Arnfinn Lundberg Bakke: Programme Officer Corporate Responsibility at Innovation Norway Tron Andres Svanes: Senior Advisor and Programme Manager Enterprise Development for Jobs
7. Eli Bleie Munkelien	01.04.22, Zoom	Director, East-Africa and Commercial Counsellor at the Norwegian Embassy, Kenia, Innovation Norway
8. Kristin Imafidon	29.04.22, Zoom	Environmental and Social Advisor, Norfund
9. Philipo Mwakipesile	05.05.22, Zoom	Commercial Manager Tanzania, Yara
10. Kjersti Blauenfeldt Næss	24.05.22, Zoom	Project Manager, NABA

Through the snowball strategy, two additional informants from relevant organizations matching the criteria were included as supplementary data: the Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) and the Norwegian-African Business Association (NABA) (see Table 2). The Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) is an alliance of companies, trade unions, and NGOs that address workers' rights worldwide (ETI, 2022). The initiative works with other institutions to offer seminars for companies on responsible business. NABA is an organization that works with companies to explore business opportunities in Africa (NABA, 2022). NABA aims at two objectives: to bridge

experiences about African markets and to bridge knowledge about emerging markets. Norfund, Innovation Norway, and Yara are members or on the board of NABA (NABA, 2022).

All interview contacts were reached via e-mail, including an information letter. At the end of each interview, I deliberately asked about other relevant informants that could be willing to contribute to the research. This strategy offered more informants to choose between and better access to the field. The inclusion of actors from different positions supports the overall goal of understanding the topic from different levels and angles.

In total, I carried out eleven semi-structured interviews between February 16th and May 24th, 2022 (see Table 2). Apart from one, all other interviews were conducted online via Zoom or Teams and in compliance with UiOs guidelines on data storage and security (UiO, 2018). UiOs guidelines describe how to store and process information with the participant's consent. The collected data involves personal identification data; therefore, in January 2022, the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) approved the research. The participants were informed about their subject data rights and what would be done with the collected data by receiving an information letter about the principles of confidentiality and security. The recordings of the interviews were stored on a safe and password-protected device. The informants agreed that their names could be used in this study. While most informants speak for themselves and not the institution, the interview data offers a rich data set on the individual opinion of responsible business. The individual opinion-based data on how the informants understand and address responsible business while working in the institutions and companies supports the aim of this study to gain an overview of how CSR and CSV are understood and addressed.

Before each interview, a semi-structured interview guide was prepared, one for the institutions and one for the companies, and sent to the informants to prepare (see Appendix A and B). The guides are based on the theoretical and case-focused aspects by focusing on understanding responsible business, CSR, and CSV. The semi-structured guides lead through the conversations by allowing the informants and myself to adjust questions and topics according to the conversations. As a result, a certain degree of control and flexibility was given. The questions followed a pyramid structure, starting with general questions at the beginning and finishing with more abstract questions (see Appendix A and B). By applying this strategy, the informants got used to the interview situation at the beginning, and once it was appropriate, more critical questions were asked. This approach supports establishing rapport

and improves the quality of the data (Dunn, 2016). All interviews were conducted in English, recorded through UiO Nettskjema-Diktafon App, transcribed, and written up with the Express Scribe program. Transcribing the interview helps to correctly remember and cite the statements (Dunn, 2016). I informed all informants about the recording and deleting of the recordings and transcription once the study is finished.

The interviews provide the foundation for the opinion-based perspectives in this study about how responsible business is understood and addressed at different levels, from Norwegian governmental institutions to representatives and directors in companies.

3.3.2. Document Analysis

Analyzing publicly available documentation enriched the data because documents represent, modify, and transform social realities (Asdal, 2015). As a result, documents are crucial when investigating how concepts, such as CSR and CSV, are understood and addressed worldwide because mainly scholars and policymakers create these documents that define responsible business understandings and strategies. According to Asdal (2015) and Hilgartner (2000), documents are closely connected with society and play a crucial role in everyday life.

How the Norwegian government writes and defines guidelines and policies influences practices in real life. A practice-oriented form of analyzing the documents suits the purpose of the research. This form acknowledges how language in documents may impact the outcomes in the real world (Asdal, 2015) and therefore supports the discussion of responsible business approaches.

Part of the data used in the analysis is based on official governmental and institutional documents, policies, and the company's publicly available documents. This study mainly focuses on two publications by international organizations, which serve internationally as broad guidelines for governments and companies to incorporate responsible business.

1. United Nations. (2011). *United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework.*
2. OECD. (2011). *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.*

In addition, governmental publications elaborate on responsible business in Norway:

1. MFA. (2009). *Meld. St. 10 to the Storting (2008-2009). Corporate Social Responsibility in a Global Economy.*

2. MFA. (2014). *Meld. St. 10 to the Storting (2014–2015). Opportunities for All: Human Rights in Norway's Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation*
3. MFA. (2015). *Business and Human Rights. National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles.*
4. MFA. (2016). *Norway's follow-up of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.*

To ensure reliability, it is important to question the authorship of the papers and what their motivations might be. Critical thinking should guide the discussion and analysis of the documents (Hilgartner, 2000). I acknowledge that the international guidelines serve as broad guidelines and the white papers by the government serve as a first step to discussing what the Norwegian government refers to in its understanding. Analyzing institutions' and companies' documents and websites offers insights into how the actors like to see their impact and how they like to represent themselves to the public.

3.4. Data Analysis Strategy

To analyze the collected data, I applied different strategies for organizing and analyzing the data. First, when making sense of the collected data, process tracing was applied as a tool to identify connections between processes, other interactions, and their outcome (George & Bennett, 2005; Vennesson, 2008). Vennesson (2008, p. 224) explains process tracing as a “*procedure that is designed to identify processes linking a set of initial conditions to a particular outcome*”. It supports advancing knowledge and theory of social phenomena while explaining a situation or an outcome that can contain numerous explanations (George & Bennett, 2005). The reason for choosing process tracing lies in its focus on analyzing underlying interactions and processes of CSR and CSV understandings.

The analysis process has been interactive by moving back and forth between theory and data to discuss how CSR and CSV are understood and the change of concepts. Hereby, *coding* presents the initial steps of making sense of the collected data (Cope, 2016). Saldaña (2009) explains that codes are terms or short sentences which capture certain characteristics or attributes. Coding as a tool is helpful in adding value to the data (Cope, 2016; Saldaña, 2009). By choosing descriptive and analytic codes, a number of *themes* can be identified and emphasized (Cope, 2016). This strategy was enabled due to actively *writing memos* during the research process. I reflected on the conversation and what I had read. These memos strengthen the identification of *codes* and *themes* relevant to this research, the key analytical

points, and my thoughts. While *coding* and *memoing* already imply a certain positionality of myself, it enables a good start for the analysis as well as for comparing certain aspects of the topic from the documents with the interviews and for reflecting on the collected data (Cope, 2016; Saldaña, 2009).

Later, the coding system built the basis to identify core understandings and arguments. This interpretation follows the latent context analysis, which involves searching for codes that are not just words but include the same or similar meaning (Dunn, 2016). I used the computer program Nvivo12 to underline the arguments and themes with different colors and notes for structuring and understanding the data. Nvivo12 serves hereby as the “*computer-aided qualitative analysis software*”, as described by Cope (2016). I also created a code tree with different sections for the research questions, connected themes, and used them throughout the discussion. This strategy allowed me to structure the data, and it was easier to analyze patterns, similar ideas, arguments, and additional comments and connect them to the theoretical foundation.

3.5. Ethical Challenges and Cross-Cutting Issues

Qualitative research involves individual interpretations, relationships, and experiences. Hereby, different ethical and cross-cutting issues arise (Dowling, 2016). In this subsection, I reflect on how I dealt with these issues during the research process.

Practical and ethical considerations are the first issues to consider when conducting research of all kinds. While practical issues, such as internet connections and language differences, occur, these challenges did not significantly influence this study. Most informants were located within Norway and spoke English well, and the relevant documents are all available in English.

Moreover, ethical considerations may affect the quality of the data. Ethics refers to the researcher’s responsibility for the participants because participation can impact people directly or indirectly (Dowling, 2016). During the interviews, I paid attention to ensuring that the informants always felt comfortable, including storing all data with consent, secure, and confidential. The fact that every individual was speaking for themselves and not for the whole company or institution is considered in the analysis, and before publishing this study, the informants reviewed and agreed to their references.

All informants are currently employed within either governmental institutions or bigger cooperation, whereas my position is the one of a student. All informants were welcoming and friendly, but my position as a student speaking to established professionals brings a certain power asymmetry. This asymmetry, however, did not significantly affect the data. Furthermore, it is crucial that all informants represent an institution or company; therefore, it lies in their nature to address the work they carry out mainly positively. By applying a critical reflexivity strategy, an evaluating who said what for which reasons and how some statements reflect on the findings (Dowling, 2016) was adopted.

Another aspect that affects the findings is the uneven distribution of nationalities of the informants and its impact on the results. Only two informants were of non-Norwegian nationality, which reflects a Western-centric understanding. Therefore, future research can investigate this topic from a Global South perspective to gain more insights into how responsible business is understood and perceived in different parts of the world.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, the role of the researcher within the research design and data collection affects the findings and analysis (Dowling, 2016; Ragin & Amoroso, 2019). Keeping complete neutrality is impossible within qualitative methods because the data collection and the findings are highly influenced by the researcher's subjectivity and positionality – personal opinions and characteristics (Dowling, 2016). In this study, it is important to point out that I come from Germany and, therefore, I have a similar, but not the same cultural background as the Norwegian informants. As a foreigner in Norway, all informants were open to elaborating and promoting their work to me. Most of the Norwegian informants used the opportunity to explain in-depth Norwegian structures and promote how successful their impact is. The two non-Norwegian informants were also open but criticized some responsible business approaches and asked for more information from my side. To ensure rigor and credibility, I was aware of my positionality within the research and tried to be transparent about it during the data collection process and analysis. Again, *“critical reflexivity is the most appropriate strategy for dealing with issues of subjectivity and intersubjectivity”* (Dowling, 2016, p. 39). In addition, the checking procedure in terms of the triangulation method, using multiple methods, theories, and sources, helps this study to deal with subjectivity and positionality and memoing to improve rigor. Regular check-ins with the research community also ensured transparent debates about subjectivity effects.

