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Corporate Social Responsibility in Afghanistan: A Critical Case Study of the Mobile Telecommunications Industry

PhD Series, No. 11.2017

Provided in Cooperation with:
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Suggested Citation: Azizi, Sameer (2017) : Corporate Social Responsibility in Afghanistan: A Critical Case Study of the Mobile Telecommunications Industry, PhD Series, No. 11.2017, ISBN 9788793483958, Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Frederiksberg, https://hdl.handle.net/10398/9466

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DK-2000 FREDERIKSBERG
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WWW.CBS.DK

ISSN 0906-6934

Print ISBN: 978-87-93483-94-1
Online ISBN: 978-87-93483-95-8

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN AFGHANISTAN – A CRITICAL CASE STUDY OF THE MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

PhD Series 11-2017

Sameer Azizi

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN AFGHANISTAN

– A CRITICAL CASE STUDY OF THE MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies | **PhD Series 11.2017**

CBS COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

Corporate Social Responsibility in Afghanistan
– *a critical case study of the mobile telecommunications industry*

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1st edition 2017
PhD Series 11.2017

© Sameer Azizi

ISSN 0906-6934

Print ISBN: 978-87-93483-94-1
Online ISBN: 978-87-93483-95-8

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Foreword

This thesis could not have been completed without the encouragement, support and constructive feedback from various people around me.

I want to express my gratitude to my supervisors Associate Professor Søren Jeppesen and Professor Dima Jamali for their productive guidance and constructive feedback. You have both been very helpful, patient and supportive in your responses to my numerous questions and enquiries throughout the years. I hope we can continue to collaborate in future.

I also want to thank my colleagues from ICM/MSC for showing genuine interest in my research and for making me feel home in the department. In particular, I am very grateful to all my colleagues from the Centre for Business and Development Studies for their support and constructive feedback to my research. I have learned a lot due to your efforts to integrate me into your academic activities.

My very supportive PhD colleagues have had an important role in clearing up the confusions over the research process. I want to thank Sarah, Rajiv, Jacob, Kristjan, Kirsti, Frederik, Majbritt and all other colleagues for listening to all my frustrations. It is also worth mentioning that the OMS administrative staff and PhD coordinators have been very supportive in responding to my questions and requests.

I could not have conducted field trips to Afghanistan without the support of several people. I want to thank all the informants from the corporations, the Afghan Ministry of Information Communication and Technologies, the NGOs, and the various experts and other informants for taking time to enrich my study. I am also grateful to Dr. Parto and APPRO's staff for their hospitality during in my stay in Kabul.

I have no words for the unconditional support that I have received from my parents, my brother and other close family members and friends. I specially want to thank my wife Moska for sacrificing many evenings and weekends in order to let me spend valuable time on work.

Finally, I want to dedicate my thesis to my dearest son Keyaan and my late sister Sadaf for making me realize how privileged I am in life.

Abstract

This doctoral dissertation examines the business-development relations in Afghanistan by focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and other related practices from corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. More concretely, the study aims to *explore the characteristics and drivers of the various CSR practices in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry in order to critically assess the relationship between CSR and development in such context.*

The thesis highlights that the national context of Afghanistan in combination with the global mobile telecommunications industry provides a relevant empirical focus that can enrich the theoretical debates about CSR in developing countries. The study thereby stresses on the importance of context, and integrates both the societal and corporate dimensions to study CSR by corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. The study draws from the political governance literature on 'Areas of Limited Statehood' (ALS) to conceptualize the national context of Afghanistan, and to problematize the assumptions and claims of the CSR literature by focusing particularly on the neo-institutional, the political and the development-oriented debates on CSR.

The empirical data for the study is based on an intensive case study of four large and foreign-owned mobile telecommunications operators in Afghanistan. The case study includes qualitative data from various sources including interviews and observations during fieldwork in Afghanistan, and a study of secondary data from the corporations, Afghan state institutions, civil society and other relevant actors.

The findings of the study are presented through Paper 1- 4, which covers one book chapter and three journal articles. Paper 1 '*CSR in Afghanistan*' presents the initial exploration of the characteristics of CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry, and integrates the literature on ALS to explain the drivers of CSR in Afghanistan. The findings highlight that the industry plays an important socio-economic role in Afghanistan, but business-driven CSR agenda fails to grasp the immense developmental potential offered by mobile technology in Afghanistan. Moreover, the published article '*CSR in Afghanistan: a global CSR agenda in areas of limited statehood'* (Azizi and Jamali 2016) presented as paper 2 further examines the characteristics and drivers of formal CSR through neo-institutional theory, and argues that a multi-level institutional field consisting of corporations and donors rather than local actors, set the agenda on explicit CSR in the mobile telecommunications industry. The two unpublished articles put particular emphasis on assessing the business-development relations. paper 3 '*Critical exploration of political CSR in the context of anarchy*' highlights that in certain areas the Afghan state is absent and anarchy prevails with non-conventional actors enforcing violent pressures on the mobile telecommunication industry. Such contexts problematize the assumptions and claims of the political CSR literature on boundaries of corporate

responsibility/irresponsibility and thereby the political role of business in society. Finally, paper 4 *'Business as development agent or business as usual'* examines the conditions that enable/constrain business to become development agents in BoP markets. The paper argues that corporate engagements in business-development nexus are not only driven by market-oriented focus innovative solutions, but also philanthropic and integrative engagements that need to be acknowledged. However, the for-profit structures within corporations imply that the business case subordinates the development case regardless of how corporations engage in social development. The study has also produced other working papers and conference papers that are not included in this thesis, but have led to development of the four papers presented in the thesis.

The four papers presented are thereby directly responding to the research question of the dissertation, as they explore the characteristics and drivers of CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry, and critically assess the various forms of CSR-development relations. Capitalizing on the novel empirical case study, the thesis contributes to the CSR literature by problematizing multiple claims and assumptions and suggesting alternative conceptualizations for each debate within the CSR literature. Such contributions call for a future agenda specifically on CSR in ALS to advance the contextualized and critical theorization of business-development relations in developing countries.

Dansk Resume

Denne ph.d.-afhandling har til formål at undersøge virksomheders sociale ansvarlighed eller ’Corporate Social Responsibility’ (CSR) i Afghanistan ved at fokusere specifikt på globale virksomheder, der opererer i den afghanske mobiltelekommunikationsindustri. Studiet søger at udforske og forklare hvad der karakteriserer og driver CSR praksisser i den afghanske mobiltelekommunikationsindustri. Dette forskningsspørgsmål danner grundlag for en kritisk vurdering af forholdet mellem CSR og social udvikling i den afghanske kontekst.

Afhandlingens teoretiske udgangspunkt er primært i CSR litteraturen, men inddrager også den politologiske litteratur om 'Areas of Limited Statehood’ (ALS) for at begrebsliggøre den nationale kontekst i Afghanistan. Dermed understreges betydningen af kontekst ikke alene i form af den nationale kontekst, men også den globale og industri-specifikke kontekst. Studiet fremhæver, at det empiriske fokus på mobiltelekommunikationsindustrien i Afghanistan er et yderst relevant empirisk felt, der kan bidrage til neo-institutionelle, politologiske og udviklingsorienterede teoretiske debatter om CSR.

De empiriske data for undersøgelsen er baseret på et intensivt casestudie af fire store, udenlandske mobiltelefoni operatører i Afghanistan. Casestudiet indbefatter kvalitative data fra forskellige kilder, herunder interviews og observationer foretaget under feltarbejde i Afghanistan, samt brug af sekundære data fra virksomhederne, de afghanske statsinstitutioner, civilsamfundsorganisationer og andre relevante aktører i feltet.

Resultaterne af undersøgelsen præsenteres gennem artiklerne 1-4, som dækker over et bogkapitel og tre tidskriftsartikler. Derudover har studiet produceret en række andre artikler og konferenceindlæg, der ikke indgår i denne afhandling, men har ført til udviklingen af de fire præsenterede artikler.

Bogkapitlet ”*CSR in Afghanistan*” præsenterer den indledende undersøgelse af hvad der karakteriserer CSR i den afghanske mobiltelekommunikationsindustri og integrerer ALS-litteratur for at forklare hvad der driver CSR i Afghanistan. Bogkapitlet fremhæver, at industrien spiller en vigtig socioøkonomisk rolle i Afghanistan men påpeger samtidig begrænsningerne ved CSR dagsordenen, som er drevet af en forretningstilgang frem for en social udviklingstilgang. Artikel 2 er en gengivelse af den publicerede artikel ” *CSR in Afghanistan: a global CSR agenda in areas of limited statehood”*” (Azizi og Jamali 2016). Ved brug af neo-institutionel teori undersøger artiklen hvad der kendetegner og driver CSR. Artiklen argumenterer, at i ALS kontekster drives CSR af et institutionelt felt bestående af flere niveauer, hvor det er virksomheder og donorer snarere end lokale aktører nationalstaten, der sætter dagsordenen for de formelle CSR praksisser i mobiltelekommunikationsindustrien.

Afhandlingen inkluderer også to upublicerede artikler, som fokuserer særligt på at vurdere relationen mellem virksomheder og social udvikling. Artikel 3 *”Critical exploration of political*

CSR in the context of anarchy" fremhæver, at den afghanske stat er fraværende, og at anarki hersker i visse områder, hvor nye typer af aktører udøver afpresning mod firmaer i mobiltelekommunikationsindustrien igennem vold og trusler. Disse omstændigheder problematiserer den politiske CSR litteraturs antagelser hvad der skelner ansvarlighed fra uansvarlighed, og dermed hvilken politisk rolle virksomhederne kan spille i disse samfund. Endelig undersøger artikel 4 *"Business as development agent or business as usual"* de betingelser, der muliggør/begrænser firmaernes mulighed for at blive udviklingsagenter i Afghanistan kategoriseret som et 'Bottom of the Pyramid' marked. Artiklen hævder, at virksomhedernes engagement i social udvikling omfatter ikke kun det markedsorienterede fokus på innovative løsninger, men også filantropiske og integrerende praksisser. Dog indebærer virksomhedernes profit-ledede strukturer, at 'business-casen' underordner det sociale udviklingspotentiale i CSR – uanset måden hvorpå virksomheder engagerer sig i CSR.

Samlet set svarer de fire artikler direkte på forskningsspørgsmålet, da de på forskellige måder fremhæver, hvad der karakteriserer og driver CSR i den afghanske mobil-telekommunikationsindustri, og danner dermed grundlaget for en kritisk vurdering af de forskellige relationer imellem CSR og social udvikling. Ved at gøre brug af et intensivt casestudie af et nyt empirisk felt problematiserer studiet CSR litteraturens gængse antagelser og påstande og fremstiller alternative koncepter og forståelser. Disse bidrag understreger nødvendigheden af kontekstbaserede og kritiske tilgange i fremtidige studier, der kan forbedre vores teoretiske forståelser af virksomheders sociale rolle og ansvar i verdens mindst-udviklede lande.

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PART ONE

List of Abbreviations for Part One

ALS – Areas of Limited Statehood
ATRA - Afghanistan Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
AWCC - Afghan Wireless Communication Company
BOP – Base/Bottom of the Pyramid
CBS – Copenhagen Business School
CMS – Critical Management Studies
CR – Critical Realism
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
CSO – Civil Society Organisation
GSMA - Groupe Speciale Mobile Association
HDI – Human Development Index
ICT – Information and Communications Technology
INGO – International Non-Governmental Organisation
MCIT – Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
MDG – Millennium Development Goals
MNO – Mobile Network Operator
MNC – Multinational Corporation
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
PCO – Public Call Office
SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
UN – United Nations
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
VoC – Varieties of Capitalism
WB – World Bank

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1. Introduction

The role of business in society has long been debated in the academic literature and has gained importance in recent decades through the agenda on Corporate Social Responsibility, business philanthropy, corporate citizenship, sustainable development and other related notions. The debate has also gained importance on the policy agenda, with pivotal global institutions such as the UN, the World Bank and the EU, as well as business associations such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), donor agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs) and, not least, national states throughout the world increasingly engaging in the debate on the role of business in society. The CSR debate is seen as an important tool to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the recently developed Sustainable Development Goals, not only in the developing world but also in advanced and industrialized economies. However, businesses engagement in CSR to tackle social and environmental challenges throughout the world, and particularly in developing countries, still remains inconclusive. While an increasing number of studies on the characteristics, drivers and relations between CSR and social development have emerged in CSR literature, the diverse contextual settings in the developing world still remain unstudied, which calls for further studies. This thesis thus aims to contribute to the CSR literature on developing countries by focusing on the CSR practices of large corporations operating in the global mobile telecommunications industry within the national context of Afghanistan, and argues that such a focus has great potential to advance our understanding of CSR in such neglected national and industry contexts.

1.1. Motivation and research question

My personal motivation for studying CSR in Afghanistan began with my first encounter with the mobile telecommunications corporations during my work in Afghanistan in 2007–2009 when I worked as a project leader for a small Danish NGO called 'Global Education through Sport' aiming to empower street-working children in local children's centres by using sport and education as tools. I realized that one of the corporations in the mobile telecommunications industry was actively sponsoring events and financially supporting a lunch project in one of the children's centres. In that period I was also enrolled at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) as a graduate student and, due to my limited understanding of the nature and drivers of CSR, I was puzzled when observing CSR in Afghanistan. I wondered why the corporations were interested in such projects with the children's centres and what made them engage in such CSR practices. These questions inspired me to write my master's thesis in 2007 about CSR in Afghanistan (Azizi 2007), focusing on the CSR practices of one specific corporation in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. On the basis of the findings and insights of the CSR literature, I realised that the discussion about CSR and development cannot be boiled down to simple yes/no answers but is far more complex. I especially realized the importance of context, as the Afghan context seemed very different from other national contexts studied in the CSR literature. This curiosity, and my increasing personal quandary about how to create long-term development in Afghanistan, motivated me to delve deeper into the academic puzzle and apply for a PhD grant.

I wanted to critically explore and assess the role of the private sector in social development by focusing on the CSR practices of the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan.

Driven by personal motivation and a theoretical understanding of the CSR literature, I developed the following research question for my thesis: to *explore the characteristics and drivers of the various CSR practices in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry in order to critically assess the relationship between CSR and development in such context.*

Since CSR in Afghanistan had previously been only marginally studied, if at all, the first part of the research question seeks emphasise on *exploring* the characteristics and drivers of CSR by corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. This exploration builds the foundations for critically *assessing* the relationship between CSR and development, understood as social development. In other words, the latter focuses on the conceptual assessment of relationships between CSR and social development than e.g., conducting an empirical-led impact assessment of CSR in relation to social development. The differentiation between an empirical-led exploring part and an abstract assessment of conceptual relations is driven by the methodological considerations of the study addressed later in chapter 5. In sum, the research question guides the overall study, but each paper touches upon parts of the research question as elaborated in the papers.

1.2. Structure of the thesis

My thesis is an article-based thesis structured in two parts, with the chapters of Part One separated from the papers in Part Two as illustrated in the table of contents. Part One includes this introduction, which will be followed by Chapter 2 on Afghanistan and the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry to introduce the empirical background of the study. Chapter 3 provides a review of the CSR literature with a focus on identifying how the characteristics, drivers and relations between CSR and development have been studied in the CSR literature. This review leads to the identification of particular focus areas addressed in Chapter 4, which further provides a theoretical framework for how to study such focus areas. Chapter 5 presents the methodological considerations of the study, highlighting how the combination of the Afghan national setting and the global mobile telecommunications industry is relevant for a critical study that can provide empirical and theoretical contributions to the academic CSR literature. Chapter 6 presents summaries of the papers presented in Part Two and leads to the concluding Chapter 7, which responds directly to the research question and aim of the thesis noted above.

Part Two of the thesis includes the papers developed throughout the study, as detailed below:

- **Paper 1:** Azizi, S. (2015). CSR in Afghanistan. In Blowfield, M., Jamali, D., & Karam, C. (Eds.), *Development-Oriented CSR* (Vol. 2, pp. 54–70). Greenleaf Publishing.
- **Paper 2:** Azizi, S., & Jamali, D. (2016). 'CSR in Afghanistan: a global CSR agenda in areas of limited statehood'. In: *South Asian Journal of Global Business Research*, 5(2), 165–189.

- **Paper 3:** Azizi, S. 'Critical exploration of political CSR in the context of anarchy'. *Unpublished*
- **Paper 4:** Azizi, S. 'Business as development agent or business as usual?' *Unpublished*

Throughout the research process I have also produced various conference/working papers and one published book chapter. These are not included in the thesis since they have either served as preliminary drafts for the four papers noted above or are unrelated to the focus of the thesis. The excluded papers are:

- Azizi, S., (2012). 'Strategic CSR in Afghanistan: The case of Roshan, An Afghan Telecommunication Company' (Working paper). Frederiksberg: Centre for Business and Development Studies. CBS.
- Azizi, S. A. (2013). 'The What and Why of CSR in the Afghan Telecommunication Sector'. Presented at the 2nd Nordic Conference for Development Research 'Knowing Development - Developing Knowledge?', Helsinki, Finland.
- Jeppesen, S., & Azizi, S. (2013). 'Rethinking CSR in the Global South'. Presented at the 2nd Nordic Conference for Development Research 'Knowing Development - Developing Knowledge?', Helsinki, Finland.
- Azizi, S. (2013). 'CSR in areas of limited statehood'. Conference paper for EGOS 2013 Colloquium in Montreal.
- Jeppesen, S., & Azizi, S. (2015). 'Avenues of Rethinking CSR in Development'. In Blowfield, M., Jamali, D., & Karam, C. (Eds.), *Development-Oriented CSR* (Vol. 2). Greenleaf Publishing.

2. Empirical Background

My study focuses empirically on the mobile telecommunications industry operating in Afghanistan. Before addressing theoretical and methodological considerations, I will first present the empirical background for my study by focusing on both the Afghan national context and the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan. To elaborate on the national context, I first provide a historical background of Afghanistan, with an emphasis on the decades of political turbulence in the country, since I argue that such information is needed to comprehend the empirical setting for business-society relations in Afghanistan. I will then provide a presentation of the mobile telecommunications industry operating in Afghanistan, with an emphasis on the history of the industry in the country and the corporations active in the industry.

2.1. Historical overview of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in central Asia bordered by Pakistan on the south, Iran on the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan on the north and China on east

(Annex 1). Since the birth of modern Afghanistan, with the exception of a few brief periods, the nation's rulers and regimes have been limited in their exercise of centralised power throughout the country. Research on Afghan history and politics has emphasized the role of both internal and external factors in explaining the failure of attempts to form a central authority in Afghanistan (Barfield 2004; Cramer and Goodhand 2002; Harpviken 2010; Rubin 2006)(Barfield 2004; Cramer and Goodhand 2002; Harpviken 2010; Rubin 2006). In the following I will provide a short overview of the key historical events in Afghanistan that have led to the current political and economic situation. This overview provides a foundation for understanding the empirical setting of my study, since the extent to which a centralized authority is present or absent has a decisive influence on the way that business-society relations are developed.

Afghanistan in the period 1700–1800

Historians have indicated that the Hotaki regime from the Pashtun Ghilji tribe took the initial steps in the creation of a land for Afghans in the period 1709–1715 (Barfield 2012, p. 95). The first formal formation of Afghanistan, however, is traced to 1747 when Ahmad Shah Abdali, starting out from Qandahar, conquered a geographic area covering today's Afghanistan, Pakistan, north-west India and eastern parts of Iran. Ahmad Shah Abdali called this land Afghanistan, the 'land of Afghans', and through his military success, wealth, and political integration of the various Pashtun tribes and clans, he was able to call the *Loya Jirga*, or Grand Assembly, to rename his Abdali tribe 'Durrani' ('pearl of pearls') (Barfield 2004, p. 270). Drawing on traditional egalitarian governance structures in which local disputes and conflicts are solved through a *Jirga*, or council, Afghan rulers have frequently gathered tribal and ethnic leaders by calling the Loya Jirga to legitimize their regimes and decisions (Barfield 2012, pp. 294–297). Ahmad Shah Durrani is still today called 'the father of the nation', and the Durrani descendants managed to reign, despite continuous disputes and killings within the tribe, for more than 230 years from c.1747 until 1978 (Barfield 2012, p. 226; Misdaq 2006, p. 3), and continue to exercise political power today.

It is important to note, however, that since the birth of Afghanistan various tribes from the Pashtun and other ethnic groups have governed territories independently of the Durrani regimes through a traditional egalitarian structure. From the early stages of state formation, the Durrani regime gained legitimacy to rule in Afghanistan by resisting rival clans such as the Ghiljis and other ethnic groups, even when this meant cooperating with other clans and foreign powers, rather than focusing on gaining military and/or socioeconomic control of the whole territory (Barfield 2004). This was shown, for example, in the Afghan-Anglo wars, when central regimes in Kabul used the British interest to gain the financial and military ability to fight their domestic rivals. During the 'Great Game', Afghanistan became an important geopolitical location from which the British Empire aimed to be able to pre-empt possible attacks from the Russian Empire on India through Afghanistan (Harpviken 2010, p. 282). The British Empire initially invaded the country in order to control strategic important locations; however, a revolt in Kabul forced them out of the country, based on a retreatment deal with the Durrani king in Kabul. However, the

Ghilji tribe and other ethnic groups who had historically opposed the Durrani kings saw the opportunity to ambush and kill 16,500 soldiers and civilians in 1842 weakening both the British empire and their allied Durrani ruler (Dalrymple 2014). Thereafter the British switched tactics in Afghanistan, changing from direct military invasion to arm's-length support of the central regime in Kabul, with the aim of avoiding the high costs of domestic rivalry—a legitimacy strategy employed by various empires in rural Afghanistan throughout history (Barfield 2004, p. 266). Afghanistan's foreign policy was decided by the British Empire, however, to ensure a loyal alliance in the region. For decades Durrani rulers exploited this financial and military aid to strengthen their central authority, as seen with Abdur Rahman Khan, the 'Iron Amir' who ruled from 1880–1901, aimed to build the first strong centralized army to control the tribal areas. While the Iron Amir attempted to gain economic control of trade routes and Indian trade institutions by introducing a new tax system, his state-building attempts failed and he became highly dependent on foreign aid, laying the way for what some historians see as the foundations for immense poverty in Afghanistan throughout the 1900s (Hanifi 2011).

Afghanistan in the 20th century

In the twentieth century, the central authorities in Kabul initiated various state-building projects with even more dramatic and damaging effects than the attempts of the Iron Amir. Inspired by Ataturk's efforts in modern Turkey, King Amanullah Khan aimed to build a modern state in Afghanistan. The first formal constitution was introduced by a Loya Jirga in 1923 and was intended to bring about rapid social and political transformation driven by Western ideals. After the Loya Jirga, however, local leaders and clergy cited the public and unveiled presence of the king's wife, and not least the Western dress code requirement during the Loya Jirga, as reasons to call for jihad against the king (Nawid 1999). In order to regain legitimacy to rule, the king initiated the Third Anglo-Afghan War and gained full independence from the now much less interested British Empire (Barfield 2012, p. 181). Although this event is still celebrated today as Afghan Independence Day, King Amanullah Khan was overthrown in 1929. His cousin exploited the political instability to replace him, and lead the country with a strategy of avoiding conflict with tribal leaders and clergy that was later implemented by his son Zahir Shah resulting in forty years of relative peace period. Zahir Shah allowed the establishment of political groups and took the initial steps towards a parliamentary democracy by presenting the 1964 constitution for the Loya Jirga. In reality, however, only the royal elite still participated in the politics of Afghanistan (Barfield 2012, p. 211). During the 1970s, students protested in the country's major cities over the lack of political participation in the new parliamentary system, causing a period of political instability that enabled the king's cousin and former prime minister to overthrow Zahir Shah while he was away on a visit to Rome in 1973 (Barfield 2012, p. 170). Daud Khan changed the political system into a presidential republic, which gave the leftist and Islamic student movements hope for political influence. The left, in particular, saw opportunities in the new parliamentary system and supported Daud's attempts to form the new republic. To fund his modernization plans, however, Daud chose to depend more closely on economic and political ties with the USA rather than the neighbouring Soviet Union, thereby marginalising the leftist movements and causing concerns for the Soviet Union (Noorzoy 1976). The Soviet Union

intervened, supporting a coup d'état in 1978 that ended the Durrani dynasty after 230 years of reign (Misdaq 2006, p. 3) and inserted a Ghilji Pashtun as the leader of a communist revolution (Barfield 2012, p. 226).

The Soviet-backed communist revolution established a new state-building project with a strong focus on central state authority to lead the development of peripheral areas by introducing a range of socio-economic reforms intended to redistribute agricultural land from landlords to peasants, to improve women's rights and livelihoods, to enhance the industrialization process by establishing cooperatives and nationalizing formerly private corporations, and to reduce the power of the religious clergy throughout the country (Barfield 2012, pp. 229–242). However, these reforms were alien to large segments of the rural population, historically opposed to the involvement of the central state in land distribution, women's issues and, not least, their Islamic beliefs and traditions (Barfield 2004, p. 281). Moreover, the revolutionary movement was beset by violent internal struggles about which leftist ideologies to follow—struggles resulting in the wide scale imprisonment, torture and execution of all political opponents, from Islamic political parties to non-Soviet leftist movements. Fearful of political turmoil, the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan in 1978 with 110,000 troops to back up the Soviet-loyal regime. This intervention provided the USA with an opportunity to turn the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan into the USSR's 'Vietnam War' (Sarin and Dvoretskii 1993), by indirectly supporting the Islamic movements known as the 'mujahedeen' to revolt against the Soviet occupation, using the rhetoric of Jihad against the communist infidels. After almost a decade of proxy warfare led by the cold war geopolitical interests of the USA and the USSR, especially in rural areas, the Soviet Union withdrew their troops from Afghanistan in 1989, resulting in a much weakened communist regime in Kabul (Rubin 2002, pp. 296–297). Propped up by arm's length Soviet economic aid, the regime in Kabul nevertheless managed to stay in power and to make attempts at reaching peace agreements with Islamic movements until the fall of the USSR led to the collapse of the regime in Kabul in 1992 (Hess 2010). In the meantime, the late 1980s saw the spread of the international opium trade from Pakistan to Afghanistan (Rashid 2002, p. 120), culminating in 80% of the world's opium being produced in Afghanistan by the end of the 1990s (UNODC 2015).

The various Islamic movements in Kabul were not unified at this time and fought individually for central power and control of the state, resulting in a bloody civil war from 1992 to 1996. Overall, the decades of war, and particularly these four years of civil war, resulted in over 1 million deaths and the movement of over 6.2 millions refugees into the neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran (UNHCR 1999). Some of these refugees managed to flee to Western countries while, two decades later, millions of others are still living as refugees in these two countries. The civil war, the mass refugee crisis, devastating war and political instability all led to the rise of a new political movement known as the Taliban, which sought to apply Islam and Sharia law as a political foundation for stability and order. From 1996, the Taliban initiated their attack from the historically important city of Qandahar and rapidly managed to gain control of most of the country. The Taliban swiftly gained legitimacy amongst the war-affected local

population of Afghanistan who welcomed any regime that promised to put an end to the street-to-street killings and create peace and stability—at almost any price. After only one year of fighting, the Taliban gained control of all Afghanistan except for the north-eastern provinces, which were protected by a mujahedeen movement known as the Northern Alliance. This movement called for Western assistance to remove the Taliban regime, emphasizing that Al-Qaida had training camps for terrorists within the Taliban-controlled areas that posed a threat not only to Afghans but also to the Western world. Until 1998, it is argued that the rise of the Taliban regime was in the interests of the USA, as a stabile regime in Afghanistan could ensure the building of a oil and gas pipe line from great reserves in the former Soviet Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan into the Arabian sea (Rashid 2002, pp. 170–181). However, the attacks by Al-Qaida on US embassies in Africa in 1998 changed the situation leading to UN-led sanctions on the Taliban regime from 1999 due to its close ties with Al-Qaida. The Taliban regime became economically and political isolated; only the government of Pakistan gave support and official recognition of the Talban regime after 1998 (Barfield 2012, p. 264). As a consequence of international sanctions, the Taliban exercised strong central control over poppy cultivation as an alternative revenue for the regime (Rubin 2000). The Taliban regime thereby not only managed to create social stability after the civil war by enforcing Sharia law through harsh methods, but exercised also unprecedented centralised authority over rural areas. The latter is very clearly evident in poppy production, where after the leader of the Taliban mullah Omar issued the Islamic decree 'fatwa' issued on poppy cultivation, the production fell from 3,200 tons in 2000 to almost no production in 2001 (UNODC 2015, p. 37).

Afghanistan in the new millennium

The geopolitical game in the new millennium continued and still continues to influence the politics of Afghanistan. After the 9/11 attacks on various locations in the USA in 2001, the 'war on terror' was initiated against Al-Qaeda and their allies throughout the world, and especially in their 'safe havens' such as Afghanistan. This led to an UN-mandated and US-led military intervention in October 2001 to remove Al-Qaida and the Taliban regime from Afghanistan, leading to the creation of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), consisting of a coalition of 42 countries, including both NATO member states and non-NATO states. After ISAF's initial military operations in partnership with the Northern Alliance, which had lost its leader Ahmad Shah Masoud on 8/11 2001, the Taliban regime was rapidly removed from major cities in Afghanistan. In December 2001 the UN invited various former mujahedeen groups as allies of the West to find a temporary political solution to avoid a political vacuum in Kabul. Despite the major role played by non-Pashtuns in the Northern Alliance movement, the Bonn Agreement appointed Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun descendant of the Durrani tribe, as leader of the new interim government until an election could take place in Afghanistan. At a new Loya Jirga held in 2002, the Karzai government was legitimized by tribal and ethnic leaders in Afghanistan and presented a new constitution in 2004 based on the 1964 constitution. Despite major problems of security and corruption, presidential elections were held in 2004 and in 2009, with Karzai emerging as the winner of both elections. However, the latest presidential elections held in 2014 illustrate the fragile political situation: after two rounds of elections a political

settlement between the two remaining candidates, framed as a 'national unity government', was needed because no winner could be announced due to the massive scale of electoral fraud. After the arrival of US Secretary of State John Kerry, a former Northern Alliance member Abdullah, and a Ghilji Pashtun professor and expert in World Bank, Ghani, were presented respectively as the chief executive and the president of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Despite this political settlement, the political and socio-economic situation in Afghanistan remains highly problematic. In spite of the efforts of the international community and the massive inflow of aid to rebuild state institutions in Afghanistan, the country is still characterized as a fragile state and a least-developed nation with a post-conflict legacy. In terms of human development, the latest data from the UN Human Development Index (HDI) positions Afghanistan as one of the world's least-developed countries, ranking 171 out of 188 countries in the 2015 report, as well as the lowest-ranking Asian country (UNDP 2015a, p. 30). This low ranking is driven, in particular, by a 31% literacy rate amongst the adult population, a weak health system resulting in high child mortality rates, and a high level of inequality between men and women (UNDP 2015b). The Afghan state continues to be ranked as one of the world's weakest states due to increasing conflict intensity, territorial conflict, gross human rights abuse and not least the political instability, (Rice and Patrick 2008, pp. 10–15). This growing insecurity is closely related to the re-emergence of the Taliban, which has expanded its control in recent years from south-eastern parts of Afghanistan to the rest of Afghanistan. Studies highlight how the Taliban and other insurgent groups and warlords have increasingly created parallel power and economic structures in geographic areas that are not controlled by the Afghan state (Cramer and Goodhand 2002; Giustozzi 2013; Goodhand and Sedra 2010; Rubin 2000).