While conducting this research, it is hard to categorize my position as an insider or outsider. In this study, my positionality is mainly as one of an *outsider*. I had no direct relationship with the cases or the informants beforehand. This partly resulted in opportunities to ask questions outside what might have been considered interesting or appropriate to an insider, such as asking basic and sometimes provocative questions concerning the imperialism characteristics. However, challenges such as less trust-building with the participants and potentially less access may have occurred. A slight *insider* position can also be referred to because I have in-depth academic knowledge about the concepts and have previously worked with CSR in development cooperation in Germany.

3.6. Summary

This chapter outlines the main characteristics and reflections of the methodological choices of this study, including the research design, the data collection, the analysis strategy, and ethical considerations. A particular emphasis lies on the reasons for choosing qualitative cases within a case study, as well as the methods and ethical considerations experienced throughout the research process. The research design and strategy are kept as open, accessible, and transparent as possible. Throughout the research, I strived to ensure rigor and trustworthiness by applying critical reflexivity and the triangulation method. Additionally, I critically reflect upon studying the cases from a distance, combined with other challenges, such as being an outsider and occurring power asymmetries.

Overall, while there are limitations, particularly in the digitalization of the research and access to the field, the collected data, through interviews and documents, support examining and discussing the research questions.

4. Understanding and Addressing Responsible Business

Regarding the first sub-research question of how Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara understand responsible business, this chapter first briefly delves into the background of the centrality and evolution of the Norwegian government's strategy addressing responsible business since 2009. It provides a background for understanding how responsible business has changed in the previous years and how it is addressed to the institutions and the two sample companies. The background makes it possible to analyze the Norwegian government's approach and where it stands in addressing responsible business. The chapter then discusses how Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara understand responsible business concepts in their operations and how it reflects in the way they address it.

4.1. The Norwegian Government's Attempts to Address Responsible Business

Decoupling institutional structures from cultural contexts is impossible because responsible business is not neutral (Gjøølberg, 2010; Strand et al., 2015). Therefore, it is necessary to shed light on the background of who addresses responsible business and where it is supposed to have a positive impact (Ditlev-Simonsen et al., 2015; Gjøølberg, 2010; Strand et al., 2015). Strand et al. (2015) emphasize that existing norms, political and economic institutions affect the interpretation and use of CSR, which can be expanded to CSV.

Scandinavia, referring to Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, has a long history of working with CSR policies (Ditlev-Simonsen et al., 2015; Gjøølberg, 2010; Strand et al., 2015). In Norway, CSR has largely been driven by the government, which has been actively involved since early on, with high ambitions and expectations for companies to act abroad as they do at home in Norway (Ditlev-Simonsen et al., 2015).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) published the first white paper focusing on "*CSR in a Global Economy*" in 2009. The white paper states that the Norwegian state will proactively strengthen guidelines and create a binding framework for companies and institutions (MFA, 2009). Furthermore, the government expresses its expectations that (i) human rights have to be respected, (ii) core labour standards and decent working conditions have to be ensured, as well as (iii) considering environmental concerns and combating corruption within business activities. Lastly, the strategy attempts to maximize transparency (MFA, 2009). Besides the MFA, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Fishery is the most relevant ministry to work with responsible business promotion (MFA, 2009).

After the first white paper addressing CSR, others were published and adjusted in accordance with global debates. Highly important for this research is the latest white paper on *“Opportunities for all: Human Rights in Norway’s Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation”* (MFA, 2014). The white paper presents the core for the National Action Plan (NAP) on *“Business and Human Rights. National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles”* (MFA, 2015) and the *“Follow-up on Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals”* (MFA, 2016). The letter describes Norway’s approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The NAP presents an updated version of the first CSR white paper and aims to achieve a coherent policy to implement the United National Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) (MFA, 2015).

The UNGPs are internationally accepted guidelines for states and businesses to implement the United Nations framework to protect, respect, and offer access to remedy (UN, 2011, p. iv). In this study, they can be understood as a strategy to address responsible business. Focus areas of the NAP include the expectations of businesses and providing an overview of the global framework of CSR in combination with the UNGPs (MFA, 2015). The UNGPs set out three pillars, which are elaborated on in the NAP. Pillar I describes in the NAP the state’s duty to protect human rights, as a legislator and advisor for supporting businesses (MFA, 2015). Pillar II refers to the government's guidance for businesses and expectations to respect human rights. The government sets out that all companies follow the rules and regulations of the country where the business operates, inform themselves about the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) and make use of them, exercise due diligence, assess risks, and apply the comply or explain principle (MFA, 2015, p. 30). Lastly, remedies need to be enacted for harms resulting from operations, as described in pillar III of the NAP (MFA, 2015). The draft of the NAP was coordinated by the MFA, with the contribution of inter-ministerial groups, civil society, businesses, and other representatives, and KOMPakt (the government consultative body for CSR) (MFA, 2015).

Moreover, the NAP references the OECD Guidelines for MNEs, which Norway aligns with. The OECD Guidelines are the only multilaterally agreed upon standards and recommendations to MNEs by governments (OECD, 2011). Besides the UNGPs, they are guidelines for understanding how responsible business can be addressed and implemented (Ditlev-Simonsen et al., 2015). The guidelines were last revised in 2011 and include non-binding principles and internationally recognized standards. They consist of two parts, where

the first explains the approach of responsible business conduct in a global context, and the second part describes the implementation procedures (OECD, 2011).

The UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines recommend the method of responsible business conduct to all governments and companies to achieve responsible business. Responsible business conduct is an approach for companies to positively contribute to economic, environmental, and social progress while achieving sustainable development and avoiding and addressing adverse impacts (Nieuwenkamp, 2016). The strategy focuses on the internationally recognized due diligence method (Figure 2) and includes sectorial guidance for finance, conflict minerals, agriculture, garment, footwear, and the extractive sector (OECD, 2018). In 2015, the G7 decided that a common understanding of due diligence is necessary for successful guidance (OECD, 2018), and the debate resulted in an internationally recognized circle of due diligence (Figure 2). The cycle starts with embedding responsible business into policies and management systems. Secondly, actual and potential adverse impacts need to be identified, followed by ceasing, preventing, and mitigating these impacts. The fourth and fifth step consists of the follow-up of the implementations and results, as well as communication about how issues are addressed (OECD, 2018).

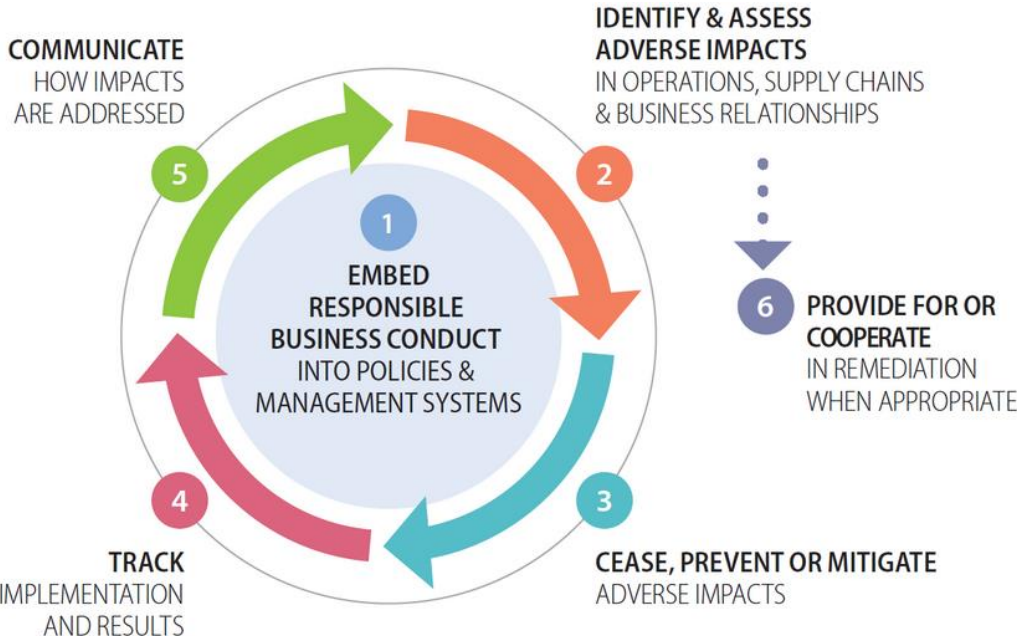


Figure 2: Due Diligence Cycle (OECD, 2018, p. 21)

In Norway, the Norwegian OECD National Contact Point (NCP) contributes to the strategy of the government and institutions to create a framework for responsible business. It is an agency established by the OECD member states to promote, implement, and assist

governments, enterprises, and stakeholders with the OECD Guidelines and arising issues (OECD, 2011). In Norway, the NCP is an independent expert advisory body and is placed within the MFA with its own budget. It consists of four experts named by the MFA and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fishery based on the recommendations of businesses, trade unions, and civil society organizations recommendations (Halsaa, Zoom, 03.03.22). Its main objective is to make the guidelines more known and available and to raise awareness through events, training, tools, remedy access, and a platform for dialogue. Additionally, in Norway, the NCP handles specific instances and complaints and promotes international cooperation.

Lastly, potential is also seen in responsible business as a hard law in order for businesses to act more responsibly along their value chains (Almatrooshi et al., 2018). Countries such as Germany and Norway have adopted laws mandating human rights and decent work due diligence (Krajewski et al., 2021). In June 2022, the Norwegian parliament passed the *Transparency Act* (Norwegian Ethics Information Committee, 2019). The Act requires companies with at least 50 full-time employees residing in Norway and operating in or outside of Norway to identify, assess, prevent, and limit risks and violations in their supply chains and report on the data in line with the OECD Guidelines (Krajewski et al., 2021). The NCP was closely integrated into developing this new law (Norwegian Ethics Information Committee, 2019). The *Transparency Act* forces around 8,830 companies to know their value chain in-depth and to conduct regular risk assessments (Krajewski et al., 2021).