The Afghan economy since 2001

The past few decades of international intervention in the country have had significant socio-economic impacts on the country, both positive and negative. In terms of general economic development, the formal national economy in Afghanistan has experienced high GDP growth rates at an average of 9.1% per year (Hogg et al. 2013, p. 47), with GDP rising from 2.4 billion USD in 2002 to an estimated 19.1 billion USD in 2015 (World Bank 2016a). Despite this massive GDP growth, Afghanistan still has the lowest GDP among Asian countries. More importantly, over 40% of the country's GDP growth has been driven by the massive inflow of aid from the international coalition since 2001 (Hogg et al. 2013, p. 52). According to the World Bank and data from the OECD, net official development assistance to Afghanistan started in 2002 at 1.3 billion USD and peaked in 2011 at 6.8 billion USD, decreasing to 4.8 billion USD in 2014 (World Bank 2016b). Since 2002 the country has been ranked amongst the top ten nations receiving aid from OECD countries, and as the absolute top-ranking country in the period 2012–2014 (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2011; OECD 2016). However, it is important to note that these figures do not cover all types of aid related to security and military aspects, which indicates that the actual total inflow of aid is much higher. Moreover, it is important to highlight that these estimates only account for the formal economy and do not include the informal

economy, which is highly influential in Afghanistan. With the re-emergence of the Taliban, opium production has boomed again since 2002, peaking in 2007 with of 7,400 tons (UNODC 2015, p. 37).

In regards to the development and challenges of the private sector in Afghanistan since 2002, the government has implemented policies closely related to Neoliberal economic policies by deregulating the markets and privatizing former state-led sectors, including the telecommunications, electricity, mining and education sectors. The local private sector consists of only a few large firms and a majority of micro or small and medium-sized firms with less than 16 employees targeting the domestic market (World Bank 2014, p. 8). Studies of these firms in Afghanistan reveal that entrepreneurs view the main challenges as lying in the country's lack of security, its insufficient physical and human infrastructure, the difficulty of access to capital and high levels of corruption (Malmstrom and Cusack 2011, p. 34). In terms of sector size, aid-led growth implies that the service sector is the largest contributor to the formal GDP (+50%), while the agricultural and industry sectors have an equal share (World Bank 2016c, p. 23).

2.2. The Afghan mobile telecommunications industry

The development of the telecommunications industry in Afghanistan has historically been driven by the interests and needs of the central authorities in Kabul. While the first wired phone network was connected to the royal palace in Kabul in 1898, it was only in the 1960s and 1970s that the use of wired phones was provided by the state to certain elite neighbourhoods and governmental offices (MCIT 2016a). In the decades of war and instability from 1973–2001 the telecommunications infrastructure was not further developed but damaged. The Taliban regime used very expensive satellite phones in major cities in high-profile government offices, meaning local Afghans had to travel to Pakistan in order to contact their relatives living abroad. One private investor was in negotiations with the Taliban regime to introduce mobile telephony in Afghanistan at the time the international coalition intervened in 2001' thereafter the industry faced a new political setting (Hamdard 2012).

The Karzai government privatized the telecommunications industry and the Afghan Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) restarted talks with private investors to establish the first mobile telecommunications operator in Afghanistan in 2002, branded as AWCC. As shown in Table 1, other foreign investors and international brands then entered to compete in the untapped market of mobile telecommunications in Afghanistan. Since 2002 the mobile telecommunications industry has been a major success in terms of its rapid market expansion and its socio-economic impacts. The industry is the largest single contributor to GDP and has created approximately over 100,000 direct and indirect jobs (WB Economic report 2011: 2). In addition, according to MCIT the industry has annually generated over 200 million USD in revenue for the state, covering 89% of the population in residential areas throughout Afghanistan by 2016 (MCIT 2016b) (Annex 2 – coverage map). The industry has also been

successful in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Afghanistan: 2.4 billion USD has been invested in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry (MCIT 2016b). Finally, the CSR practices and products/services of the corporations in the industry are praised for their socio-economic impact in Afghanistan. As shown in the table, all corporations are engaged in CSR practices, implemented either through internal departments or external foundations created by the corporations. These CSR practices are communicated externally in various ways, including through modern media such as websites and social media and/or traditional TV channels and corporate reporting.

	AWCC	**Roshan**	**MTN**	**Etisalat**
Market entrance year and investment source	2002: 80 % foreign and 20 % MCIT	2003: 100% foreign investment by three investor groups	2006: 100% foreign investment by MTN	2007: 100% foreign investment by Etisalat
CSR organization and communication channel	'Bayat Foundation' (a separate NGO)	'Roshan Community' (organised internally)	'MTN Foundation' (a separate NGO)	'Etisalat Social Responsibility' (organised internally)
	CSR communicated through owner's international satellite TV channel and website	CSR communicated through website and social media	CSR communicated through website and HQ annual reports	CSR communicated through website and HQ annual reports

Table 1: Overview of corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry
Source: Corporate websites: http://www.bayatfoundation.org/, http://afghan-wireless.com/about-us/social-responsibility/, http://www.roshan.af, http://www.mtn.com.af, http://etisalat.af/ (accessed September 2016).

2.3. Summary

The overview given above has highlighted a number of important historical events that indicate the extent to which central authorities in Kabul have always depended on foreign support and have been limited in governing vast rural areas in Afghanistan, both with and without foreign aid. The overview underlines how internal factors such as conflicts of interest within the ruling elite, conflicts between tribes and ethnic groups, and the rural-urban division are the main causes for the limited authority of the central state over the peripheral areas outside Kabul (Barfield 2004). External factors and powers are also highlighted as a major cause of this limited authority, since Afghanistan has long been an important strategic geopolitical location in central Asia for both former empires and present-day global policies (Misdaq 2006; Rubin 1995, 2002). These factors imply that the central state has played a minor role in—and in certain periods has even been completely detached from—economic activities in Afghanistan. Throughout history,

central authorities in Kabul have relied on a rentier economy driven by foreign aid (Barfield 2012; Suhrke 2013; Verkoren and Kamphuis 2013). In this sense the current situation of a weak state authority heavily driven by international aid and 'experts' (Verkoren and Kamphuis 2013) differs little from the political and economic situation in the late 19th and twentieth centuries in Afghanistan (Cramer and Goodhand 2002; Hanifi 2011).

While trade and economic incentives have proved to be more important tools for gaining legitimacy from the rural population than costly military control (Barfield 2004, p. 2), the current situation is more complex, since not only the state but also the insurgents and various other non-state actors are driven by the rentier economy. After decades of war, illicit trade such as opium production has created complex parallel economic and political structures that undermine the state-building process (Goodhand 2005; Rubin 2000), since the more powerful and self-reliant that the non-state actors become the more they resist the influence and control of the state (Cramer and Goodhand 2002). While the role of non-state actors has been highlighted in relation to modern state-building efforts (Podder 2014), a specific focus on the role of global corporations as non-state actors calls for further studies in such contexts (Börzel 2013). The specific interest of this thesis therefore is in formal and large corporations operating in the global mobile telecommunications industry and how they operate and engage business-society relations to address social development issues, with or without the state. The success of mobile telecommunications corporations is of interest because, despite the many challenges they face in Afghanistan, they have managed to achieve rapid and expansive growth and have engaged in a range of CSR practices. The question that thus arises is how to conceptualize and analyse CSR in relation to 'social development' in the various governance settings in Afghanistan.

Next I will review the CSR literature on developing countries in general and thereafter develop the theoretical framework for analysing CSR in Afghanistan.

3. CSR literature review

This chapter provides a review of the CSR literature. A brief historical overview of the literature is given prior to a more specific review of the debate on CSR in relation to developing countries. The purpose is to highlight the claims and assumptions made within the CSR literature that are relevant for my study on CSR in Afghanistan.

3.1. The historical foundations of CSR

In recent decades CSR has become a buzzword among businesses, scholars, CSOs, state institutions and the media when referring to the various engagements of business in societal issues. While businesses have for centuries engaged in societal issues, the distinct notion of corporate social responsibility has emerged only in recent decades, driven by capitalist conditions in Anglo-Saxon societies (Carroll 1999, 2008). The modern CSR phenomenon is historically rooted in the US context, where the debate on formalizing the social responsibility of business emerged from the philanthropic activities of business before the 1950s (Carroll

2008). Howard R Bowen's 1953 work, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman*, can be highlighted as a seminal work in this respect (Acquier et al. 2011), since Bowen provided a definition of CSR that called for the integration of social responsibility in the managerial and organizational considerations of corporations (Carroll 1999, p. 270). Bowen's thoughts have been said to rooted in economic institutionalism, influenced by a Keynesian economic approach and Christian values, which positions his concept of the 'social responsibilities of the businessman' as a middle way between socialism and classic liberalist capitalism (Acquier et al. 2011). Critical views, however, have emphasized that large corporations have stressed on property rights within the US regulatory framework during the 19th century to reduce the social responsibility of business to that of merely the economic responsibility of corporations towards shareholders (Banerjee 2008a).

During the 1960s–70s, new definitions and types of formalization of the social responsibility of business emerged, reflecting the increasing interest of research and practice in defining and understanding the responsibilities of business, and particularly of 'corporations', in society. Reviews of the CSR literature from this period highlight the way in which the CSR concept moved from Corporate Social Responsibility towards Corporate Social Responsiveness, reflecting the shift from CSR_1, as an ethical discussion, towards CSR_2 that views CSR as a matter of managerial responses to social pressures (Frederick 1994). Preston and Post's review underlined the distinction between 'primary' responsibility, i.e., economic responsibility, payment of taxes and compliance with other formal laws, and 'secondary' responsibility, i.e., taking responsibility for the positive and negative consequences of business actions and products (Preston and Post 1981), which calls for actively engagement of corporations in the creation of public policies to avoid regulations and social pressures (Preston and Post 1981, pp. 60–61).

From the 1980s and into the new millennium, the CSR literature expanded extensively, integrating a variety of theoretical schools and, importantly, a more global focus. Various definitions of CSR have been developed, from those that view CSR as a social construction defined by relevant actors in their relationship to each other (Dahlsrud 2008), to a more categorical and universal definition of CSR as encompassing economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic dimensions (Carroll 1979, 1999). Given such ambiguities in understandings of CSR, debates have increasingly encompassed both social issues and environmental issues, and have engaged in a more global agenda due to the increasingly global reach of corporations in recent decades. The latest reviews of CSR in developing countries show how studies on developing countries have increased since the 1990s, from just a few articles in 1990–1994 to over 240 articles in the period 2010–2014/5 (Jamali and Karam 2016, p. 5).

In general, despite increasing interest in CSR literature, it is still not considered a distinct theoretical discipline but rather a field of study that is still emerging and seeking to define its own boundaries by continuously revising core assumptions and concepts through the increasing integration of various theories and methodologies, primarily from the discipline of management

but also from other disciplines such as political science, sociology and philosophy (Lockett et al. 2006). Garriga and Melé (2004) provide a useful categorization of the theoretical perspectives and approaches in the CSR literature, including the instrumental view (i.e., engaging in activities towards society to gain economic objectives), the political approach (i.e., focusing on the power of business when debating responsibility), the integrative approach (i.e., integrating social demands into for-profit logic) and the ethical approach (i.e., focusing on the morally 'good' society through business). As shown below, my study relates especially to the first three theoretical perspectives, and adds other theoretical perspectives that have been developed since the review was conducted. In terms of the level of analysis, reviews of the CSR literature highlight how the institutional, organizational and individual levels operate as three distinct units of analysis that have developed separately and in parallel with each other, which calls for multi-level analysis (Aguinis and Glavas 2012). The empirical focus of CSR studies has predominantly been on Western contexts, neglecting the diverse settings of the 'developing world' (Egri and Ralston 2008), which shows for example that countries like Afghanistan are not yet covered. Moreover, the mainstream focus of the literature has been on business and management perspective addressed through publications in international management journals, implying a lack of focus on broader societal perspective (e.g., CSR in relation to governance). The most recent and first systematic review of CSR in developing countries finds that, in comparison to the mainstream CSR literature, the characteristics, contextual dynamics, and implications of CSR in developing countries differ significantly and calls for further studies on these dimensions (Jamali and Karam 2016). These dimensions are key areas for my study and will be further elaborated below.

3.2. The CSR literature on developing countries

In order to elaborate on the particularities of the characteristics, drivers and assessment of CSR-development relations in developing countries, I will take as my point of departure the 'instrumental' perspective on CSR as the dominant perspective (Garriga and Melé 2004). This will be followed by a focus on the criticism evoked by the 'development-oriented 'and 'anti-capitalist' perspectives, as two relevant but different critical perspectives on the debate about CSR in developing countries (Blowfield and Frynas 2005, pp. 505–506) that is not covered by Garriga and Melé.

The 'instrumental' perspective on CSR

At the outset it is important to give a brief description of the 'instrumental' perspective on CSR, which as noted above is not only the foundational driver for the modern CSR phenomenon (Carroll 2008; Carroll and Shabana 2010; Garriga and Melé 2004) but is also viewed as the dominant perspective by other debates in the CSR literature, including the development-oriented view (Blowfield and Frynas 2005), the critical political economic view (Hanlon and Fleming 2009), the institutional view (Brammer et al. 2012) and the political view (Scherer and Palazzo 2011). The core idea that businesses can have an 'enlightened self-interest' in CSR was already being debated in the 1980s by Drucker (Smith 2009) and gave rise to the theoretical and

empirical focus on the 'business case' of CSR, i.e., on how and when businesses can capitalize on CSR as an instrument for achieving economic benefits (Carroll and Shabana 2010). The debate has been divided into the puzzle of how to measure CSR in relation to its direct impact on financial performance and/or evaluate its strategic significance. First, CSR has been measured in terms of its impact on corporate financial performance in order to assess the business case of CSR in financial terms (Griffin and Mahon 1997; Orlitzky et al. 2003). Despite decades of research, however, the correlation between CSR and financial performance remains inconclusive (Margolis and Walsh 2003; Perrini et al. 2011; Salzmann et al. 2005; Vogel 2006). Second, the strategic importance of CSR has been debated since the initial stages of formalizing CSR as a management practice (Ansoff 1979). Initial studies focused on how to create a fit between corporate strategy and corporate social engagements (Burke and Logsdon 1996), leading to a categorization of the strategic gains of CSR in terms of: a) cost and risk reduction, i.e., utilizing CSR to mitigate potential threats from stakeholders in order to reduce costs and risks; b) competitive advantage, i.e., utilizing CSR to adapt to and gain from opportunities in the external environment in order to improve competitive strategic positioning in the market; c) reputation and legitimacy, i.e., alignment with external expectations, utilizing CSR in accordance with the view that gaining legitimacy to operate and improving corporate reputation constitutes competitive advantage; and d) the creation of synergistic value, an approach that compromises and synthesizes diverse stakeholder interests and views to create synergy for both the corporation and stakeholders (Kurucz et al. 2008). The idea that CSR can potentially create 'shared value' and 'win-win situations' not only for corporations but also for society (Porter and Kramer 2011; Salzmann et al. 2005) has gained popularity not only within academia but also among practitioners (Crane et al. 2014) without addressing the problems that occur when corporations align corporate interests with societal interests through CSR (Nijhof and Jeurissen 2010).

Such claims about value creation for both business and society have been haunted, however, by Milton Friedman's shareholder view. Friedman referred to the social responsibility of business as a "fundamentally subversive doctrine", since "there is one and only one social responsibility of business - to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud" (Friedman 1970, p. 6). Recent CSR debates have used parts of this quote to advance counter-arguments to the whole notion of CSR. In contrast, I argue that Friedman's view on the social responsibility of business was deeply rooted in the instrumental view elaborated above. What Friedman argued against is the unrelated engagement of business in social issues, particularly without the consent of the shareholders. Friedman thereby viewed corporate managers as employees/agents whose sole social responsibility is to maximize shareholder value. When corporate managers use the scarce resources of corporations to promote social causes without any connection to profit maximization, the act is not only irresponsible towards shareholders but also has a negative societal impact on customers and employees, since it is they who ultimately pay for such engagements. In contrast, Friedman supported only corporate engagements in society that are in the long-term interest of the

business, e.g., those that serve to attract employees, reduce wage costs, enable tax-reduction, and/or create goodwill for the corporation (Friedman 1970, p. 5). Similar to the recent instrumental view on strategic CSR, Friedman underline on the business case as the dominant driver of CSR practices; and whether this business case is framed as 'strategic' CSR or as enlightened self-interest is less important as long as the practices have profit-maximizing purposes.

The 'development-oriented' view of CSR

The claims and assumptions of the instrumental view of the role of business in society have triggered critical responses that may be labelled as the 'development-oriented' view of CSR. This perspective emerged in the late 1990s and expanded in the 2000s when various corporate scandals related to social and/or environmental damage appeared in the media (Klein 1999). The 'development-oriented' view has problematized the claims of the instrumental perspective by highlighting two general points of critique against the instrumental view on CSR. First, various studies have highlighted how the implications of CSR differ in developing countries (Jamali and Karam 2016). In particular, the 'win-win' and 'shared value' claims of the instrumental view on CSR are criticized for aiming to 'solve' developmental issues through managerial logic without understanding the complexity of such societal developmental challenges (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Fox 2004; Jenkins 2005; Newell and Frynas 2007; Reed and Reed 2009). This critique necessitates drawing a distinction between the business case (i.e., what a corporation gains from CSR) and the development case (i.e., what beneficiaries will gain from CSR), and argues that in the instrumental view on CSR the business case defines and reinvents the development case of CSR (Blowfield 2005, 2007; Idemudia 2008; Newell 2008; Newell and Frynas 2007). This perspective thus acknowledges that the private sector, and particularly MNCs, have enormous resources with which to enable social development in developing/least-developed countries (Frynas 2008, p. 275), but argues that CSR "works sometimes, in some places for some certain issues, and for some groups of people" (Newell 2005, p. 556). This perspective therefore focuses on improving managerial practices in corporations towards a more 'development-oriented' CSR approach that underlines the importance of contexts for business and the development case of CSR (Blowfield 2012; Blowfield and Dolan 2014; Jamali, Karam, et al. 2015; Sagebien and Whellams 2010).

Second, interrelated to the first point, several studies have highlighted the fact that business-society relations in developing countries are different from Anglo-Saxon contexts due to their economic, political and social contexts (Jamali and Karam 2016). The debate therefore calls for more south-centred' studies on CSR in order to gain a more contextualized understanding of the nature, drivers and societal implications of CSR in developing countries (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Dobers and Halme 2009; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, et al. 2015; Jamali and Sidani 2012; Jeppesen and Lund-Thomsen 2010; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006). Such contextualized studies have potentials to provide in-depth understanding of governance actors, structures and incentives at the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis (Frynas 2008; Haufler 2010; Idemudia 2011; Jamali 2010; Jamali and Neville 2011; Jamali 2014). Studies have emphasized the importance of

national and regional contexts of CSR (Dobers and Halme 2009), with a particular focus on, for example, the Asian context (Chapple and Moon 2005, 2007), the Middle-Eastern context (Jamali and Sidani 2008; Jamali and Mirshak 2010; Jamali and Sidani 2012) and the African context (Blowfield and Dolan 2008; Idemudia 2008, 2011; Muthuri et al. 2012). However, not all contextual settings of the 'developing world' are covered in the debate; low-income economies, least-developed contexts and post-conflict and fragile states, for example, remain relatively unstudied (Egri and Ralston 2008; Jamali and Karam 2016). There is therefore a need to acknowledge the varieties of business-society settings that exist in the 'developing world' beyond the general focus on emerging markets and BRICS-countries, as the former may provide different settings for CSR than seen in the latter. At the meso and micro levels, studies have argued that sector and industry contexts (Jeppesen and Lund-Thomsen 2010; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006) and, not least, the size and types of firms, are all important to the CSR discussion (Jamali et al. 2009; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, et al. 2015; Jeppesen 2009; Luetkenhorst 2004; Vives 2006). However, at the meso and micro level, the CSR debate on developing countries has so far mainly stressed the CSR engagements of MNCs in global industries such as global manufacturing or production chains (Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen 2014; Lund-Thomsen and Nadvi 2010), mining and extraction (Frynas 2001, 2005; Idemudia 2011), while service industries such as mobile telecommunications remain unstudied despite their global reach and expansive growth in developing countries.

The 'anti-capitalism' view

A different critical perspective that may be framed as the 'anti-capitalist' view criticizes the instrumental debates about CSR for "missing the forest for the trees" (Jones 1996), since the ideological and political economic issues of CSR remain untouched in the mainstream debates (Hanlon and Fleming 2009; Jones 2009, 1998). On the one hand, this view highlights an ideological critique that address CSR as a by-product of neo-liberal ideology (Shamir 2008), an ideology which has not only enabled the privatization and marketization of public good in both developed and developing countries (Harvey 2007) but has also constructed the voluntary nature of CSR in opposition to the mandatory regulation of corporate responsibility (Banerjee 2008b, 2010; Vallentin and Murillo 2012). In this view, corporations have used CSR as a smokescreen for the damage they cause to society and/or in order to legitimize private self-regulation so as to enable profit maximization throughout the world (Banerjee 2014). On the other hand it is argued that CSR is embroiled in structural tensions and contradictions when corporations with the primary goal of maximizing profit claim to promote societal and/or environmental development. Debating CSR is therefore not only a matter of improving management practices, but requires problematization of the 'parasitical' (Fleming and Jones 2013), 'predatory' (Hanlon and Fleming 2009) and 'necrocapitalist' (Banerjee 2008c) structures that enable corporations throughout the world to create and sustain social and economic inequality. The dominant instrumental view of CSR thus neglects the discursive and material power relations constructed by undemocratic global governance structures supported by various supranational organizations and MNCs (Banerjee 2010, 2014), thereby marginalizing the voices of particular groups in

developing countries that call for corporate accountability (Banerjee 2008a, 2008b; Newell 2005; Newell and Frynas 2007). The radical views in the debate therefore call for 'the end of CSR', since "CSR research appears paralysed, unable to offer solutions" (Fleming and Jones 2013, p. 96) to the global social and environmental challenges produced by capitalist structures. In sum, this critical perspective turns a broader societal lens on the CSR debates by shedding light on the underlying structural tensions and contradictions in which CSR is embedded. While the institutional and political perspectives of CSR also turn a broader societal lens on CSR, as shown in the next section, this particular critical perspective has been addressed here to illustrate the radical critique of the prevailing instrumental perspective on CSR in the literature.

3.1. Summary

As shown in Table 2, the review has presented the instrumental view on CSR as the dominant debate in the CSR literature and has highlighted two specific critical perspectives in order to illustrate the broad spectrum of debates within the CSR literature in relation to developing countries.

	View on CSR	**Main focus of study**	**Claims about business-society relations**
Instrumental perspective	CSR is voluntary and strategic corporate engagement in society to maximize profit within the rules of the game.	How to define and measure the impact of CSR on the strategic and financial performance of corporations.	• CSR enables business to 'do good while doing well'. • Enlightened self-interest creates win-win situations for business and society.
Development-oriented perspective	CSR consists of both a business and a development case.	How to redirect business from 'doing harm' to 'doing good' for social and environmental purposes in developing countries.	• CSR has potentials to enable social development and reduce the social harm caused by business. • Contextualization is key to enabling the realisation of the potentials of CSR in developing countries
Anti-capitalism perspective	CSR is a neo-liberal smokescreen to deflect criticism and prevent regulatory pressures on corporations.	How to problematize CSR from a political, economic and ideological critique.	• CSR is embedded in the structural limitations of neo-liberal ideology and political economy and is thus a dead-end. • Radical alternatives are needed to achieve sustainable development and democratic governance of business-society relations.

Table 2: Overview of relevant CSR debates

The intention is not to provide an exhaustive review of each of these views but to identify the calls relevant for my study on CSR in developing countries. First, the 'development-oriented' perspective emphasizes the potentials and limitations of the CSR- development nexus, calling

for contextualized studies of the characteristics, drivers and the assessment of the CSR-development relations. Second, while I have separated the development-oriented and the 'anti-capitalism' critiques of CSR, there are commonalities between them in their mutual emphasis on how the business case of CSR imposes structural limitations and contradictions on the CSR-development relations. I consider both of these points to be highly relevant for the aim of my research, which seeks to critically contextualize the characteristics, drivers and the CSR-development relations as practised in the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan.

4. Overall theoretical framework

The review given above of the CSR debate on developing countries highlights how the characteristics, drivers and CSR-development relations are highly context-dependent, which thus calls for the theoretical conceptualization of business-society relations in developing countries. In order to respond to this call I will take my point of departure in a recently developed stream in the literature on political governance to conceptualize the context and business-society relations of Afghanistan. I will then utilize this conceptualization to problematize specific claims and assumptions about CSR in developing countries in order to critically identify specific focus areas for my study.

4.1. Defining CSR

An initial stage in developing the theoretical framework for my study is to define CSR, given that defining CSR has been a struggle ever since the initial studies of CSR, as shown in the review chapter. While various definitions of CSR have been provided by several scholars (Carroll 1999; Dahlsrud 2008; van Marrewijk 2003), throughout my study I will use the 'umbrella' term of CSR that defines CSR as:

> a variety of theories and practices all of which recognize the following: (a) that 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); and (c) that business needs to manage its relationship with wider society, whether for reasons of commercial viability or to add value to society. (Blowfield and Frynas 2005, p. 503)

This encompassing definition is relevant for my study for various reasons. First, this umbrella definition views CSR as a space for debating the responsibility of business in complex business-society relations and thereby avoids making CSR a normative concept driven by corporate or stakeholders' viewpoints, as it is in the case of the normative stakeholder theory (Donaldson and Preston 1995) in relation to CSR debates (Fleming and Jones 2013, pp. 53–54; Jamali 2008). Instead, the umbrella definition enables a discussion that acknowledges the various conflicting views on CSR by emphasizing the 'variety' of both the practices (e.g., formal/informal,

explicit/implicit) and theories (e.g., social, political, institutional and managerial) that relate to the responsibility of business in society. Second, while this definition of CSR sketches the nature of CSR as a voluntary act beyond legal responsibilities and personal liabilities, it still emphasizes corporate responsibility towards society and the natural environment. Such emphasis on the voluntary nature of CSR is important to bear in mind, particularly in relation to developing countries due to their different political and institutional settings, as indicated earlier. Third, CSR is viewed broadly as corporate engagements are categorized into three levels of engagement, by emphasizing responsibilities a) within the business, b) towards external business partners and c) towards challenges within the wider society. These levels are important for the analytical categorization of CSR practices and topics. Fourth, and finally, the definition acknowledges that CSR encompasses both commercial interests and value for society, thereby not limiting CSR practices to the interests of business or society only. In short, I assess that the 'umbrella term' is important and relevant for my study because such an analytical understanding of CSR can guide me to explore the broad nature of CSR in a novel empirical context without being limited by a Western-biased understanding of CSR.

4.2. Conceptualizing Afghanistan as Areas of Limited Statehood

The review chapter highlighted that engaging in contextualized studies of CSR in developing countries is complex and require the integration of various theoretical lenses to analyse business-society relations (Egri and Ralston 2008; Jamali and Karam 2016). The question is thus how to conceptualize business-society relations in Afghanistan in order to be able to study the characteristics and drivers and the CSR-development relations. Afghanistan is described as a low-income country with a so-called 'fragile state' that is recovering from decades of conflict. The conceptualizations of such contexts in the political literature on states have been led by various adjectives, such as 'fragile', 'weak', 'failed' (Rotberg 2002), but are criticized for being embedded in a normative agenda rather than having theoretical relevance (Grimm et al. 2014). Instead I argue that in order to conceptualize the complexities of the Afghan setting there is a need to integrate a recently developed governance perspective labelled 'governance without a state' (Risse 2011). This literature criticizes the dominant emphasis on euro-centric statehood when debating developing countries, since the Weberian conceptualization of the state as "an institutionalized authority structure with the ability to steer hierarchically (Herrschaftsverband) and to legitimately control the means of violence" (Börzel and Risse 2010, p. 118) is an ideal that does not match the realities in many developing countries. In reality, many developing country nations have what Krasner calls 'international sovereignty', i.e., international recognition, but lack 'domestic sovereignty' (Krasner 1999). In other words, these nation states have 'Areas of Limited Statehood' (ALS), since they lack the Weberian state authority and ability to implement and enforce rules, and/or lack a legitimate monopoly over the means of violence throughout their territory (Risse 2011, p. 4). However, one should not restrict this definition to countries like Afghanistan only, as areas in other developing countries can also be conceptualized, at least temporarily, as areas of limited statehood (ibid: 5). The question is whether ALS are doomed to be 'ungovernable', with no kind of social and economic

coordination. The core argument of the governance literature on ALS is that ALS *do* have societal coordination and governance but without the euro-centric Weberian understanding of state-led steering (Börzel and Risse 2010, 2010; Risse 2011). Instead, a 'governance without a state' perspective is promoted, where governance is understood as "institutionalized modes of social coordination to produce and implement collectively binding rules, or to provide collective goods" (Risse 2011, p. 9). In other words, the focus on governance redirects state-centric understanding towards a more (non-)hierarchical mode of steering, since the institutionalized authority structure is not only ruled by the state but also includes other non-state actors and their interrelationships. Hence the focus on 'areas' in ALS indicates that a variety of governance configurations, ranging from complete state-control to non-state control, can (co-)exist within a single sovereign nation state. These possible parallel configurations imply that both state and non-state actors can play more or less important roles in governance, depending on the specific degree of limited statehood.