4.2. The Governments Guidelines – From CSR to CSV?

As argued by Porter and Kramer (2011), to achieve a change from CSR to CSV, government regulations and policies should encourage institutions and companies to apply CSV. As presented, the Norwegian government has taken an active approach towards creating a responsible business framework and adjusting it over the last few years. The government acknowledges its crucial role and the necessity to have regulations and policies in place which elaborate on proposed guidelines and mechanisms (MFA, 2015). This approach fits both in a CSR and a CSV understanding since the concepts see the government as an important actor.

Many of the current relevant documents by the government, e.g., the white paper from 2014 (MFA, 2014), the NAP (MFA, 2015), and the follow-up of Agenda 2030 (MFA, 2016), continue to refer to CSR as the responsible business concept. The NAP defines CSR as “*the responsibility companies are expected to assume for people, society and the environment that*

are affected by their activities” (MFA, 2015, p. 14). This description fits into the broad CSR understanding and describes the importance of companies’ effect on people, society, and the environment. The government’s strategy can be explained by keeping the definitions of responsible business as broad as possible to accommodate different variations, conditions, and outcomes, as described by Brammer et al. (2012). However, besides CSR, value creation as such is starting to be mentioned in the documents too. The follow-up of Agenda 2030 refers to value creation in some paragraphs, e.g., *“All relevant authorities cooperated in developing the management plans as a framework for ensuring sustainable use and value creation”* (MFA, 2016, p. 25). Also, in some parts, the white paper from 2014 refers to value creation (MFA, 2014, p. 60). A clear definition and explanation of what value creation include is not yet provided by the government, and clear references to CSV cannot be found.

According to an evaluation by Norad in 2018 (Sundet et al., 2018) regarding the government’s approach and relevant institutions, strong references to the UNGPs in several Norwegian policy documents are identified, in addition to addressing the SDGs and OECD Guidelines (MFA, 2009, 2015). Promoting these guidelines, one may also expect that the government’s approach to responsible business will change in accordance with adjustments of these guidelines. This argument is supported by the close collaboration with the OECD NCP and the Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI). Both support spreading the message of the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines, which do not refer to CSR anymore (Dypvik, Oslo, 26.03.22; Halsaa, Zoom, 03.03.22). However, CSR remains present in some online representations of, for instance, the ETI (ETI, 2022). Nevertheless, how far the government’s approach is at the forefront of international debates remains unclear due to the open strategy.

Furthermore, Porter and Kramer (2011) put forward governmental regulations that can encourage companies to strive for shared value. These regulations may include setting clear and measurable social goals. Such clear goals are not fully referred to in the NAP (MFA, 2015). In the evaluation by Norad (Sundet et al., 2018), findings show that the government sets no clear guidance or exact expectations for the institutions. The NAP (MFA, 2015) describes its expectations in five main points (see MFA, 2015, p. 30). These points are kept open by explaining that companies should follow the rules, regulations, and responsible business conduct as the main strategy.

The guidelines by the government and, for instance, the knowledge-sharing tasks by organizations such as NABA can be expanded to other proposed regulations by Porter and Kramer (2011). Porter and Kramer (2011) emphasize that methods of implementing responsible business should be left to the institutions. In Norway, the ministries, institutions, and companies are independent in choosing their methods, and no clear periods or phases of reporting are defined. The NAP (MFA, 2015) and the follow-up of Agenda 2030 (MFA, 2016) do not provide any new means of supporting businesses to fulfill their responsibility. The government's strategy to address responsible business to the institutions, therefore, lacks a definite allocation of the responsibilities and structuring measurements, expectations, and a clear understanding of what responsible business should include, according to Sundet et al. (2018). In this context, Næss (Zoom, 24.05.22) explains that it is up to the companies which concepts are used or referred to in the work of the Norwegian-African Business Association (NABA). NABA expects its partnering companies and institutions, e.g., Norfund, Innovation Norway, and Yara, to follow internationally recognized guidelines but does not set clear expectations.

Lastly, the government has started to change from addressing responsible business from the voluntary nature reflected in CSR and CSV to making it more legally binding. The *Transparency Act* (Norwegian Ethics Information Committee, 2019) is a first step towards clear and legal regulations and goals. According to Sundet et al. (2018) how these regulations and principles are often implemented receives rather less attention. As a result, it may be expected that companies and institutions themselves approach responsible business as activities that exceed regulatory requirements, which again fits into both CSR and CSV.

Overall, the government does not yet put in place regulations that refer clearly to an understanding of CSV instead of CSR. Sundet et al. (2018) describe the responsible business strategy by the government as relatively thin and without specific commitment, which the government might intend. Consequently, the Norwegian government cannot yet stand as a clear guidance provider towards CSV, instead leaving it open to institutions and companies to decide which concept they align with.

4.3. Responsible Business Approaches by the Institutions

In addition to the framework and guidelines published by the government, Norwegian institutions are expected to follow and address responsible business in their operations. These institutions include, for instance, Norfund, Innovation Norway, Norway's embassies, and Norad. All are expected to contribute to information sharing and competence building on responsible business (MFA, 2009; Sundet et al., 2018). To gain a better overview of how responsible business is understood and addressed in the examined Norwegian cases, this chapter discusses how the two governmental institutions, Norfund and Innovation Norway understand responsible business and how it is reflected in the way they address it.

4.3.1. Norfund – The Responsible Investment Approach

Norfund is a governmental institution mandated by the MFA and represents the Norwegian government's Development Finance Institution (DFI) (MFA, 2009). Norfund invests in companies in the Global South and supports businesses that would otherwise not succeed or exist due to the high risks involved in certain markets (Sundet et al., 2018). The focus of Norfund lies in assisting in developing sustainable businesses and industries (Norfund, 1997a, 1997b). Norfund has been working with responsible business promotion for decades. The Norfund Act and Statues provide directions for Norfund's approach to investing responsibly (Norfund, 1997a, 1997b). As presented, the government leaves it up to the institutions to decide which understanding and strategy they apply to address responsible business concepts. This explains why, although the MFA mandates Norfund, the strategy of Norfund pursues its own requirements and reporting mechanism. Norfund tends to look towards internationally recognized standards and follows its own operation strategies due to the institution's main task of being an investment fund (Imafidon, Zoom, 01.04.22; Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). Norfund's investments occur in three different forms: equity, funds, and loans in different sectors (Norfund, 2020). The investment cycle includes several steps, from identification to due diligence, investments, and active ownership, to finally, the exit by Norfund (Norfund, 2022b). Norfund aims to mobilize capital and receive returns in connection with improvement effects (Norfund, 2022c).

Moreover, Norfund's role in addressing and implementing responsible business practices within its investments and companies is carried out through various entities, such as its positions on company boards to ensure that companies comply with regulations on

environmental and social standards (MFA, 2009). Again, due diligence plays a significant role for the institution. It is applied as the main method to identify and reduce the risks during the appraisal of new investments and the following up on developing an effective environment and social action plan (Norfund, 2022b). In collaboration with Norfund, the companies work out an environmental and social action plan, which sets targets and improvement actions to be implemented during the investment cycle (Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22.).

In addition, Norfund relies on the strategy of Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) (IFC, 2022a) to assess risk and the International Finance Corporation Performance Standards (IFC, 2022b; Norfund, 2020). ESG refers to a voluntary evaluation of a company's responsibility and provides a measurement of ethical performance (IFC, 2022a; Polley, 2022). Investment companies mainly use the strategy to assess performances and build a good reputation by evaluating, for instance, aspects such as climate change management, company cultural policy, or diversity and inclusion (Sandberg, 2022). As an investment institution, Norfund needs detailed figures to track the success and development of its investment and therefore refers to ESG (Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22).

The role of ESG in the debate between CSR and CSV remains unclear. Unlike CSR, ESG provides a clearer measurement of ethical performance. However, by some scholars, ESG is understood as a part of CSR, and the term is used in similar contexts because ESG can be described as part of CSR's intent on sustainability and ecological values (Sandberg, 2022). Consequently, ESG might stand as a quality assessment of companies' CSR performances (Sandberg, 2022). This may lead to confusion because Norfund does not refer to clear delimitations. The main difference between CSR and ESG is that CSR refers to self-regulation and rather non-measurable approaches by companies, while ESG offers comparable quantifiable data and accountability (Sandberg, 2022) and therefore explains Norfund's use of ESG and its ESG policy (Norfund, 2020). Other scholars point towards ESG as a strategy for enhancing the competitiveness of companies and taking societal and environmental needs at the core of business activities (Polley, 2022). Therefore, seeing ESG as enhancing competitiveness and taking societal and environmental needs as the point of departure can also be interpreted as a way to achieve CSV. Imafidon (Zoom, 29.04.22, 24:25 min.) supports this argument by emphasizing that *"ESG is not about the costs all right. Actually, it is an integral part of your business"*, which points towards a CSV instead of a CSR understanding. For her, CSR is more about charity (Imafidon, Zoom, 29.04.22). In addition, the IFC

Performance Standards (IFC, 2022b) are used in the finance sector industry to assess ESG performance. They include a set of standards covering aspects relating to environmental and social performances (Sundet et al., 2018). Lastly, Norfund acknowledges the UNGPs (UN, 2011) and refers to other international guidelines.

Norfund's Environmental and Social Advisor Kristin Imafidon (Zoom, 01.04.22) and Norfund's Executive Vice President of Green Infrastructure and Scalable Enterprises, Ellen Rasmussen (Zoom, 28.02.22), emphasize that the institution no longer prefers the term CSR for their responsible business understanding. According to them, a change away from CSR has occurred in recent years. Both informants explain that CSR for them only encompasses external, philanthropic, and voluntary activities, whereas ESG and IFC standards are more integrated into the activities and are clearer in their understanding (Imafidon, Zoom, 29.04.22; Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). CSV is not specifically mentioned by the informants yet, but the understanding of responsible business within Norfund's responsible business approach and strategy is seen to incorporate local challenges into business strategies. This understanding tends towards CSV. ESG and IFC standards are described as more specific in their requirements, application, and reporting mechanisms and, therefore, better serve Norfund's goal and could, in this case, be interpreted as CSV. Overall, Norfund looks towards international debates and no longer applies CSR in their responsible business understanding.

4.3.2. Innovation Norway – The Corporate Responsibility Approach

Innovation Norway is "*the Norwegian government's most important instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises and industry*" by supporting Norwegian companies, enhancing innovation, and achieving competitive advantages (Innovation Norway, 2022a). In contrast to Norfund, Innovation Norway follows regulations and works closely under the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Fisheries (MFA, 2009). Even though the two institutions' missions differ, both are crucial when analyzing responsible business understanding from different angles.

At the core of Innovation Norway's operations, the institution sees itself as an essential player contributing to the restructuring of business and sustainability to meet today's social and environmental challenges (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22; Svanes, Zoom, 31.03.22). Innovation Norway provides financing, advice, training, and other support mechanisms for Norwegian companies (Sundet et al., 2018). Since the first white paper on CSR, Innovation Norway's role

in addressing and implementing responsible business has been highly important by showing its presence and offering services through offices worldwide (MFA, 2009). In addition, Innovation Norway provides information about legislation in the countries Norwegian enterprises operate (MFA, 2009). The institution's strategy for responsible business more closely follows the government's guidance than Norfund on promoting the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines to address responsible business.

Several documents and policies about responsible business requirements and definitions exist within Innovation Norway (Innovation Norway, 2015, 2022b). Hereby, the institution applies its own term of "*corporate responsibility*" to address responsible business and its own methods based on internationally recognized guidelines (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22). Innovation Norway tries to avoid confusion and now consistently refers to *corporate responsibility* as the main understanding of responsible business (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22). Although the informants speak about *corporate responsibility*, no clear explanation of Innovation Norway's concept is published in any documents. Bakke (Zoom, 31.03.22) explains that it is a term that the institution developed, building it on the UNGPs and OECD Guidelines, and stands as an umbrella concept (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22). Moreover, all companies, suppliers, and partners collaborating with Innovation Norway must abide by and agree to the Policy on Good Business Conduct (Innovation Norway, 2022b).

Arnfinn Lundberg Bakke, the Programme Officer of Corporate Responsibility at Innovation Norway, and Tron Andres Svanes, the Senior Advisor and Programme Manager for Enterprise Development for Jobs in Innovation Norway, understand CSR as an outdated concept to address responsible business (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22; Svanes, Zoom, 31.03.22). Even though a change away from CSR is identified by the opinions of the two representatives of Innovation Norway, the concept is still present in many documents, such as the Good Business Policy (Innovation Norway, 2022b) and the Anti-Corruption Policy (Innovation Norway, 2015). In the former, CSR is named in combination with ethics to address responsible business (Innovation Norway, 2022b). All terms together build the core of Innovation Norway's Good Business Conduct (2022). CSR and ethics combined are described as operations that are "*based on high standards of ethical attitudes, avoid contribution to corruption, human rights abuses, poor working conditions or adverse effects on local communities and the environment*" (Innovation Norway, 2022b, p. 1). This definition remains a broad guideline for companies and points towards the CSR understanding of addressing and

avoiding societal and environmental impact. It does not necessarily include these aspects within the business strategies as proposed by CSV. The institution mixes terms relating to responsible business with several concepts, e.g., CSR and ethics (Innovation Norway, 2022b), which makes the strategy rather unclear and remains broad.

In contrast to the documents, a CSV understanding is clearly demonstrated by Bakke (2022). He states that *“acting responsibly is a pre-requisite for achieving the highest possible returns over time, and it makes companies better equipped to handle risks. So, we always say that sustainability and corporate responsibility is about value creation, it is about economic growth, it is about competitiveness, not about morals, or about rights and wrongs.”* (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22, 10:36 min.). Through this statement about value creation and acting responsible, the understanding of the Programme Officer of Corporate Responsibility in Innovation Norway clearly points towards seeing responsible business as CSV. He exactly describes taking societal needs as the basis for economic growth, competitiveness, and hereby creating value as proposed by Porter and Kramer (2011). For the informants, acting responsible is not just about external activities anymore (which for both is CSR) but about the overall economic growth and competitiveness of companies which fits into the CSV understanding. Bakke (Zoom, 31.3.22) emphasizes that in connection with sustainability risks, the concept of ESG has also gained importance in their work, but adjustments are yet to be made. Such adjustments signify a change in Innovation Norway’s understanding of responsible business and strategy away from CSR in the direction of CSV.

Furthermore, Innovation Norway has developed its own tools and guidelines based on the responsible business conduct from the OECD. Bakke (Zoom, 31.03.22) explains that these were adjusted to involve more direct questions about certain risks in more specific markets Innovation Norway and its partners operate. In difficult cases where a breach of the OECD Guidelines is suspected, Innovation Norway stands in close contact with the NCP to receive guidance and support (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22). These individual adaptations, own interpretations, and tools show how responsible business understanding and guidelines can be bent and extended to the needs they are meant to serve. However, Sundet et al. (2018) criticize Innovation Norway for lacking competence and capacity and therefore scoring very low in the evaluation of addressing responsible business by governmental institutions. Most of the expectations set by Innovation Norway to the companies they operate with remain broad and up to the companies to interpret (Sundet et al., 2018).

In addition to the offices in Norway, Innovation Norway's offices abroad address two functions: ensuring good quality human rights due diligence and monitoring and addressing Norwegian business interests responsibly in line with the UNGPs (Sundet et al., 2018). The main services include business support wherever Norwegian companies would like to operate, offering financial means, competence, advisory services, and networking services such as support and contacts with partners on-site (Innovation Norway, 2022a).

The directing manager of the East African office, Eli Bleie Munkelien, closely collaborates with the Royal Norwegian Embassy and the *Team Norway Network* (Munkelien, Zoom, 01.04.22). The office of Innovation Norway in East Africa hereby represents the commercial section of the Royal Norwegian Embassy (Team Norway East Africa, 2022), and therefore, it is crucial for Norwegian companies operating in East Africa. Furthermore, the *Team Norway Network* serves as a platform between public and private actors operating in and for Norwegian-based businesses in East Africa to collaborate. The network aims to achieve and strengthen successful trade and investments through coordinated efforts, initiatives, and shared knowledge exchange (Team Norway East Africa, 2022).

The approach by Innovation Norway in East Africa slightly differs from Innovation Norway's approach in Oslo. For instance, the focus on anti-corruption policies when implementing and discussing responsible business in East Africa plays a much more crucial role than in Norway (Svanes, Zoom, 31.03.22; Munkelien, Zoom, 01.04.22). Munkelien (Zoom, 01.04.22) explains that the general terms she prefers to use in the East African context are responsible business and sustainability because other concepts mainly lead to confusion (Munkelien, Zoom, 01.04.22.). Again, the broadness of responsible business understanding comes into play by adjusting the approaches to different international contexts. Munkelien (Zoom, 01.04.22) supports the opinion that policies and their issues need to be spelled out more directly and should not be kept as broad as international guidelines, for instance, the OECD Guidelines.

Overall, Innovation Norway follows different responsible business strategies in its offices in Oslo and Kenya. The strategies seem to be currently adjusting through the development of new documents. Until now, most documents remain with CSR as the main concept. In contrast, the understanding of the informants clearly demonstrates a change away from CSR to CSV.

4.4. CSR and CSV Understanding in the two Companies

Today, Norwegian business investments provide opportunities for African countries and Norway and bring the two locations closer together. Although most of Norway's activities in Africa have been development assistance in the past, now, the connections are changing towards investment opportunities and political dialogue (MFA, 2008) and are receiving increasing attention (Emejulu, 2019). A 50% increase in trade demonstrates the importance of the African market for Norway just in 2018 (Emejulu, 2019).

Due to previous development assistance collaboration, most of the Norwegian embassies are located in southern and East Africa (MFA, 2008), which might explain why Norfund and Innovation Norway also have offices there. How Norfund and Innovation Norway address their understanding of responsible business impacts the company's understanding on-site.

After outlining how the government, Norfund, and Innovation Norway, understand and address responsible business, this chapter explores the two companies understanding of responsible business, GRAS and Yara, both operating in East Africa.

4.4.1. GRAS – Following Norfund's Approach to CSV

The Norwegian company Green Resources AS (GRAS), founded in 1995, has received funding in the form of equity and loans from Norfund since 2009 (Norfund, 2022a). Therefore, the company serves this study's aim to analyze understandings and strategies to address responsible business influenced by a close relationship with Norfund.

According to their website, GRAS is the largest forest development and wood processing company in East Africa (GRAS, 2022). The company employs 1,500 workers during the season and manages up to approximately 38,000 ha. of land, owning three subsidiaries that manage plantations in Tanzania, Uganda, and Mozambique (GRAS, 2022). The company's mission is to establish *"East Africa's leading forest industry company working for the benefit of its shareholders, employees, and the communities where it operates"* (GRAS, 2022). These are first hints about how the company sees its responsibility in society and for the environment.

Besides its mission, GRAS has experienced financial issues before (Norfund, 2022a) and has also been in the press for community projects that did not bring the desired impact for the communities and the environment (Bergius et al., 2018). Today, the new CEO, Hans Lemm,

adjusted the overall sustainability and community development strategy. The company's activities are presented within a sustainable development approach and target community development (Bergius et al., 2018; GRAS, 2020). GRAS focuses on an ESG and sustainability approach in the company's overall business strategy, including a detailed reporting and risk assessment plan (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22). In addition, a number of international standards have been implemented, such as the Forest Stewardship Council (GRAS, 2022). GRAS has developed a framework that is not yet publicly available and focuses on sustainability by dividing the strategy into three subcategories. The first category refers to the *"traditional CSR, but it is broader, it is both, it is training, internal and external, it is finding linkages with other companies or community enterprises, it is shared value projects"* (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22, 07:03 min). This statement by Lemm clearly references CSV as the responsible business understanding while also naming CSR in the same context. A second aspect of the sustainability framework is communication, and thirdly, controlling and monitoring the activities (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22). Lemm's statements and the upcoming framework point towards current adjustments in the responsible business approach of the company that will soon occur.

In line with Norfund, the CEO of GRAS, Hans Lemm, expresses his opinion that CSR is no longer a term used within the company to refer to responsible business (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22). Instead, the statement: *"We [...] emphasize our commitment to creating shared value and upholding stakeholder engagement as an integral part of our business operations"* (GRAS, 2020, p. 31) shows how the company is presenting its responsible business understanding by explicitly referring to CSV. This is a recent change, as evidenced by the sustainability report from 2018, which mentions CSR at the very beginning (GRAS, 2018). The sustainability report from 2018 states *"all this is done whilst at the same time, adhering to high standards of corporate social responsibility"* (GRAS, 2018, p. 6).