I consider such a conceptualization of national context relevant for my study and for the CSR literature, as it sheds light on very different national settings than those so far studied in the CSR literature (Jamali and Karam 2016). The historical overview of Afghanistan given in the background chapter shows that the central state authority has always struggled to steer hierarchically and to gain control over the means of violence, indicating that the Afghan state has been limited in practising statehood according to the Weberian definition described above. Meanwhile it is important to understand that Afghanistan is a sovereign nation state that has legal international sovereignty but lacks what Krasner refers to as "Domestic sovereignty […] the formal organization of political authority within the state and the ability of public authorities to exercise effective control within the borders of their own polity" (Krasner 1999, p. 4). This is seen especially when differentiating between urban areas vis-à-vis rural areas of Afghanistan, as the state has historically lacked control over the latter. However, as shown in chapter 2, the Afghan state lacks control in both urban areas and particularly in rural areas of Afghanistan in the present situation. The Afghan state's authority to steer hierarchically and control the means of violence is dependent on international and national non-state actors. The international actors include the bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, international NGOs (INGOs), as well as the specific bilateral commitments of the UN and other development agencies. The level of interference from the international community as external authorities signifies that Afghanistan also lacks what Krasner refers to as 'Westphalian sovereignty', i.e., the ability to exclude external actors from authority structures within the legally recognized territory of Afghanistan (Krasner 1999, pp. 3–4). Due to the (post-)conflict situation in Afghanistan, national non-state actors such as former local leaders, commanders and warlords have been integrated into state structures as governors of their territories, which can create parallel governance structures that under certain conditions substitute/replace the formal state structures in ALS (Risse 2011, p. 18). However, such a governance perspective on ALS calls for a revision of the assumptions and claims about business-society relations in order to understand the engagement of business in governance in ALS - with or without other state/non-state actors.

Business-society relations in ALS

The conceptualization of the Afghan national context from a governance perspective on ALS has various implications for understanding and studying business-society relations in Afghanistan. The ALS literature highlights that in consolidated states the 'shadow of hierarchy' casted by the state, i.e., state regulations and policies, conditions the engagement of business in societal issues, as corporations either engage to avoid regulation or disengage due to the active provision of social goods by the state (Börzel and Risse 2010). However, in ALS such hierarchical steering by the state is limited and even absent in some cases, which raises the question of what drives businesses as non-state actors to engage in societal issues in ALS contexts.

The ALS debate claims that functional equivalents to the state's 'shadow of hierarchy' exist in ALS (Börzel and Risse 2010), since particular actors and dynamics can cast a 'shadow of external actors', a 'shadow of anarchy' and/or a 'shadow of market & competition' (Börzel et al. 2012). These alternative shadows each provide particular business-society relations, which can have diverse effects on the characteristics and drivers of CSR in ALS. First, the shadow of external actors involves international actors such as foreign governments, international development agents and INGOs, and relates to how international laws can trigger CSR by large corporations and MNCs (Börzel et al. 2012, p. 11). It is therefore interesting to analyse how the international community of donors and development agencies that have entered Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime have affected CSR in Afghanistan. Second, the 'shadow of anarchy' highlights conditions in which the state is absent and unable to provide public goods and/or the regulatory framework necessary for market transactions (Börzel et al. 2012, p. 7). These conditions can force corporations to engage in the provision of public goods through CSR, and even to substitute government services in order to enable markets to function (Börzel and Risse 2010, p. 121). It is therefore interesting to study what 'anarchy' is in Afghanistan and how the condition of 'anarchy' drives corporations to engage in particular types of CSR (Börzel et al. 2012, pp. 10–11). Third, the 'shadow of market (& competition)' involves competitors and international civil society (ibid: 6). The former implies that corporations engage in CSR due to competitive pressures, whereas the latter highlights situations where corporate brands and reputations are put at risk through international civil society campaigns.

4.3. Identifying focus areas of the study

I have highlighted how the literature on ALS mainly argues that nation states such as Afghanistan are *not* necessarily doomed to be 'ungovernable' and emphasizes that the governance perspective on ALS is necessary to conceptualize the actors and relations beyond state-centrism (Börzel and Risse 2010, 2010; Risse 2011). I argue that such governance perspectives provide a relevant conceptualisation of 'context' for studying CSR and enable me to problematize the assumptions presented earlier about business-society relations and the acclaimed pivotal role of corporations in society through CSR. I argue that the governance perspective on ALS provides a relevant theoretical lens through which to analyse the macro

level of context in Afghanistan for two main reasons. First, the governance dimension enables me to move beyond the state-centric approach to CSR in order to encompass various non-state actors that all play important roles in providing collective goods and enforcing binding rules. Second, the emphasis on 'areas' rather than a general nationwide focus on context enables me to analytically conceptualize and distinguish between different business-society conditions within the same Afghan national context, with each having different social, economic and political settings. Hence the three functional equivalents for the state's shadow of hierarchy provide different settings for contextualizing the characteristics, drivers and CSR-development relations in Afghanistan as an example of an ALS context. Similar to the mainstream CSR literature, the ALS literature claims that corporations as non-state actors engage in the governance of ALS and use CSR as their tool to address societal issues (Börzel 2013; Börzel and Thauer 2013), whether alone or in cooperation with state and other non-state actors (Börzel et al. 2012). However, the characteristics, drivers and CSR-development relations in ALS remain unstudied, and this calls for a critical study that problematizes the assumptions and claims presented in both the CSR and ALS literature on the role of business in developing countries. In order to identify specific focus areas for my study on CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry, therefore, I will take my point of departure in the three shadows of hierarchy so as to problematize particular CSR debates relevant for my study.

Problematizing the local-global dynamics of CSR in ALS

While the ALS literature highlights the shadow of external actors as a particular condition for CSR in ALS, it neglects to explain how CSR emerges in the interplay between local vis-à-vis global actors active in ALS. The increasing emergence of CSR by MNCs in both developing and developed countries has caused an 'institutional turn' in the CSR literature, which capitalizes on neo-institutional theory to explain *how* CSR emerges worldwide. The core claim is that institutions matter when debating CSR, since businesses as social actors in society seek legitimacy in various ways to reduce uncertainties in the institutional context (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Jamali and Neville 2011). Such a focus on legitimacy in society was also raised, as noted above, in the earliest discussions of CSR (Bowen 1953 in Garriga and Melé 2004), but the neo-institutional focus on hegemonic behaviours to reduce uncertainty also explains *why* businesses act socially responsibly/irresponsibly (Campbell 2006, 2007) beyond the instrumental economic-rationality argument (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). However, globalization, and particularly the increase in the number of MNCs that operate in both national and more global institutional settings, raises questions about whether the occurrence or even emergence of CSR is due to local or global conditions. The institutional approach to CSR therefore calls for multi-level analysis (Aguilera et al. 2007) that incorporates the structure-agent relations of micro and macro contexts (Scott 2013) in order to explain how CSR does/does not emerge and in what forms (Brammer et al. 2012; Jamali and Neville 2011; Matten and Moon 2008). Studies have argued for the global convergence of an 'explicit' form of CSR that replaces 'implicit' CSR by conceptualizing the national setting through varieties of capitalism (VoC) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, by emphasizing institutional isomorphism at the global organizational field level to explain the local-global dynamics of CSR (Matten and Moon

2008). However, studies on CSR in developing countries show that local contexts also matter for CSR, which indicates that the combined form of 'crossvergence' may better explain CSR in developing countries (Jamali and Neville 2011).

What remains unclear is how the neo-institutional take on CSR can explain the emergence of CSR in ALS. As indicated in recent calls on understanding the institutional setting of CSR in developing countries (Jamali and Karam 2016), I argue that the national setting of ALS, with weak state authority and powerful non-state actors, provides a different national setting than presented by the VoC framework. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind the shadow of market, as the Afghan mobile telecommunication industry consists of global players that are not only active in Afghanistan but also in various other national contexts. Hence the limited or even absent national state combined with the presence of MNCs in a global industry provide relevant grounds for studying which local and global institutional actors and pressures condition the emergence of CSR in Afghanistan. In other words there is a need to study how CSR emerges in such a multi-level setting compromised by corporations, the ALS national context, and the global configuration of industry. Such a study can provide important contributions on the local-global dynamics of CSR in an ALS as a particular developing country context. The combination of concepts from the governance perspective on ALS and neo-institutional theory thereby provides fertile ground for advancing contextualized analysis of CSR in the 'developing world' (Blowfield 2007; Halme et al. 2009; Jeppesen and Lund-Thomsen 2010). Neo-institutional theory therefore provides a solid theoretical perspective to further understand the shadows of external actors and market and to conceptualize the emergence of CSR in such complex local-global settings.

Problematizing political CSR in Areas of Limited Statehood

The ALS setting and the pivotal role of non-state actors also highlight the need for reassessing the responsibility and role of business, in particular in the shadow of anarchy in ALS. In order to theoretically position the debate on responsibility and the role of corporations in such settings, I refer to the recent debate on political CSR that calls for a conceptualization of the role of business in society beyond that of merely economic actors to a recognition of their political role (Matten and Crane 2005; Scherer et al. 2014, 2016; Scherer and Palazzo 2007, 2011). It has been highlighted that MNCs operate in post-national governance settings where states alone are no longer capable of governing global markets, which has compelled corporations and CSOs to engage in a more political role than seen before (Scherer and Palazzo 2011). Various approaches from political theory have been introduced to the CSR debates in order to re-conceptualize the new role of business in society, including an extended corporate citizenship approach (Matten et al. 2003) that emphasizes the role of business in administering rights (Matten and Crane 2005, p. 174), and a 'deliberative democracy' approach which claims that cooperation between private and public actors in a post-national setting can enable the democratic governance of societies (Scherer and Palazzo 2011). Hence both political CSR and the governance perspective on ALS focus on the increasing role and cooperation of non-state actors to address and solve societal issues that affect corporations and are affected by corporations. However, this debate is

criticized for neglecting the profit-maximizing nature and authoritatively managed organisation of businesses, indicating that businesses have no interest in or mechanisms for enabling the roles in society that have been claimed (Fleming and Jones 2013; Hanlon and Fleming 2009). Finally, it is important to highlight that the assumptions and claims of the debate do not match the realities in developing countries, due in part to the lack of empirical evidence from developing countries (Banerjee 2008a, 2010). The key question for critical studies, therefore, is not *whether* corporations act as political actors with specific interests in developing countries but *how* businesses as political actors are enabled, and what such a political role implies for the various actors of society (Banerjee 2010, 2014; Fleming and Jones 2013).

As indicated earlier, the context of Afghanistan as an ALS, and particularly the context of 'anarchy', i.e., the lack of a state to govern society hierarchically, can condition or cause businesses to engage in governance. However, the question remains as to what characterizes contexts of 'anarchy' from a business perspective and how businesses address responsibility in such contexts where the normally taken-for-granted state and CSOs do not operate. I argue that the 'anarchy' context provides a very interesting ground for problematizing the assumptions and claims of the political CSR debate, for while corporations might have a very important political role in such contexts, the question is whether and how their engagements are aligned with claims made about their administration of rights and their enabling of democratic governance. Finally, it is worth mentioning that while there is an interest in CSR literature towards war/conflict contexts (Jamali and Mirshak 2010, p. 443), only a limited number of studies in the literature have raised the issues of CSR in conflict/war contexts since the 1990s (Haufler 2010, p. 118). However, much of this literature seems to take its point of departure in understanding the response of business (Jamali and Mirshak 2010) to conflict situations (Nelson 2000; Sweetman 2009), without critically relating to the political role of business in governance.

Problematizing CSR-development relations in ALS

Finally, my study also touches upon the challenges of relating the business case to the development case of CSR promoted by the 'development-oriented' view. The instrumental view on CSR has, as noted above, for decades promoted CSR as a tool for corporate strategy and argued for win-win situations and 'shared value' for business and society (Carroll and Shabana 2010; Porter and Kramer 2011). However, the developmental critique of the instrumental view on CSR problematizes such claims, as CSR is led by the business case and there is a lack of contextual understanding of the 'development case' (Blowfield 2012; Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Dobers and Halme 2009; Idemudia 2008; Jenkins 2005; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006; Utting 2007). The development-oriented CSR literature is slowly but increasingly drawing on insights from the development studies literature to address the tensions between the business case and the development case of CSR (Edward and Tallontire 2009). Recently the debate has put more emphasis on the conditions for business to contribute to development (Jamali, Karam, et al. 2015). Here an important distinction is made between CSR as a tool for development, i.e., corporations' indirect contributions to development through tax, job creation and other business-led activities, and business as development agents, i.e., through a pro-poor focus, resource

allocation and accountability, that intentionally contribute to addressing the social, economic and environmental challenges of the poor (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). The latter is closely related to the claim that businesses can enable social development through products/services and innovations aimed at segments of the population at the 'bottom of the pyramid' (BOP) (Kolk et al. 2014; London and Hart 2010; Prahalad and Hammond 2002). However, the question of whether businesses act as development agents or not is put forward as an agenda for debate rather than a normative claim, which calls for studies into the conditions that enable/disable businesses to become development agents (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). Hence the debate remains inconclusive as to whether and how businesses can be tools or even agents for development through CSR.

I argue that the relationship between the business case and the development case lies at the heart of the debate and can shed light on the possibility or improbability of businesses acting as development agents (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). The critique presented by the anti-capitalist view is therefore a relevant critical approach to this specific debate since it focuses on the structural and functional limitations of private and for-profit corporations to address societal issues and interests (Banerjee 2008c; Fleming and Jones 2013; Hanlon and Fleming 2009). Moreover, I emphasize the importance of the contextual conditions in this debate. As shown earlier, development agencies and the Afghan state have praised the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan for the way in which industry-specific mobile technology is utilized to address socio-economic needs in a context that is in urgent need of development on a massive scale. Focusing on the combination of the Afghan context with its urgent need for social development and the industry praised for its social engagements throughout the developing world is relevant for this discussion. In other words, if businesses can be development agents through products and services (Blowfield and Dolan 2014; Kolk et al. 2014) that 'create shared value' and 'win-win' situations (Porter and Kramer 2002, 2007, 2011), the case of the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan is significant and can offer crucial insights into such claims and their limitations.

However, it is highlighted that the nature of poverty and the process of *development* remains unclear in CSR debates (Idemudia 2008; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006; Sharp 2006) and that the evolutionary progress of the field of development studies is promoted as a key source for inspiration in this regard (Edward and Tallontire 2009). It is obviously beyond the scope of this chapter to review the very broad field of development studies, but I would like to underline that when using the term 'development' throughout this thesis I refer to the Human Development Index (HDI) and UN millennium development goals (MDGs) as the most widely internationally acknowledged indicators for development. Hence I refer to 'development' beyond a pure focus on income and towards a holistic understanding of development informed by international policies that have shed light on the multidimensional nature of poverty. Such a perspective on development is argued to have been influenced by the philosophical work of Amartya Sen and his 'capability approach', which is, however, simplified in HDI indicators due to the policy-oriented approach of the UN (Fukuda-Parr 2003). Viewing poverty through the lenses of the

HDI and MDGs is a common approach taken in the CSR literature and the broader business-development literature (Boyle and Boguslaw 2007; Jenkins 2005; Kandachar and Halme 2008; Merino and Valor 2011; Reed and Reed 2009). Hence the focus of my study is to understand 'how' and 'why' businesses relate to development and poverty measured through HDIs and MDGs. This focus relates to the much more complex debate about the process of development. Here I am inspired by recent critical movements that take a critical stance towards the Western-led modernization logic and view social development as a complex social phenomenon that requires a holistic understanding of the implications of development and the power relations embedded in development interventions (Escobar 2011; Ziai 2013). This implies a critical assessment of the role of development actors in the legitimization and creation of 'development' discourse (Mosse 2005; Mosse and Lewis 2006) and requires an understanding of the development process as a multifaceted political process with a critical approach to depoliticization and outcome-led top-down interventions (Ferguson 1990). Hence development should ideally be driven by democratic inclusion and the participation of local voices, not only in order to understand needs and priorities (Chambers 2008) but also to ensure the development of sustainable solutions, defined as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation" (Brundtland 1987).

4.4. Summary

In this chapter I have developed a theoretical framework for my study that enables me to contextualize and critically study CSR in Afghanistan and thereby advance the CSR literature on developing countries. I argue that while the call for contextualization is put forward in the CSR literature, the debate is vague on how to conceptualize macro national settings in those developing countries that have a weak or even absent state. I argue that conceptualizing Afghanistan as a sovereign state with 'Areas of Limited Statehood' is relevant, and that the governance perspective on ALS provides shadows of hierarchy in business-society relations as alternatives to state-centric conceptualizations. These alternative conceptualizations are related to the various theoretical streams in the CSR debates in order to problematize the main assumptions and claims of the CSR literature.

Figure 1 illustrates the three main focus areas of my study that I have derived by integrating the ALS literature into specific CSR debates. Such integration of the shadows of hierarchy cast by external actors, markets and anarchy has been relevant and necessary for problematizing CSR debates; however, as shown in Figure 1, they are combined in each CSR debate. In other words the shadows of external actors and markets are considered relevant for the institutional and development-oriented perspectives, whereas the political CSR perspective emphasizes the shadow of anarchy and market. Finally, it is important to note that the three focus areas are all relevant for analysing the main research question of my study that seeks to analyse the characteristics and drivers of CSR with a focus on debating the CSR-development relations in Afghanistan as an example of ALS. The institutional perspective can explain the emergence of CSR in Afghanistan and thereby relates to the characteristics and drivers of CSR in such a

context. The political and development-oriented perspectives also touch upon the characteristics of CSR, but with a primary focus on assessing the drivers and CSR-development relations in Afghanistan.

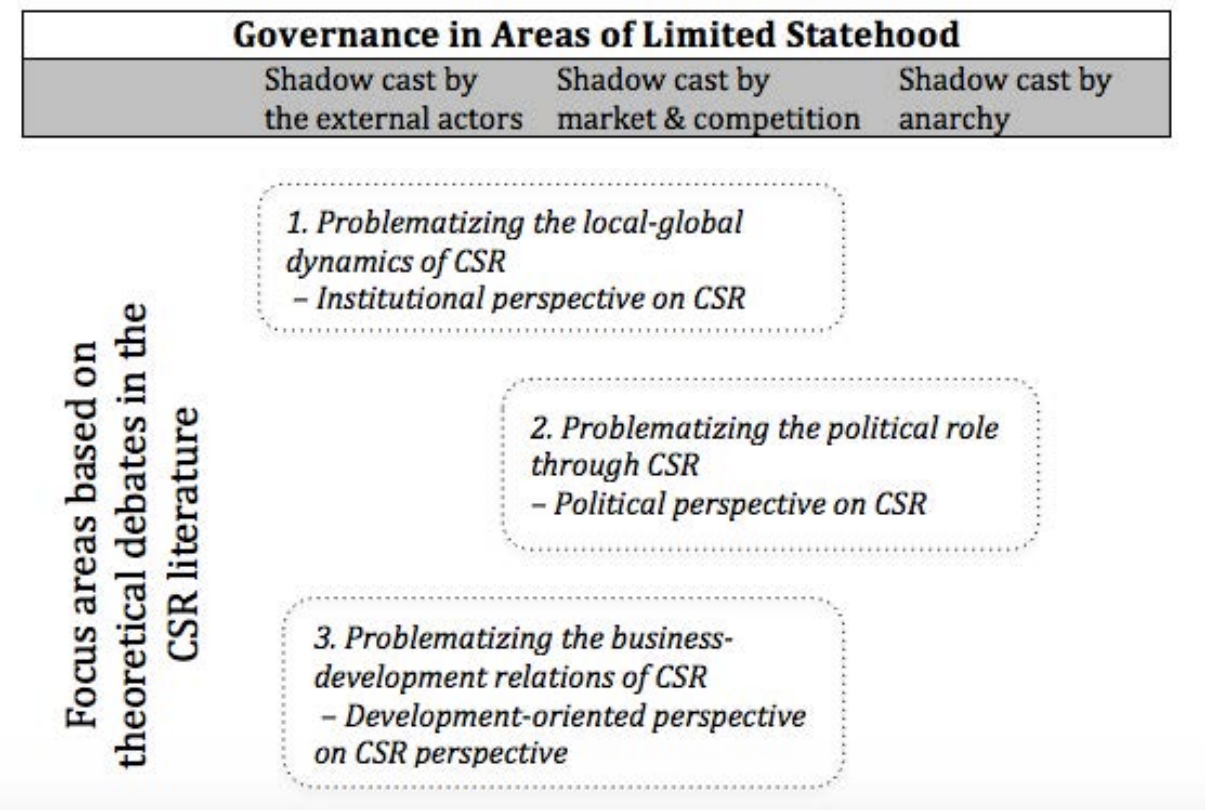

Figure 1: Overview of Focus Areas of the study
Source: Author's construction

While the theoretical positioning and argumentation of my study may seem a linear process, the various methodological considerations that were taken into account have not been addressed in this chapter. The next chapter will further argue for why the various theoretical lenses are relevant for my study and how I have gained data to analyse the focus areas highlighted.

5. Methodology

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the methodological considerations of my research study by taking its point of departure in how my study views reality (i.e., ontology), which affects the claims as to what can be known about reality (i.e., epistemology). I will therefore initially introduce the ontology and epistemology of Critical Realism (CR) as the overall philosophy of science applied in my study. This will be followed by an elaboration of how the modes of inference in CR are relevant for the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter. Thereafter, the choice of an intensive case study and the related empirical data collection and interpreted considerations will be described.

5.1. Critical Realism as the philosophy of science

> '[But] all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided' (Marx 1967 chapt. 48, III)

I have chosen Critical Realism (CR) as the philosophy of science to guide and inspire my research study's ontological and epistemological foundations. Roy Bhaskar's philosophical work from the 1970s led to the establishment of CR as a particular philosophy of science, and CR has since been developed further by several other philosophers and social scientists (Archer et al. 1998; Sayer 1992, 2000). As the focus of this chapter is on the methodological considerations of my study, I will not elaborate further on the latest developments in Bhaskar's philosophical works or touch upon the CR-led social theory of transformations and morphogenesis (Archer 1995). Instead I will focus on Andrew Sayer's work on CR methodology (Sayer 1992, 2000) and refer in particular to the CR debates in management studies and organizational studies where CR has gained increasing attention (Danermark 2002; Easton 2010; Edwards et al. 2014; Fleetwood 2004; Fleetwood and Ackroyd 2004; Reed 2009).

Ontology and epistemology

A philosophy of science is distinctive in terms of its ontological and epistemological claims and assumptions. As its name implies, CR is developed from realism but emphasizes a critical understanding of classical realist ontology. The founders of CR used the heavily debated philosophical standpoints of realism/constructivism and materialism/idealism as fertile grounds for developing CR (Bhaskar and Lawson 1998) as a response to both classical realist and constructionist claims and assumptions about ontology and epistemology in social science.

Ontology is essential for any discussion of philosophy of science and relates to a specific understanding and theory of whether and what exists in reality (Fleetwood 2004). From an ontological point of view, CR positions itself as transcendental realism that draws from Kantian transcendental philosophy, but differs in two specific aspects. First, Bhaskar agrees with the premise that knowledge is conditioned by time and space, but argues that these conditions exist not only in human minds, as Kant's idealism argues, but are instead to be found in a complex

reality that exists independently of human knowledge (Bhaskar 1998, pp. 21–22). This ontological viewpoint highlights what is referred to as the intransitive object of science in CR, as "[t]he world exists independently of our knowledge of it" (Sayer 1992, p. 5). Second, while Kantian transcendental philosophy aims to find universal conditions for human understanding of reality, CR emphasizes that our transcendental understandings of the deeper structures of reality are based on fallible rather than universally true theorizations (Bhaskar 1998, p. 22). Instead, the transitive object of science in CR argues that "[o]ur knowledge of that world is fallible and theory-laden" (Sayer 1992, p. 5). Such an epistemological viewpoint thereby highlights how the process of theorization is a mediated understanding of reality that conceptualizes parts of the continuously changing, relational and stratified reality. However, it is important to highlight that the transitive dimension of reality does not imply that knowledge generation and progress is impossible, as "it is possible to develop reliable knowledge and for there to be progress in understanding" (Sayer 2000, p. 30).

To cope with such complexity, CR proposes a differentiated, relational and stratified ontology (Bhaskar and Lawson 1998). This differentiated view is in line with the constructionist school which argues that social reality occurs in complex open systems wherein various social actors and natural objects co-exist and produce social reality. Such concept of reality therefore requires a *differentiated* rather than a monistic understanding of social reality (Bhaskar 1998, p. 22). However, CR also claims that ontology is also stratified and relational, since reality has more depth than merely the observable stratum and therefore requires an understanding of the various strata of reality and their interconnectedness (ibid). What is observable is therefore only a part of reality and cannot be reduced to the abstract structures that have produced the observable events; thus it requires abstraction to understand the particular properties of the structures in their deeper stratum of reality. Ontology in a CR approach is therefore divided into three strata or domains, consisting of the real, the actual and the empirical (Bhaskar 1998, p. 41), and differentiates CR both from other schools of realism and from the constructivist philosophy of science (Sayer 2004, pp. 14–16).

As shown in Figure 2, the empirical domain represents the concrete level of research, whereas the actual and real domains require an abstract level of study. More concretely, CR argues that whatever social phenomena we aim to study can be observed or measured as events in the empirical domain (e.g., CSR practices in a concrete setting and time), which includes specific events that are observable and recorded by the researcher (Danermark 2002, pp. 20–21). In other words, the actual domain highlights various events and their interactions that are not necessarily observed and which occur independently of our observations of them. Lastly, the real domain includes structures that, through generative mechanisms, make observable events occur. Structures in the real domain require abstraction and theorization, calling for the identification of generative mechanisms that, under certain conditions, are activated by such structures. Hence CR emphasizes that observable events and their sequences do not occur in a vacuum but are produced by abstract structures in the real domain with unobservable inherent powers which,

under specific conditions, generate mechanisms that produce observable events (Sayer 1992, pp. 103–115).

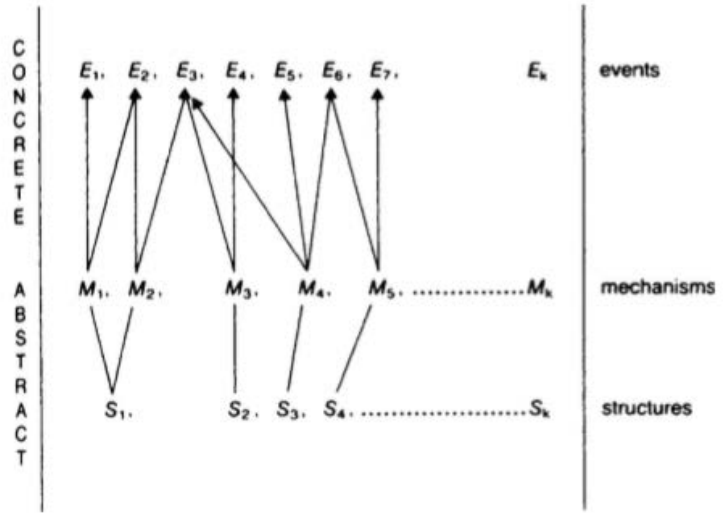

Figure 2: Structures, mechanisms and events
Source: Sayer 1992, p. 117

Such a standpoint is simultaneously both critical and integrative of classical realist and constructionist ontologies. On the one hand, classical realist ontology is criticized for its inherent naïve empiricism, with its claim of neutrality of data and its assumption that what is observable is a complete view on reality. As an example, the deductive mode of inference aims to provide cause-relation explanations that are logically tested for validity and reliability (Danermark 2002, p. 82); however, such studies merely describe what is observed at the empirical level without being able to understand and explain what produces these observable events and their interactions. This leads to what Bhaskar refers to as the 'epistemic fallacy', since the intransitive dimension of knowledge is not differentiated from transitive objects of science (Bhaskar and Lawson 1998, pp. 5–6; Danermark 2002, p. 21). Nevertheless, CR does acknowledge, partly in line with classical realist ontology, that a social and natural reality does exist. On the other hand, CR opposes radical social constructivism, which in a reverse way collapses the transitive dimension with the intransitive dimension of science and argues that reality is merely a social construction without any existence outside collective and individual memory (Sayer 2004, p. 15). Such extreme claims of constructionism are criticized for 'intellectual fallacy' (Sayer 1992, p. 13), since only describing or re-describing parts of social reality will also lack explanatory accounts beyond the empirical level as to why various views and discourses exist and affect the events observed. In response, the constructivist school counter that the search for generative mechanisms to provide causal explanations in social life will lead to a return to scientific authoritarianism whereby structure gains importance and dominates over agency (Duberley and Johnson 2009; Reed 2009). Instead, proponents of post-structuralism emphasize that social reality is a 'social construction', since no 'greater' reality exists beyond discourses. Fleetwood responds that the focus on the 'social construction' of

reality implies an ontological ambiguity (Fleetwood 2005), and defends CR's complex realist ontology by identifying four modes of reality— material, ideal, artefactual and social (ibid: 199-201)—in order to avoid ontological exaggeration (ibid: 210-213). Such a broad understanding of structures in the real domain emphasizes the need to acknowledge that reality *can* exist without human knowledge, observation or construction of it, but this does not mean reality always exist independently of human activities (Fleetwood 2005, p. 199). This implies that reality is not necessarily socially defined but socially produced, as we do not need to know the reality or create a construct of reality in order for it to exist (Danermark 2002, p. 200). In other words, reality is not a construct but a *construal* of human mind and activity (Sayer 2004, p. 7), as human activity affects reality through tacit and/or incomplete knowledge. In sum, I have argued that CR provides a particular ontological and epistemological setting for my study and thereby shapes the broader considerations as to what can be studied about CSR and how. On the basis of these principles I will elaborate more concretely on how theory and data can be related in a CR approach.

Modes of inference

The explanation of a social phenomenon based on CR requires a move from observable events to the identification of particular conditions and generative mechanisms emerging from deeper structures. Identifying how researchers can engage in such CR-inspired investigation first requires an elaboration of the modes of inference in CR.

As opposed to deduction and induction, CR presents abduction and retroduction as two closely related alternative modes of inference that enable researchers to generate explanations and generalizations that are able to encompass the stratified and relational ontology of CR. Abduction is the process of recontextualizing or redescribing the object of study by capitalizing on one or various different theoretical frames for the purpose of explanation and theorization (Danermark 2002, pp. 88–96). The inclusion of various theoretical frames aims to gain a deeper—and if possible a more developed—conceptualization of the studied social phenomena. While deduction and induction refer to specific theoretical frames in their own ways, abduction underlines the need for various theory-led understandings to uncover the different levels of complex social reality. Abduction therefore builds on the stratified and relational ontology of CR, as it enables the researcher to reflect upon how data in the empirical domain is differentiated from what causes events to happen in the actual and real domains. Abduction also entails creative reflections on the part of the researcher to recontextualize the object of study based on various theoretical frames that conceptualize ideas about how structures, relations and contexts produce the events observed.