How GRAS refers to responsible business concepts mainly results from the close connection with Norfund and other DFIs, which also call CSR outdated and addresses a strategy that includes social and environmental issues within the overall company's strategy (see chapter 4.3.1). Even though Lemm (Zoom, 16.02.22) argues that there is an evolution away from CSR, he explains that the objective of the company has always been to *"have a positive impact on both the environment and the community surrounding"* (Lemm, Zoom,

16.02.22, 24:59 min). This statement stands as a broad description of responsible business and fits into the umbrella construct of CSR and CSV.

According to Porter and Kramer (2011), there are three ways for companies to achieve CSV. Firstly, to create products in line with societal needs. In the case of GRAS, they meet this criterion since forest and wood processing in a sustainable way is crucial not just for the surrounding communities but also for a sustainable global future. The second way to CSV refers to using societal problems to redefine productivity (Porter & Kramer, 2011). GRAS also follows this way when evaluating the broad sustainability framework and applying it to their productivity. Sustainability is integrated into the overall business strategy and not separated from the main activities, according to Lemm (Zoom, 16.02.22). This explanation demonstrates that a change occurs by seeing sustainability and other responsibilities, such as community impacts, as drivers of economic activities as proposed by CSV. This strategy now operates in contrast to, for instance, charity projects which is Lemm's (Zoom, 16.02.22) understanding of CSR. Only the last strategy of CSV of developing new clusters (Porter & Kramer, 2011) is not yet referred to by the company.

Overall, the approach by GRAS points towards a change in understanding responsible business away from CSR. The company still includes and references CSR in its charity projects (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22) but is changing the overall understanding of responsible business to CSV. Furthermore, GRAS refers in some parts concretely to CSV while remaining broad and applying it as an umbrella understanding for different approaches. The relationship with Norfund is close and occurs in a very interactive cycle (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22). The relationship may partly explain why the company chooses its strategy according to Norfunds understanding and choice of concept.

4.4.2. Yara's Approach to CSV

Yara, a Norwegian MNE founded in 1905, is owned by 36% of the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Fisheries, and it is one of the leading crop nutrition businesses worldwide (Yara, 2022b). Since Yara is a company partially owned by the Norwegian government, it can also stand as a good case in this study to examine how the company understands and approaches responsible business. As a company, Yara is independent of the government in most of its decisions (Botillen, Zoom, 10.03.22).

In addition to producing and offering fertilizer products, the company focuses on developing and providing digital environmental and agricultural solutions and tools to improve the efficiency and sustainability of food production by educating and sharing knowledge (Yara, 2020). Yara strives for “*sustainable value growth, promoting climate friendly crop nutrient and zero-emission energy solutions*” (Yara, 2022b) and has been named as a good example of approaching shared value by Porter and Kramer (2011).

However, like GRAS, Yara has received bad press for its responsible business activities in previous years (Reuters Staff, 2016). In particularly one corruption scandal received attention whereby the former CEO of Yara was convicted (Reuters Staff, 2016). Nowadays, Yara counts as one of the highest-scoring companies concerning their responsible business reporting mechanisms in Norway (The Governance Group, 2021). In its long history, the firm has learned and adapted its responsible business strategy over time.

The company’s mission is to feed the world and protect the planet responsibly. At the core of the company’s vision stands “*A collaborative society; a world without hunger; a planet respected*” (Yara, 2022a). Yara refers to similar international guidelines as the government, such as the OECD Guidelines and the SDGs, and has a comprehensive ESG reporting strategy in place (The Governance Group, 2021; Yara, 2020). Besides being a fertilizer company, Yara describes its mission and importance in going beyond a usual producer by taking action into its hands and improving economic, environmental, and social conditions in the countries they operate (Yara, 2022a). This mission points towards understanding of responsible business within Yara.

The company states that it does not use CSR as a concept anymore, arguing that as a fertilizer company, they see the need to go beyond just being a company but actively get involved and hereby have the “*aim to create shared value for the company and society*” (Yara, 2020, p. 70). Taking social needs and environmental issues as an integral part of the company and referring to them as shared value clearly demonstrates the use of CSV within the company.

Moreover, Yara has regional units worldwide in Europe, America, Africa, and Asia (Yara, 2020) and has been operating in Africa for more than 30 years (Yara Kenya, 2022). Yara addresses sustainable business concepts in several East African countries by increasing profitability on-site through knowledge and good-quality products. In addition to its fertilizer

offers, Yara East Africa concentrates on capacity-building programs and other projects to achieve sustainability and development (Yara Kenya, 2022).

The Stakeholder Relations and Business Development Manager, Øystein Botillen, worked on-site in East Africa for many years and initiated the “Action Africa” project when covid-19 started. In his opinion, CSR *“is not something that we have applied and sort of frequently referred to. Rather the opposite”* (Botillen, 10.03.22, 06:04 min.). Botillen (Zoom, 10.03.22) further points out that the company saw its responsibility to act when covid-19 started. The initiative Action Africa supports farmers through free fertilizer for them to continue with their farming activities.

“I guess if you want to say that that is an articulation of global cooperation taking its business and potential to asset it, to help and assist, and if you want to define it as an expression of corporate social responsibility, I have no problems with it. It does not change the fact that we do not, in principle, do that kind of thing.” (Botillen, Zoom, 10.03.22, 17:25min.).

This statement demonstrates how for Botillen (Zoom, 10.03.22), the terms and concepts do not matter that much but instead prioritizes actions that contribute to the wider goal of improving social and environmental conditions.

When further exploring where the company stands in understanding responsible business, it becomes clear that the company clearly chooses to address CSV as their responsible business understanding and approach because the company promotes CSV on their website as a win-win strategy (Yara, 2015). Yara and its subsidiaries see societal needs as opportunities for new products that also redefine productivity. This aspect is supported by the voice of Mwakipesile (Zoom, 05.05.22), who points out that the company supports many farmers in Tanzania to improve socially and economically through its products and takes social needs and conditions into account when producing new products and technologies. In turn, this support also benefits the products and productivity of the company. These correspond with the two first ways to CSV by Porter and Kramer (2011). The company also tackles the third way of enabling cluster development (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Yara works towards cluster development, especially in African countries, by recognizing the lack of infrastructure which prevents farmers from accessing necessary fertilizer and connecting smallholder farmers with infrastructure to access markets and inputs (Yara, 2015).

4.5. Summary

This chapter has first accounted for how the Norwegian government's strategy to address responsible business has evolved since the first white paper in 2009. The central processes and methods of today's responsible business understandings and concepts were introduced and examined in relation to the debates of an occurring change from CSR to CSV. The policy commitment by the government towards responsible business is identified by mostly naming CSR in their documents as a broad understanding of responsible business. This may be intentional, leaving room for the institutions to follow their aims. CSV is not yet specifically mentioned.

Afterwards, this chapter outlines and examines the different understandings and how responsible business is understood and addressed within Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara. Norfund and Innovation Norway understand responsible business not as CSR anymore and are rather changing their approaches towards a newer understanding. This newer understanding might refer to CSV since some statements hint towards that concept. The main message of both institutions is that CSR did not achieve what it intended. Numerous documents and guidelines are currently adjusting to guide and understand responsible business.

The understanding that a conceptual change is occurring is also reflected in the companies' understandings. GRAS and Yara still consider CSR to some extent, mostly in their charity projects, but they are adjusting their strategies more and more to incorporate CSV directly. From the informant's point of view, responsible business has to be involved in all business activities, which is the main difference in their understanding of CSR and CSV. The idea of a win-win situation by aligning a company's budget towards CSV instead of having a separate CSR budget, as proposed by Porter and Kramer (2011), is understood as responsible business in similar ways by the informants from the companies.

5. Motivations and Critiques of the Newer Responsible Business Understanding

Chapter five discusses how the institutions and companies in this study view their responsibility to balance social and economic goals and, therefore, why it is important to them what concept they align themselves with. The analysis returns to the theoretical framework of this study to explore the research question of where the debate about a change in understanding responsible business in Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara is heading, why, and to what extent it implies a change from CSR to CSV. This chapter first discusses the perspectives brought forth by participants on developing a responsible business ethos and why this is leading them to avoid CSR. Secondly, this chapter discusses how newer ideas of responsible business favor and prefer CSV understandings but how CSV may also fail to deliver similar aspects as from CSR's critiques. Finally, how CSV works similarly to CSR in a global context and the criticism of western cultural and economic imperialism are discussed.

5.1. More than CSR – Developing an Ethos

All informants agree that being informed about current debates, keeping a good reputation, and finding a beneficial relationship between social and economic goals, is crucial for the government, institutions, and companies to succeed on the global market and to contribute positively to society and the environment.

The informants from the companies agree that it is a pre-requirement to have a strategy as a company in place that goes further than being a business that contributes to a good society and the environment in external activities (Botillen, Zoom, 10.03.22; Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22.). All informants emphasize a desire to develop a business whose mission goes beyond the bare minimum of legal, social, and environmental responsibilities. Lemm refers to the need for adopting a socially and environmentally responsible business concept as being *“part of this global journey on becoming more responsible corporate citizens”* (Zoom, 16.02.22, 25:00 min.). This statement demonstrates how Lemm likes to refer to global debates and acknowledges the need to adjust the company's strategy accordingly. Similar arguments are found when looking at Yara, which also focuses on internationally accepted guidelines. Botillen explains that it is a globally evolving process of understanding responsible business and finding beneficial relationships between social, environmental and economic needs (Botillen, Zoom, 20.03.22). The work of NABA further supports this argument. Næss (Zoom,

24.05.22) explains that the understandings of the concepts are updating each other from new perspectives in society. These understandings describe a globally changing debate on how the relationship between the economic goals of businesses and social and environmental needs will and should look in the future.