While abduction emphasizes various theory-led recontextualizations, it does not discuss which of these are more or less valid and relevant. Here retroduction offers a comparison of explanations as a: "mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them" (Sayer 1992, p. 107). Retroduction thereby focuses particularly on identifying generative mechanisms that under

certain contextual conditions emerge from structures in the real domain (Danermark 2002, p. 96). Retroduction thus relates to the transitive dimension of knowledge in CR, since it emphasizes that while all knowledge is fallible not all explanations are equally fallible (Sayer 2000, p. 30). This fallibility assessment of identified generative mechanisms focuses on how mechanisms are able to provide transfactual argumentation that is necessary for theorization and generalization (Danermark 2002, p. 58). Since reality is viewed as stratified and relational in CR there is a need to provide transfactual arguments about how deeper structures generate mechanisms that, under certain conditions, cause observable events. Generalization and theorization is therefore not a matter of testing general laws in the concrete (deduction), or of using the concrete to generalize (induction), but of moving from the concrete to the abstract and from the abstract back to the concrete. The retroductive process can thereby build on the abductive recontextualization of the concrete to the abstract, and thereafter identify and differentiate between the abstract necessary vis-à-vis contingent conditions and generative mechanisms that can explain the emergence of concrete observable events. While abduction and retroduction are conceptually different approaches, in practice they can overlap and can be difficult to separate (Danermark 2002, p. 110).

When I started my study I was in doubt as to whether my study should use the inductive or deductive mode of inference. On the one hand I was looking for a specific theoretical perspective that could be beneficial for me in explaining CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. On the other hand my data emphasized that the contexts of Afghanistan and the mobile telecommunications industry provided contextual conditions different from those so far seen in the mainstream CSR literature. Furthermore, applying CR to my study made me realize that simply gathering data on CSR activities in Afghanistan could not tell me much about how and why firms engage in CSR, since such data on what corporations identify as CSR mainly relates to observable events visible at the empirical level only. Hence abstraction is needed to understand how and why these CSR practices are emerging and not others, or why some specific issues of development are raised rather than others. The abductive mode of inference can enable various theory-led understandings of how observable events (the empirical domain) are parts of series of events (the actual domain) that under certain conditions emerge from deeper structures (the real domain), which in turn cause/produce observed and non-observed events (Jeanes and Huzzard 2014a, p. 9). Such a process can lead to various explanations that are all mediated by the theoretical perspectives employed to identify generative mechanisms. More concretely, the abductive process entails a) gaining data about social phenomena that are thereafter b) explained through various theory-led frames that re-contextualise or re-describe of the subject matter. Hence the point is not to provide explanations based on *one* specific theoretical frame but to engage in *various* frames of explanation.

I argue that the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter, indicating various focus areas based on several recontextualizations of CSR debates, was driven by the abductive approach for several reasons. First, the CSR literature, as noted in the literature review, is not an established field with specific theoretical angles but an emerging field that currently involves

various theoretical schools with the aim of furthering theory-development. Second, the empirical focus and aim of my project calls for the exploration of various theoretical frames within the CSR literature, as Afghanistan is an as yet unstudied national context in the CSR debate. I assessed that in order to understand CSR in such a context I would benefit from exploring the various theoretical accounts of how and why CSR emerges in such a context rather than delving into a specific theoretical discussion. Moreover, I considered the abductive approach relevant for enabling theory-development based on a relatively unstudied case. Abduction is argued to be particularly relevant in studies that emphasize unstudied events since there is a dialectic relationship between theory-led re-descriptions and the empirical-led theory-building process (Danermark 2002, p. 95). This implies a 'dialectical interrogation' process, where my findings are contrasted with other theoretical stances in order to produce different explanations and to contribute theoretically (Alvesson and Sandberg 2014, p. 27). Third, I also realized that my data included various puzzles and topics that could not be explained through a single theoretical perspective. To avoid excluding or neglecting important parts of my data, the use of different theoretical perspectives allowed me to capitalize on major parts of my data. In concrete terms, abduction enables me both to use my data on CSR in Afghanistan as a driving force to identify the frame of my analysis and to criticize claims and assumptions in that particular theoretical frame. Finally, it is important to note that the abductive approach also supported the setup of the paper-based thesis. In order to avoid repetition and too much overlap between the papers, I needed a profound reason and method to 'slice' my research into various papers and book chapters. Here the abductive emphasis on providing various theoretical frames was beneficial in categorizing my data and analysis, enabling me to emphasize more clearly the differences between the papers and their specific contributions to the literature. I therefore argue that the process of writing the various papers can be characterized as an abductive mode of inference, where the papers presented in this thesis both draw from the multiple theoretical lenses on CSR and critically advance the literature by introducing the governance literature on ALS.

However, my study is also inspired by the retroductive modes of inference, as I will discuss the explanatory power of these paper's recontextualizations in the final conclusion of the thesis. As noted above, the retroductive process aims to identify and compare generative mechanisms by differentiating between necessary and contingent mechanisms and conditions that produce the CSR practices seen in Afghanistan. Thus, for my study, retroduction simply asks what makes CSR exist or what properties are necessary vis-à-vis contingent for CSR to exist and emerge in the Afghan context. Seeking to answer this question can draw from abductive efforts to recontextualize CSR from various theoretical angles in order to identify more general mechanisms and conditions needed for CR-inspired theorization and explanation of CSR. Such a process also enables me to engage in a critical study of CSR, as explained below.

Studying critically with Critical Realism

I have noted that abduction and retroduction can lead to critical studies of CSR, but there is also a need to understand 'critique' and how critical studies can be obtained through the lens of CR. I

take my point of departure in critical management studies (CMS) as a broad movement that aims to challenge the mainstream ideas, logics and conceptualizations within management and organizational studies through a diverse range of theoretical backgrounds (Alvesson et al. 2009b). While all scholarly work implies some level of critique, CMS particularly addresses the issues of emancipation, dominance and inequality created by capitalist, patriarchal and neo-liberalist relations in society (Alvesson et al. 2009b, p. 5) and aims to provide various critical lenses through which to study 'management'. More concretely, CMS address denaturalization, performativity and reflexivity as three principles for critical research (Fournier and Grey 2000). In this regard, proponents of CR argue that CR is not only aligned with CMS but advances the aim of CMS through its emphasis on conditions and generative mechanisms to explain the (re)production of the dominant structure (Reed 2009). In particular, CR's deep view on ontology emphasizes that the execution of power inherent in the dominant structure is conditioned by the various inherent capacities of agents, e.g., the ruling elite versus the lower elite and excluded groups (Reed 2009). The relationship between the ruling elite and the dominant structure is thus seen as mutually beneficial, since ruling elites emerge from the material conditions and cultural elements constructed to sustain the dominant structure (ibid: p. 2). In the following I will explain how my focus on CR can be related to such critical principles and how these influence my study.

First, critique as a process of *de-naturalization* highlights the need to critically question basic assumptions in a certain field that are viewed as consolidated knowledge and practices (Alvesson et al. 2009b, p. 6). This denaturalizing aim is central to CR's focus on what produces observable events, which in other words is a process of critically assessing the claims and assumptions of certain theoretical frames in order to provide re-descriptions that have intellectual and practical implications (Reed 2009, pp. 56–57). The abductive approach to recontextualize and redescribe CSR from various theoretical angles is highlighted as a particular research strategy for critical studies (Alvesson et al. 2008), since the provision of various explanatory accounts will lead to both new empirical and conceptual contributions. Different theoretical angles can thereby denaturalize assumptions and claims originally derived from one particular theoretical perspective. More concretely, bringing in new theoretical angles into my study of CSR will have the potential to de-naturalize and de-familiarize the mainstream understanding of the nature of CSR and the drivers of CSR (i.e. how and why certain CSR practices occur and not others - as predicted in the mainstream literature). The emphasis on conditions and mechanisms for explaining why CSR appears in specific ways enables a critique of the main assumptions and claims made about CSR in relation to developing countries/least-developed countries, as reviewed in the theory chapter.

Second, CMS emphasize the critique of *performativity* in management studies, since a critical focus on the social, ethical and political consequences of business and management performance beyond profit and efficiency is lacking (Spicer et al. 2009). However, such debate about critical performativity is criticized for being driven by non-business school canons that overtly criticize the power and dominance of social actors within the field of business through sophisticated

social theories that neglect the importance of business literature (Koss Hartmann 2014, pp. 618–620). To avoid such ironically elitist behaviour on the part of CMS scholars, I consider the CR-led focus on explaining mechanisms that create specific power relations and conditions for dominance useful for the debate on performativity in CSR studies. These explanatory processes also enable a critique of the means-ends calculation logics of business literature, and aim to re-direct attention towards the consequences of management logics in the CSR debates. In other words, the business and management fetish for performativity is created by certain structures and related generative mechanisms that can be studied through abductive and retroductive modes of inference. By critically identifying structures, generative mechanisms and contextual conditions, latent alternatives or potentialities through heterotopias, i.e., possibilities of social life that are not distant from what already exists (Spicer et al. 2009, pp. 551–552), are enabled by CR-inspired studies. In particular, the retroductive process is closely related to the tactic of 'exploring alternatives comparatively' (Koss Hartmann 2014, pp. 623–624), as various alternative explanations are related to each other in order to find the less fallible abstractions of mechanisms and conditions. As I showed in the literature review chapter, I take my point of departure in the instrumental view of CSR in order to identify other theoretical perspectives on CSR. I consider such an approach to be critical because I consider the instrumental view to be the dominant perspective on CSR and thus aim to identify other views so as to overcome the managerial and calculative performativity logic embedded in the instrumental view. Ultimately, any criticism of dominance and power is inherently related to a normative standpoint towards human emancipation and proposals for alternatives (Reed 2009, pp. 60–61), which therefore requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher. I will return to the issue of reflexivity in relation to my field study and my personal background later. In the following, however, I will elaborate more concretely on how my study is designed as an intensive case study and what that implies for my study.

5.2. Intensive case studies

Having explained the modes of inference and how they can result in critical studies, the question is then how to design such studies. Rather than categorizing studies as qualitative and quantitative, CR puts the emphasis on the purpose of study by distinguishing between intensive and extensive studies (Sayer 1992, p. 242).

As shown in Figure 3, intensive study focuses on a limited number of events in a particular context in order to gain an in-depth understanding of how such events are produced/generated by mechanisms emerging from abstract structures. Qualitative methods such as interactive interviews, ethnography and qualitative analysis are suggested for such intensive study of events, conditions and mechanisms for the purpose of theorization, as both the necessary and contingent conditions and mechanisms can be identified for a particular context (Sayer 1992, p. 243).

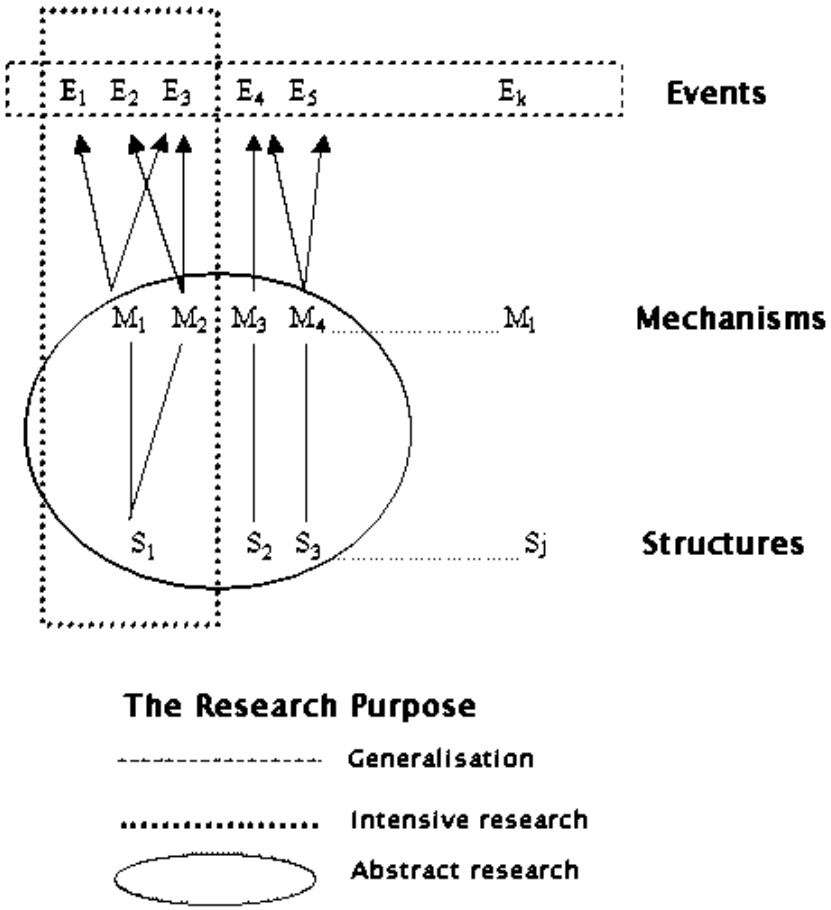

Figure 3: Intensive and extensive studies
Source: Sayer 1992, p. 11

However, the generalization of such studies is by nature limited, since intensive studies are not intended to be representative of other contexts, objects and structures. Extensive study, in contrast, focuses only on the level of observable events by including a larger sample of events for the purpose of generalization. Based on primarily quantitative data and statistical methods, extensive study aims to understand general patterns and characteristics of a broader population divided in taxonomic groups of objects. The limitation is thereby that events and relations between events are merely described without providing causal explanations of how and why the objects are produced. Ideally these two distinct research designs would be combined, since they each provide valuable insights needed for generalization and theorization. In other words, an intensive study could provide an in-depth understanding of relations and identify necessary and contingent relations, which can lead to the development of specific hypotheses for a larger population test in an extensive study.

However, my research is built on an intensive study in which I place the emphasis on particular actors and relations in order to gain an in-depth understanding of CSR in Afghanistan. I argue that intensive study is the most appropriate design for my study for a variety of empirical and theoretical reasons. First, my empirical focus provides a unique opportunity for critical studies of CSR. As noted in the review chapter, CSR in Afghanistan remains unstudied and implies a

lack of knowledge about the actors involved, their relations to each other, how they affect CSR and are affected by CSR in Afghanistan. The unexplored empirical context of Afghanistan for CSR studies calls for an intensive study in order to gain and explore an in-depth understanding of the actors and relations and their effects on CSR. From the initial project formulation of my study I realized that an extensive study focused on predefined taxonomic objects of study and hypothesis would be irrelevant, since the contextual settings of Afghanistan differ immensely from the national contexts studied in the CSR literature. Quantitatively testing such a predefined understanding of the characteristics of drivers of CSR in Afghanistan would be undesirable for the purpose of advancing the theorization of CSR, as the empirical focus of my study provides a unique opportunity to critically study claims and assumptions about the nature and drivers of CSR.

Second, the empirical and practical limitations of my study also argue for an intensive design. The narrow empirical focus of the study on the mobile telecommunications industry in the Afghan context implies a limited population size, as the industry involves few actors in terms of the number of corporations and other non-industry actors. I could have broadened my empirical focus in order to engage in an extensive study by including a larger population of informants to study the impact of the CSR projects on beneficiaries. However, as I show later, reaching out to such a large population is particularly challenging and requires many resources in the Afghan context, since informants are not easily accessible due to lack of security in the villages, provinces and cities of Afghanistan. I have therefore delimited my study to only engaging in an intensive study, as extensive study was theoretically not relevant and practically not applicable for my study. In the following I will elaborate upon the relevance of context in such intensive case study, and will later explain how the study was carried out as a case study.