While the informants have a clear motivation for aligning their business interests with larger social and environmental goals, this is still difficult because of varying expectations, lack of clear guidelines, and the need to compete economically. As a result, all are looking for a concept that can sufficiently balance the tension between economic and social goals. Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara acknowledge this tension between economic growth and societal goals (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22; Botillen, Teams, 10.03.22; Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22; Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). Doing well economically and doing good for society and the environment in the institutions and both companies play an important role. Everyone experiences high pressure from the global markets to apply internationally recognized responsible business frameworks (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22; Botillen, Teams, 10.03.22; Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22).

Also, individual aims and objectives are reflected in how responsible business is understood and addressed. Bakke aptly points to owners' interests and the alignment of what is happening worldwide to explain why Innovation Norway adjusts its strategy and understanding. *"As everyone, we are just trying to adapt to the world around us and to owners as well, what they want"* (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22, 07:01min). This statement shows that the informants from Innovation Norway experience interests and international debates to follow certain rules and expectations. In the same vein, the informants from Yara and GRAS explain that they are very careful not to do something wrong (Botillen, Zoom, 10.03.22; Lemm, Zoom, 16.03.22). Lemm (Zoom, 16.03.22) gives the example of rising international pressure on sustainability and compliance when attracting funding. In this context, Norfund has its expectations and ambitions as an investor to receive returns (Norfund, 2022c). The implementation of responsible business policies and projects is focused on high expectations, which may not always be the appropriate ones, e.g., local differences, which may impact how policies are understood and implemented. Lemm reflects on the issue of *"making sure that the ambitions that sometimes come from the DFIs, can actually be implemented on the ground and be lasting"* (Zoom, 16.02.22, 32:06 min.). These experiences of tension show the pressure to apply international best practices, although no international definition or decision fully

clarifies expectations. It is also unclear whether the same guidelines and understandings should be applied in all global contexts.

When it comes to understanding responsible business and concepts that balance social, environmental, and economic goals, CSR has played a large role in the global understanding of responsible business. For this reason, the institutions, and companies in this study, remain partly with referring to CSR in documents and online representations, but when speaking to the informants, it becomes clear this is a concept they want to move away from.

Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara have all referred to CSR at some point. Rasmussen (Zoom, 28.02.22) explains that there is nothing wrong with the term itself, but in her view, it refers to the past when companies worked differently. For her, CSR is mainly about an activity to *“do something good at the side of doing business in a responsible way”* (Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22, 03:11 min.). Now CSR is internationally criticized, and most informants do not like to be associated with it anymore. As a result, they are looking for new concepts of responsible business to adjust to in the future. The informants all see CSR mainly as external, not bringing the desired change, and that it has negative connotations by being mainly of a charitable and philanthropic nature (Botillen, Zoom, 10.03.22; Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22; Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). This is why the informants from Norfund, for example, refer to responsible business concepts involving the overall business strategy, which are more effective in the informants' opinion (Imafidon, Zoom, 29.04.22; Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). This understanding demonstrates a clear change away in Norfund from referring to responsible business as CSR. In addition, Bakke (Zoom, 31.03.22) and Svanes (Zoom, 31.03.22) also explain that, in their opinion, this evolution away from CSR mainly occurred due to CSR's negative connotation and philanthropic character. These aspects of CSR explain the changing understanding within Innovation Norway too.

For Botillen from Yara, CSR is something they also do not like to refer to, and he describes it as *“we do not [...] do that kind of thing”* (Botillen, Zoom, 10.03.22, 17:25min.), which points towards a negative connotation of CSR. Today, Yara has incorporated CSV as the main approach to responsible business. Lemm's understanding is similar since he phrases that CSR is rather an *“archaic”* term, and the company does not like to be associated with it anymore (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22, 04:18 min.). These are clear opinions about CSR whereby a change within the two companies away from CSR towards a new understanding is identified.

Overall, Rasmussen (Zoom, 28.02.22) emphasizes that the references to CSR only by a company show her that the company's strategy and knowledge are not up to today's debates. This way of understanding CSR as something that is not enough in today's globalized world again demonstrates that the concept is viewed as outdated and is understood as too simplistic to successfully evaluate social and economic needs. It explains that many informants are looking toward a new concept, such as CSV.

5.2. Towards CSV – Appeal of a New Concept

As the informants cite the downfalls of CSR, especially how it isolates social and environmental responsibilities from business and its connotations with philanthropy, they seek a new understanding that approaches responsible business in a new light. This understanding currently changes and adjusts in favor of the concept of CSV.

The foremost reason for a change away from understanding responsible business not as CSR anymore but preferring the concept of CSV lies in the appeal of a new concept that may solve the critiques and limitations of CSR. CSV has received much attention as a solution, replacing CSR through theoretical contributions and practical adjustments (Crane et al., 2014; Menghwar & Daood, 2021). The appeal of CSV offers not just scholars but also policymakers, representatives, and company managers the opportunity and strength to adjust their understanding and strategy. Porter and Kramer (2011) argue that including societal needs within the business in a new way offers the strength to approach responsible business more successfully than CSR may have done.

Even though the CSR concept also refers to more than just external activities, for most informants, CSR remains rather broad and does not bring much change (Bakke, Zoom, 31.03.22; Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22). Lemm explains that, in contrast to CSR, their sustainability framework, for instance, gets "*much broader (..) of how different actions of the company all interact*" (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22, 08:49 min.) and therefore offers a more holistic approach to responsible business. Lemm's opinion demonstrates that for him, CSR is more about doing good in addition to business activities, and the newer frameworks are about incorporating economic and societal needs into the overall strategy. This line of argument is similar to how Porter and Kramer (2011) describe CSR and the evolution of cooperation to change to CSV.

Current strategies, such as the sustainability framework (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22), the responsible business conduct (Halsaa, Zoom, 03.03.22), or the IFC standards (Imafidon, Zoom, 29.04.22), may start to refer to CSV and contain certain guidelines which offer a sufficiently open enough framework in which the institutions and companies can operate, adjust to their specific circumstance, and succeed economically. How far and to what extent social and economic goals are evaluated differently than before remains unclear and open for future research.

To explain the prevalence of CSR and the change away from it, the concept is important to understand the role CSR has taken on as an umbrella concept for responsible business more generally. Some documents, projects, and online representations of Innovation Norway, the ETI, GRAS, and Yara refer to CSR as a broad umbrella concept for describing responsible business and charity projects (Botillen, Zoom, 10.03.22; ETI, 2022; Innovation Norway, 2022c; Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22). While a change away from applying the concept of CSR is occurring, the legacy of the concept itself remains in most documents and probably within most understandings and strategies of responsible business. The informants only make one clear distinction about what is exactly changing from CSR to CSV. According to the informants, this change includes focusing on social and environmental needs in internal economic activities instead of CSR as only being external activities (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22; Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). This way of understanding CSR could explain why the institutions and companies of this study agree that the evolution away from CSR is happening or has already happened due to its philanthropic and voluntary nature.

In contrast, the fact that CSR is understood as an umbrella concept for responsible business is also one of the strongest criticisms against it. The mixing of different terms fits into the similar definitional issues debated by Blowfield and Frynas (2005) about CSR and if a common understanding would be beneficial. CSV does not necessarily solve this issue because most informants mix concepts and models together without clear delimitations, and therefore it remains similarly broad (see Innovation Norway's policies in chapter 4.3.2.). The reference to several concepts at once may lead to misguidance or misunderstanding. Therefore, CSV also lacks conceptual clarification (Crane et al., 2014; Menghwar & Daood, 2021) and might not yet stand up to be an alternative to CSR.

These are some areas where a critique of CSR may also apply to CSV, even though CSV is supposed to overcome the limitations of CSR and is starting to be preferred by all informants. The remaining part of this section further discusses CSV's supposed advantages and where CSV is receiving similar critiques as CSR to discuss the extent to which the concept is preferred.

In addition to CSV taking an approach that aims to integrate business and social responsibility in a new light, supporters of the concept also believe it could lead to creating clearer guidelines for evaluating social goals and the role of the government than CSR has achieved (Crane et al., 2014; Porter & Kramer, 2011). The informants prefer CSV and newer frameworks because it is argued that they offer the strength of remaining broad enough and, at the same time, referring to more explicit guidelines in the newer frameworks (Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22, Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). The authors of the CSV concept argue it to be a revolutionary concept that re-invents capitalism (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and is seen as such by most informants. While CSR remained open for interpretation and without clear explanations, CSV is described as offering a clearer understanding of guidelines and expectations of the tension between social needs and the economic success of companies (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

While some say that CSV contains clearer guidelines, some do not believe that CSV is distinct enough from CSR and is used similarly broad and ineffectively. Scholars, such as Crane et al. (2014) and Menghwar and Daood (2021), critique CSV for not being original and broad in similar ways as CSR. This is shown in the fact that the informants remain unclear when it comes to other differences between CSR and a new understanding. The only main difference put forward by all informants is that now social and environmental aspects are included in the overall economic activities of the businesses, instead of CSR, where they were included in an external budget (Halsaa, Zoom, 03.03.22; Imafidon, Zoom, 29.04.22; Lemm, Zoom, 16.02.22). Again, the flexibility and broadness of responsible business understandings, as in CSR, may lead to similar issues because there is not enough understanding of the changes within and between concepts from the institutions and companies. Therefore, how far CSV works against the tensions between economic and social goals more sufficiently than CSR remains open for more research. Dypvik (Oslo, 25.03.22) concludes that in the future, increased transparency and legal requirements on corporate conduct and supply chains will make life harder for companies that do not assume their social and economic responsibility. It remains uncertain to what extent CSR and CSV will play a role thereby.

CSV is further described as making a significant step forward by including the state's and institutions' roles more specifically (Crane et al., 2014). Porter and Kramer (2011) describe CSRs contribution to governmental roles and international guidelines as rather broad. They explain CSV as going further by proposing regulations that can strengthen institutional and companies' work towards CSV (Porter & Kramer, 2011). This study is based on white papers and the NAP to represent the governmental work. The data shows that the Norwegian government is adjusting, potentially away from CSR, by referencing international guidelines, which are also changing. A change towards CSV, however, remains unclear, and the government's approach is broad and leaves room for the institutions and companies to apply their own understanding of responsible business. The responsible business strategy by the government demonstrates that CSR has and still plays an important role for a long time in the government's work. The government leaves the methods of implementing responsible business approaches and measurements up to the institutions and companies, as recommended by Porter and Kramer (2011). However, the institutions and companies remain unclear about the exact expectations from the government, and leaves room for future research.

Regarding more specific guidelines from CSV, internationally recognized guidelines applied by the government, institutions, and companies in this study, do not yet fully include a CSV reference. Nevertheless, they are changing away from referring to responsible business as CSR and are focusing on a more common understanding. A common understanding and implementation of responsible business in different local contexts could contribute to a beneficial relationship between the institutions, businesses, and international relationships, which CSR did not achieve. The Head of Secretariat of the Norwegian OECD NCP, Cathrine Halsaa, amply states that for instance:

„The OECD Guidelines are the most comprehensive international standard for responsible business conduct and entail all aspects of a business activities [...] That there is one standard that is supposed to be applied to all is a great contribution. So, you cannot say that this does not apply for this country or the other country. It does apply to all countries, and the expectations are the same” (Halsaa, Zoom, 03.03.22, 34:18 min.).

Dypvik (Oslo, 25.03.22) also emphasizes that the same expectations for social and environmental conditions should and do apply to all companies worldwide. However, CSV is not yet specifically mentioned in these guidelines; therefore, it is unclear to what extent it is

incorporated. Further research is needed on how far CSV translates better into policies than CSR for every individual actor to be easily understood.

Lastly, it is important to recognize the weaknesses of CSV because, as the comments of the informant's echo, the novelty of CSV and the eagerness to replace CSR may obscure how the concepts are actually quite alike and face similar limitations. Though there is a focus on the negative aspects of CSR, especially how the informants describe it as doing good separately from business, CSR is a much more complex concept than described by Porter and Kramer and many of the informants (see chapter 2.1.1). The understanding by most informants is evolving to describe CSR just as philanthropic, voluntary, and simplistic, to describe CSV as the solution concept. It is questionable how CSV has a different impact and can be seen as an alternative to CSR. Crane et al. (2014) refer to the weakness that not much is new about the CSV concept itself. This is obscured because CSR is now often described in a way that suits CSV's popularity. This study underlines this argument since both institutions and companies describe CSR as a very simplistic concept, mainly referring to charity or its voluntary nature.

Even if CSV may not end up being the solution to all of CSR's problems, Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara are all thinking critically about how to develop a responsible business framework and are eager for a change away from the limitations associated with CSR and are starting to incorporate CSV in their understanding.

5.3. Western framings in a Global Context

Finally, it is important to consider whether CSV can be more successfully implemented than CSR in the context of global value chains to discuss where the debate is heading regarding responsible business. GRAS and Yara operate in East Africa, so their understanding of responsible business must be relevant and practical on-site. The broadness of CSV might offer strength and potential for future research for a South-Centered research agenda, similar to the one demanded by CSR scholars (Almatrooshi et al., 2018; Cheruiyot & Onsando, 2016; Inekwe et al., 2021). As described, CSV can be applied in different institutional and cultural contexts that might solve CSR's limitations by evaluating social, environmental, and economic needs.

Despite this hope, there are concerns that the CSV concept can also be confusing when used in the East-African context. The issues lie in understanding what is meant by the terms of CSR, CSV, Responsible Business Conduct, or the OECD Guidelines (Munkelien, Zoom, 01.04.22; Mwakipesile, Zoom, 05.05.22). Bakke (Zoom, 31.03.22) and Halsaa (Zoom, 03.03.22) explain that the OECD Guidelines and other international frameworks are already challenging, and it is very abstract and difficult for companies to navigate their way through them – no matter if the actors follow a CSR or CSV understanding. Different cultural perceptions and local contexts can still be cited as challenges and limitations to the understanding of CSR and CSV if they are not tailored to local conditions and explained in depth, as supported by the opinion of Mwakipesile (Zoom, 05.05.22). Mwakipesile (Zoom, 05.05.22; 25:40min.) explains that in Tanzania, they don't use *"this corporate social responsibility [...] So, maybe if Yara could offer guidance to CSR and CSV in the future to support farmers in the villages to support on the issues, I think it can also give more to us and the reputation to Yara"*. This statement demonstrates that the knowledge about CSR and CSV on-site differs, and more guidance and support are asked for by Mwakipesile. This opinion points towards issues in understanding what is meant by the concept and how best to implement them in different cultural and institutional contexts. Munkelien (Zoom, 01.04.22) supports the argument since, in her opinion, CSR and CSV are only little used on-site and tend to cause confusion. Many of the concepts refer to similar aspects, and, in her opinion, some companies in East Africa do not understand what they exactly mean and apply the concepts in the way they best understand them (Munkelien, Zoom, 01.04.22).

Therefore, even though a change is occurring away from applying CSR and preferring CSV, it remains questionable how far CSV will bring the change and is clearer and more actionable for all actors and partly explains why it is not referred to yet in the East African context.

Until now, CSV also does not attempt to work against the accusations of economic and cultural imperialism set out by CSR critiques (De Neve, 2009; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). The complexity of today's global value chains in both concepts, CSV, and CSR, plays a crucial role. CSR has already been criticized for not having a global enough outlook and ignoring the institutional and cultural differences in its understanding and addressing, which can lead to new dependencies, hierarchies, and the transferal of Western norms and ideas (De Neve, 2009; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). While most informants prefer a CSV understanding, the

concept does not yet refer to a more global outlook, as requested by the South-Centered CSR agenda (Karam & Jamali, 2017; Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). CSV is also accused of ignoring the complexities of value chains (Crane et al., 2014), which partly explains why it is not fully included in all responsible business approaches by the informants and documents.

As presented, Western ideas, and norms, e.g., cultural imperialism, are said to be transferred from the Global West to the Global South through investments and CSR guidelines (Khan & Lund-Thomsen, 2011). Even though the primary data of this study includes only one Tanzanian voice, Norwegian representatives, such as Munkelien (Zoom, 01.04.22), emphasize that on-site the culture differs, and it is necessary to include them in the concepts. Consequently, the concepts need to be adjusted when operating under different conditions, which explains the different approaches to responsible business by Innovation Norway in Oslo and in Kenya. In her opinion, the OECD Guidelines, CSR, and CSV are not relevant concepts.

In contrast, Norfund and Innovation Norway representatives emphasize their involvement of local voices from the office-on site and how they acknowledge cultural and institutional differences (Imafidon, Zoom, 29.04.22; Munkelien, Zoom, 01.04.22; Rasmussen, Zoom, 28.02.22). However, no one criticizes CSV's origin as based on Western experiences as put forward in CSR critiques (Brammer et al., 2012). Finally, no one mentions the need for a South-Centered research agenda yet, which again questions how far CSV differentiates itself from CSR and if CSV better incorporates international differences.

A similar expression of referring to CSV and not yet solving the imperialism critique of CSR is the creation of GRAS sustainability approach. Lemm (Zoom, 16.02.22) explains that the sustainability approach was developed bottom-up by the country managers, but the overall themes came from top-down, from the investors and managers. This is similar to the case of Yara. Mwakipesile (Zoom, 05.05.22) explains that the office on-site receives instructions and guidelines from Yara international through the Head of Social Impact of Africa and Asia, which they implement. The Head of Social Impact in Africa and Asia and the social impact manager for Africa oversee the social aspects in Tanzania. To what extent the adjusting responsible business understanding within GRAS and Yara deals with complex value chains in a new way than CSR remains unclear. Also, how far GRAS and Yara remain in some old structures of CSR needs further research.

5.4. Summary

Chapter five discusses why and to what extent the informants prefer changing their responsible business understanding away from CSR and potentially to CSV. All informants emphasize the shortcomings of CSR and advocate for another approach to responsible business, which might speak in favor of CSV.

The main reason why and to what extent the change occurs lies in the appeal of a new concept that may serve as a solution to CSR's shortcomings. CSR is, by most informants, described as external and philanthropic, while CSV is said to include a new strategy towards responsible business. However, it is still unclear if CSV will be able to overcome CSR's criticisms and to what extent it is different from CSR. A legacy of CSR understanding as an umbrella concept of theories and strategies is found in this study in documents, policies, and online representations of the institutions and companies, without clear delimitations to a change.

Nevertheless, CSV is also critiqued for not bringing the desired change, and all informants refer to the tension and pressure between social and economic goals. This tension is not yet solved through CSV. Moreover, a clearer role of the state and institutions is described in CSV than in CSR. The Norwegian government has long been taking important steps towards acknowledging its crucial role in addressing responsible business by adjusting white papers and guidelines. However, the future strategy remains uncertain about a changing understanding and exact expectations in accordance with the CSV concept.

Lastly, how CSV approaches today's complex value chains in another way than CSR needs further research to understand if it will stand as an alternative to CSV in the Norwegian cases. In this context, CSV also lacks a clear strategy for incorporating local voices, conditions, and needs into its concepts more successfully than CSR.

6. Where is the Understanding of Responsible Business Heading?

This study focuses on the debate about understanding responsible business and a change from CSR to CSV to approach the relationship between businesses, society, and the environment. The research aims to answer the overall research question of *where the understanding of responsible business in Norway is heading. Why and to what extent does it imply a change from CSR to CSV?* The objective is discussed in the study in a two-folded way.

Firstly, by analyzing documents and the collected data from the government, institutions, and two companies, the first sub-question of *how the Norwegian institutions Norfund and Innovation Norway and the companies GRAS and Yara understand responsible business and how it is reflected in the way they address it* is examined. The analysis of the past and the status quo shows that the government, Norfund, and Innovation Norway are changing away from referring to CSR as understanding responsible business. The government's white papers mainly keep CSR in regulations as a broad concept to include different understandings and strategies of responsible business. Slight adjustments have been made since the first white paper in 2009, and the last changes point towards more adjustments in the future because international debates regarding responsible business guidelines are ongoing. However, it remains unclear where the government's understanding is heading and if it really is at the forefront of debates. Clearer guidance and government expectations could support addressing responsible business in the future.

Secondly, this study demonstrates that Norfund and Innovation Norway are flexible in choosing their own understanding and addressing methods. Due to Norfund's nature as an investment fund, Norfund incorporates international standards to receive returns. This study identifies first signs regarding changes towards referring to CSV and not incorporating CSR anymore. Informants from Norfund describe CSR as not bringing enough contribution in today's world, which clearly point towards a change away from CSR.

In contrast, Innovation Norway has been criticized for lacking guidance and competence in approaching responsible business (Sundet et al., 2018). Improvements are occurring, and adjustments in their strategy are happening, implying a change from CSR to CSV in understanding responsible business. While Innovation Norway mainly incorporates CSR in documents, the institution refers to its own definition of corporate responsibility and demonstrates clear hints towards a CSV understanding.

Overall, the concept of CSR remains present in many policies and still plays a role in governmental and institutional work. Closer collaboration between Norwegian actors in Norway and on-site in Oslo could support improving the strategy, deciding who is responsible for what, and learning from other experiences and how to best understand CSR and CSV.

This study further analyzes how responsible business is understood and addressed by GRAS and Yara. GRAS demonstrates that a change is occurring within the company to address the relationship of the company with its surrounding communities and the environment. GRAS partly remains with elements and aspects of CSR, for instance, referring to it in the context of charity projects. In other parts, such as the sustainability framework, GRAS is adjusting the strategy by clearly starting to refer to CSV as integrating economic and social issues within the overall strategy. The close relationship with Norfund partly explains the change and future adjustments.

Yara stands as a good example of being at the forefront of referring to CSV in many of its activities and not addressing CSR as a concept anymore. The approach clearly reflects a close view of international guidelines, and the company incorporates CSV in its understanding of responsible business. To Yara, international guidelines are more important and more in line with CSV than CSR.

Overall, the informants from GRAS and Yara do not associate CSR with a successful, responsible business strategy. A change occurs in both companies, while Yara is already clearly changing towards CSV, and GRAS is adjusting. Room for a clearer change remains when considering the three ways proposed by Porter and Kramer (2011) to include societal issues in all business activities and make it an integral part of competing in global markets.

In addition to recognizing the occurring change within the Norwegian government's approach, Innovation Norway, Norfund, GRAS, and Yara, this research sets out to explore *why and to what extent the responsible business understanding implies a change from CSR to CSV* by examining *why and to what extent the informants and academic debates prefer the CSV concept to the CSR concept*.

The extent to which CSV is incorporated in the understanding of the informant's view has already been partially elaborated at the beginning of the chapter. The foremost reason for a change in understanding of responsible business as CSR lies in the argument that CSR did

not bring the desired change and is associated with philanthropy and voluntariness. This study demonstrates how all informants involved supporting the idea that CSR is, in a way, outdated, voluntary, and mainly external to core business activities, and a change is necessary for a sustainable future.

A new concept is needed that offers the potential for the desired change. The informants and academic debate thereby see several strengths associated with CSV that potentially will lead and are leading to a change from CSR to CSV in the Norwegian cases.

Firstly, CSV receives attention since it stands as a new concept that can solve issues of capitalism in a globalized world by giving corporations a new role of including societal and environmental issues in each interaction of the corporations. In contrast to this potential, some scholars argue that the concept of CSV does not offer much new input and is broad in its approach, like the concept of CSR. This study shows how close the two concepts are intertwined and used within the same contexts by the informants. All institutions and companies' informants tend to avoid CSR as an approach to responsible business, but the concept with its main elements is found in the Norwegian ministries' work and documents by Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara. It remains questionable and open for future research on how the concept clarifies the understanding of responsible business, contributes to the desired relationship, or if CSV is another umbrella term to incorporate similar theories as CSR without a clear delimitation. All informants agree about the negative connotations of CSR but are not coherent in their new understanding of whether CSV will be the new concept.

Furthermore, CSV describes the opportunity to evaluate social and environmental goals on a more strategic level than CSR, which the informants acknowledge. CSV sets out that companies evaluate what they can do for their surroundings, society, and environment. This is another reason why the informants prefer CSV to CSR, and it might bring more of the desired change in the future if the three ways by Porter and Kramer (2011) are further examined. Nevertheless, CSV is also accused of ignoring the tension between the economic goals of corporations and social improvement – the same as how it has been criticized within CSR and is demonstrated in this study.

CSV also suggests clearer guidance for the companies and the government. The concept is said to propose more definite guidance and a proposal for regulations that strengthen the conditions for companies to succeed in the process. Again, in contrast to the potential seen in a change away from CSR, most of the guidelines and changes in this study

remain unclear and are currently adjusting. Future research should explore how the government approaches and adjusts its strategy and how it reflects in the understanding of institutions and companies.

Lastly, CSV also lacks a clear or different strategy for dealing with historical, institutional, and cultural differences in a globalized world, which might explain why it is not yet fully the new understanding of responsible business in the researched cases. Both CSR and CSV lack this dimension, and CSV scholars do not yet attempt to research more on the western origin or deal with the economic background, as demonstrated by this study's data. By describing the societal needs as central, these should be further explored in how far South-Centered concerns are included in the economic goals of companies.

To conclude, this research demonstrates that a change away from understanding responsible business as CSR occurs in the examples of four Norwegian cases, Norfund, Innovation Norway, GRAS, and Yara. Most informants refer to CSR as an outdated concept, and to some extent, but not yet fully, the concept of CSV is referred to and preferred due to its potential to solve the limitations of CSR and how best to understand responsible business. This in-depth study of the four Norwegian cases implies that the understanding of responsible business is a highly relevant topic in institutions and companies in Norway and will be of much interest to policymakers, scholars, and other relevant actors in the next few years. What exactly the informants understand and ask for in the future needs further research. Some wish for clearer guidance, while others remain to ask for broad frameworks which can be applied worldwide.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that responsible business understanding depends on individual understandings and aims, practically and theoretically. While the Norwegian institutions are currently adjusting, this study demonstrates that the two Norwegian companies have already changed their understanding and strategies to incorporate the newer concept of CSV and potentially will remain with that understanding in the future. The government, which was at the beginning described as being at the forefront of current debates, is not very clear about its approach and future adjustments. In this context, strategies such as ESG and other guidelines will be of high importance, not just in Norway but worldwide, to approach responsible business.

Overall, this study demonstrates and draws attention to how CSV offers the potential to mitigate some of the shortcomings of CSR, which explains the occurring changes in the cases in Norway. However, it also remains criticized by the informants in this research and scholars, which partly explains why a change to CSV is not fully occurring. It is further questionable if the concept of CSV can live up to its promises or if it remains with the main elements of CSR under a new umbrella concept. Future research should closely assess whether the CSV approach will be the future understanding and if it brings the desired relationship and changes.

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Appendix A - Interview Guide: Governmental Institutions

Understanding of responsible business:

- How do you understand and conceptualize responsible business in (insert institution)?
 - Where does the perception originate from?
- Which are the main drivers and goals for yourself and (insert institution) to address responsible business (particularly in East Africa)?
 - Which concepts do you address or refer to? (References to CSR or CSV?)
 - In your opinion, how do the concepts differ (in their usefulness and impacts)?

The relationship to the government and other institutions:

- To what extent do the Norwegian Ministries address responsible business to (insert institution)?
- How is (insert institution) linked with other governmental agencies, such as Norad, or the OECD NCP, to understand and address responsible business?
- Do you, and if yes, to what extent do you incorporate tools offered by the OECD, its Norwegian NCP, and other information and tools in your work approach to address responsible business?

The approach to addressing responsible business:

- How are social and environmental responsibilities visual within the organizational structure of the (insert institution)?
- How does (insert institution) communicate and address the importance and same visions of responsible business in the operations in Norway and abroad?
- Do you, and if yes, which support, and training do you offer to companies in relation to responsible business? And do they differ in various country contexts?
 - To what extent do the companies report back to (insert institution) about their progress, and how do you assess and further assist?

Strengths, weaknesses, and critiques of responsible business concepts:

- What would you describe as the main opportunities and challenges (insert institution) and the companies' experience when understanding and addressing responsible business in Norway and abroad, e.g., CSR and CSV?
 - Do you experience challenges with understanding responsible business guidelines, e.g., CSR?
- Is it problematic for you that the Norwegian government and public expect the firms and suppliers operating in, for example, African countries to follow the same standards as in the EU?
- Are or were there important milestones for (insert institution) regarding responsible business strategies in the previous years, e.g., the role of the transparency act?
- Is there anything you would like to improve in the future regarding responsible business concept understanding?
- Some literature points towards the issue that different national, socio-economic, and cultural realities in countries of the Global South are not included enough in international guidelines and concepts. Do you agree?
- What is your opinion on the future development of CSR and CSV?

Appendix B - Interview Guide: Companies

Understanding of responsible business:

- How do you understand and conceptualize responsible business in (insert company)? Where does the perception originate from?
- Which are the main drivers and goals for yourself and (insert company) to address responsible business?
 - Which concepts do you apply or refer to? (Do you apply CSR or CSV?)
 - In your opinion, how do the concepts differ (in their usefulness and impacts)?

The relationship with the government and international institutions:

- How do you characterize (insert company) relationship with the Norwegian governmental institutions and ministries? (In regard to responsible business guidelines)
 - Is (insert company) linked with any governmental agencies, such as Innovation Norway, Norad, or Norfund, to address responsible business in Norway or East Africa?
- Do you, and if yes, to what extent does (insert company) incorporate tools offered by the OECD, its Norwegian NCP (e.g., RBC compass), or which other guidelines are applied and addressed in the responsible business strategy? And why?

The responsible business approach within (insert company):

- Which mechanisms are used to root the same visions and goals of responsible business within (insert company)?
- How are social and environmental responsibilities visual within the organizational structure of (insert company)?
- How does (insert company) communicate and address the importance of social and environmental responsibility in daily operations?
 - How do you include workers' experiences and local conditions in the responsible business strategy?

Strengths, weaknesses, and critiques of responsible business concepts:

- What would you describe as the main opportunities and challenges (insert company) experience when understanding and addressing responsible business, e.g., CSR and CSV?
 - Are or were there important milestones for the company, and is there anything you would like to improve in the future in the responsible business strategy?
 - To what extent do you think that some of the opportunities and challenges can be explained through the broad definition and varying understandings of responsible business concepts?
- Some literature points towards the issue that different national, socio-economic, and cultural realities in countries of the Global South are not included enough in responsible business concepts. Do you agree?
- What is your opinion on the future development of CSR and CSV?