The importance of contexts and cases in intensive studies

The intensive study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of a given phenomenon in a specific context rather than a universal, one-size-fits-all explanation unrelated to any context (Sayer 2000, p. 23). This aim is in line with the call for contextualization raised in the review of the CSR literature. I have so far noted that context is important without clarifying the importance of context in theory development from a CR point of view. In the following I will therefore elaborate on how the influence of context can be integrated in case studies as a particular approach for intensive study.

The terms ‘context’ and ‘case studies’ are closely related when debating intensive studies and can easily be intertwined without further considerations. However, I find it useful to distinguish between context as an empirical setting with particular conditions, and a case study as a more narrowly defined approach to study social phenomenon intensively. Intensive study underlines the importance of context in terms of temporality, as structures do not operate in a vacuum of time and space but within a specific context (Fleetwood 2005, p. 203). An intensive study therefore emphasizes not only structures and mechanisms, as I have highlighted so far, but also how contextual conditions affect observable events (Sayer 2000, p. 27). In other words, studying

CSR is not only a matter of identifying necessary relations between CSR projects and abstract structures (e.g., corporations), but also context-led contingent conditions—in this case in the Afghan context. Sayer emphasizes the role of context, as "(w)e need to know not only what the main strategies were of actors, but what it was about the context which enabled them to be successful or otherwise" (Sayer 2000, p. 26). In other words, providing explanations of CSR also requires a focus on the contingent contextual conditions that enable/disenable corporate engagements in CSR.

In contrast, case study is one of the possible approaches to study intensively and to emphasize the importance of context in theory building. While the case study approach has been popularized by the publications of Yin (1994) and Eisenhardt (1989), among others, these works present particular views on the ontological and epistemological considerations of case studies (Easton 2010). The main criticism of case studies typically focusses on the ability of such studies to generalize on the basis of a limited number of samples, suggesting that a larger number of cases are needed to search for regularities and patterns (Eisenhardt 1989). While Yin argued that case studies have important explanatory potentials in asking how and why questions, validity and reliability are still viewed as crucial elements that need to be tested to ensure the generalizability of findings (Yin 1994). In contrast, the development of theory in CR is not only a question of population size but of gaining an in-depth understanding of how causal mechanisms that emerge from deeper structures and contextual conditions generate the events we observe (Sayer 1992, pp. 104–117). CR-led case studies thus focus less on generalization and, as shown above, more on how intensive case studies can explore and explain necessary mechanisms and context-led contingent conditions (Easton 2010, p. 128) which can be used in abstract research to modify/develop theories with abductive and retroductive modes of inference (Danermark 2002, p. 110).

Context selection process

In regards to the context, I view the context in my study as a combination of the national context of Afghanistan and the industry context of the mobile telecommunications industry. First, at the national and macro level of context, I consider Afghanistan and some of the features of post-conflict, weak-state and least-development, as described in the background chapter, as a multifaceted macro setting. Each of these features has potentials to influence the CSR debate differently and therefore needs particular attention. As shown in the review chapter, the call for conceptualization highlights the need for such features of the Afghan context to be integrated into the debates on CSR and the role of corporations in developing countries. Second, the mobile telecommunications industry also serves as a specific meso-level context, since the industry players are not only operating in Afghanistan but are affecting and being influenced by the tendencies of this global industry. I thereby argue that the combination of these macro- and meso-level contexts provides particularities and complexities that illustrate the explanatory power of such examples through case studies (Merriam 2014, p. 43). The role of such cases in theory development has been acknowledged before (Flyvbjerg 2006), since critical, extreme and/or paradigmatic cases can falsify existing claims and assumptions (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 230).

I argue that, depending on the theoretical angle, my study of the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan can act as an extreme, critical and/or paradigmatic case for theory development. It is an extreme case because the focus on the extreme contextual setting of a (post-)conflict environment and a vague/limited state in Afghanistan is atypical amongst studies of high-tech and global industry engagements in CSR. However, it is also a critical case, since the study of the developmental role of industry in one of the world's least-developed national contexts can clearly indicate the potentials and limitations of corporate engagements in social development in developing countries. The contextual combination and the emphasis on the intensive case study approach thereby provide multiple potentials for critical theory-development that problematizes the claims and assumptions made in the CSR literature.

Case selection process

The boundaries of such an intensive case study are set through an iterative process driven by the purpose of the study and an in-depth understanding of actors and relations within the field. Case studies can be built as single and independent cases or as various cases (e.g., corporations) that are embedded within the broader case study (e.g., an industry or networks) (Harrison and Easton 2004). My case study can be categorized as an embedded case study (Harrison & Easton p.196) in which the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan as an overall case context embeds four corporate cases: AWCC, Roshan, MTN and Etisalat. Hence the study will focus more on the embedded nature of the cases within the industry than on devoting specific attention to the attributes of each case company. While the telecommunications industry is always used in plural form because it includes various types of technologies, I have excluded other types of telecommunications services such as Internet services and wired phone services in Afghanistan in order to focus solely on the mobile network operators (MNOs). My initial fieldwork indicated that a focus on MNOs would be particularly interesting and relevant because their size of business, geographic coverage, products and services are important factors for debating CSR and the role of corporations in business-society relations in Afghanistan.

First, as noted in the background chapter, the MNOs are of a size that matters in assessing the economic influence (e.g., employment and tax) and social influence (through products/services and CSR) that each corporation can have in society. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that MNOs, due to their size among other factors, are explicitly engaging in CSR. In contrast, while various other micro-enterprises such as small phone-card vendors in the streets are also a part of the industry, they are too small in scale to address any broader societal issues either as individuals or in aggregated form. Second, the continuous expanding coverage of the telecommunications network of the MNOs now extends to more than 80% of the Afghan population, which indicates that the MNOs are active both in urban and rural areas of Afghanistan. As noted in the literature review, this geographic coverage of the MNOs is highly relevant for my study because it gives rise to interesting puzzles for the debate on CSR and business-society relations as to whether MNOs deal with multiple formal/informal, legitimate/illegitimate stakeholders in such areas and, if so, how their engagements affect our understanding of business-society relations in such contexts. In contrast, the local vendors and

the various large international traders of telecommunications equipment that operate as suppliers for the MNOs are less relevant because of their limited focus on business-to-business customers and their geographic coverage of urban areas. Likewise, the operators of wired phone services and the various Internet providers are all limited in their geographic coverage, since they only provide services to the largest cities in Afghanistan and are not operating in rural Afghanistan. While these large-sized local and global corporations operate within the telecommunications industry, their limited geographic coverage affects their role in business-society debates. Finally, the dimensions of products and services are very important characteristics of the MNOs, together with their size and geographic coverage. The MNOs are particularly interesting for my study not only because they offer products and services that are a) directly targeted at the broad Afghan population but also because b) some of their products and services aim to have a social and economic impact on their users. Here the use of mobile products and services for development has particular interest for my study, since products and services utilizing wireless mobile phone technology are used by the MNOs as a tool to address broader socio-economic development issues. In contrast, none of the micro-vendors, larger suppliers and wired competitors offer products or services that address or aim to affect the socio-economic dimensions of development in Afghanistan.

In addition to these reasons, the boundaries of the case study are also set by the importance of temporality. The specific focus on MNOs requires further delimitations, since time and space are constantly changing. As noted earlier, CR acknowledges that changes occur in time and space and these affect our explanations because the specific context of study is ever changing. For my case study this meant that I started focusing on the four MNOs that were actively operating during 2011-2014. However, during this period and particularly after 2013, 'Salaam' was licensed to operate in the market by the MCIT. Nevertheless, I have chosen not to include 'Salaam' in my studies for two reasons. First, at the point of time when Salaam entered the Afghan MNO market I had already conducted my field study in Kabul disabling me to engage with them face-to-face. I attempted to access the company through requests by phone and email to arrange interviews with them, but I was denied access to their senior management. The second reason was their lack of engagement in CSR and in reporting about CSR. I struggled to find secondary data about Salaam's engagement in CSR, and what I did find was very limited. When I reached them by phone, one particular response was that the senior management was too busy with the start-up to talk about business-society relations and issues of CSR. I therefore decided not to include the case of Salaam along with the four other MNOs in my study. Next, I will more concretely describe my field studies in Afghanistan and the various types of data that I recorded for my intensive case study.

5.3. Field studies and data collection considerations

As each of my papers will include a detailed elaboration of methods used, I will not elaborate further upon the specific interviewing, coding and analysis approaches employed so as to avoid unnecessary repetition. Moreover, each paper uses distinct methods that are better explained in

relation to the specific purpose of each paper. Instead the purpose here is to provide an overview of my field studies and related reflections on the methods of data collection used on the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan that are not addressed in the papers. The intensive case study emphasizes on a mix of qualitative data that is driven by the needs of the research study (Danermark 2002, p. 155; Easton 2010, p. 124). In my study I have undertaken two field studies in Afghanistan that are directly relevant for my study. Traditionally, the data collection process is described somehow as a linear process that starts after the research project is initiated; however, a more realistic approach is to acknowledge preliminary studies and understandings of the field for intensive case study (Danermark 2002, p. 103). I will therefore argue that I have conducted one preliminary and one project-specific field study for this research study.

Preliminary study in 2007 and field study in 2010

As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, I undertook more than ten field trips in Afghanistan in the period 2006-2010 for a Danish NGO as a project manager prior to this research study. These working trips were influential for my current study since I was introduced to the CSR topic in Afghanistan when I met some of the corporations who wanted to engage with the local NGO that we aimed to support through our Danish NGO. These trips also provided me with very important hands-on work experience in Afghanistan. The social network I created at that time among NGOs, researchers, UN-offices and the private sector was very useful for my later research field studies. In particular, I gained experience of how to deal with the security challenges in Afghanistan and learnt the important of networking in accessing various fields in Afghanistan. However, my initial data collection process started in relation to my master's thesis on the same topic in 2010, as this process led to my first research-minded engagement with the mobile telecommunications industry. I conducted semi-structured interviews over Skype with the head of CSR in one particular corporation in 2010. This gave me an initial but limited understanding of the CSR practices by this particular corporation. Moreover, my master's thesis provided me with an initial understanding of the important actors and their relations in regards to the CSR debate in Afghanistan.

In 2011 after graduating from CBS, I worked as a research assistant at the CBS Centre for Business and Development Studies. Here I was granted a fund to conduct a preliminary research field study in Afghanistan in order to gain a better understanding of the field and thereby improve my chances of being granted a PhD-scholarship. I therefor conducted a field study from September to December 2011 in Kabul, Afghanistan, where I expanded my network within the field in order to gather more data on the CSR topic. My preliminary study led to a total of six interviews with various actors within the industry and their stakeholders, which I have also used in my PhD thesis, a scholarship for which I was granted in spring 2012.

Field study in Afghanistan from September to October 2013

My second field study in Afghanistan was much more specific in terms of what I wanted to study on CSR in the Afghan telecommunications industry.

Actors/organization	Interviews conducted
Roshan	1. CSR director (2010) 2. Marketing and CSR manager 3. CSR coordinator 4. M-paisa manager
MTN	5. CSR manager (2011) 6. CSR manager 7. Mobile Money manager
Etisalat	8. CSR manager 9. M-paisa manager 10. General Public Relations manager
AWCC	11. CSR manager 12. Mobile Money manager
Ministry of Communication and IT	13. Director general 14. IT employee
Afghan Telecommunications Regulatory Agency	15. Public Relations manager 16. Marketing manager 17. Mobile Money manager
NGOs	18. Deputy director of partnering NGO (2011) 19. Deputy director of partnering NGO 20. UK INGO (2011) 21. Danish INGO (2011) 22. Swiss INGO (2011)
Suppliers	23. ACG – Director (Skype)
Researcher and experts	24. Academic expert 25. ICT expert - Hamdard 26. CSR advisor on the mining industry- WB 27. Senior coordinator - UNICEF (2011) 28. IT students at ICT conference
Donor agencies	29. Danish embassy, Helmand value chain and ICT 30. Danish embassy growth and employment 31. Danish embassy education 32. World Bank on ICT
Communities	33. Landlord in Kunduz, Northern Afghanistan

Table 3: List of interviews conducted

As shown in Table 3, the field study in 2013 enabled me to conduct semi-structured interviews with senior representatives of the four corporations active in the industry on their CSR engagements. Other interviews conducted prior to 2013 are also listed in Table 3, with the year indicated in brackets.

An important event that enabled me to identify relevant actors and relations, and which provided me with access to these, was the first International ICT Conference and Exhibition held in Kabul in 2013. This conference gathered all relevant national and international actors to discuss the topic of 'ICT for human development' and enabled the broader ICT industry to share ideas and exhibit products and services. This conference was a 'lucky strike' for my field study as I recorded 33 speeches, as listed in Table 4, and observed more than 10 exhibitions, listed in Table 5. All of which helped me not only to gain a broad picture of the field but also to gather very specific statements necessary for my analysis. Moreover, the conference enabled me to

meet relevant actors in the field face-to-face for interviews or to set up interviews after the conference. This conference was therefore essential for my access to and identification of actors in the field, as I previously either did not have access to the actors or did not realize the importance of some of the actors. For instance, I knew before the conference that MCIT and ATRA were two different bodies, but there was no public information about how they differed or about which senior representative would be important for my study. Likewise I had only a vague notion of the business partners/suppliers, local experts and, not least, donor agencies relevant for my study. However, hearing the diverse speeches and meeting participants during the breaks of the conference enabled me to identify the right informants and also to introduce myself and my study in a way that gained me access to further interviews.

The conference also enabled me to update and re-establish my contacts with the four corporations, as my former contacts in AWCC and Etisalat had left these corporations, while my contacts in Roshan and MTN did not respond to the multiple requests I had sent them prior to the conference. I met all representatives of the four companies at the conferences and (re)established relations, which led to concrete agreements on conducting interviews with them. Furthermore, the speeches at the conference also provided a lot of background information about the industry from very diverse actors. This information not only clarified who the important actors were with whom to engage in deeper conversations, but also whom I should not approach as their work and organizations were outside the boundaries of my case study. This delimitation was important for my study, as I not only had time and resource constraints but also security risks to consider, as detailed later.

Finally, the conference also enabled me to identify other stakeholders, such as local and international NGOs, local and international experts on the field, and finally donor agencies relevant for the specific topic of CSR. Using the snowball technique, I asked in each interview for the 'hidden' relevant informants that could be useful for me (Browne 2005). The strength of the snowball technique lies in gaining access to the relevant actors and understanding relationships between them by asking informants to identify additional relevant actors within the field. This process of interviewing the elite from corporations, industry actors, ministries and donors requires continuous interaction in order to gain legitimacy (Macdonald and Hellgren 2004). However, in the final interviews I realized that the relations and actors mentioned by the informants were all covered by my study but that my interviews were targeted towards an elite group rather than being an open process that included viewpoints from diverse groups of informants. The limitation of the snowball technique is that the specific group's actors and relations drive the identification of other stakeholders, which thereby can exclude and marginalize some specific groups whom this group does not recognize as important actors (Browne 2005, p. 57). I will elaborate on the elitist group challenges later in regards to data collection.

As noted, I managed to observe relevant activities, projects and fields as much as possible given the challenges of conducting field studies in Afghanistan. Table 5 provides an overview of my

various observations, illustrating how many observations I conducted, the purpose of the observations and the locations of the observations.

Representations	Number of speeches
Politicians and Ministry officials	9 speeches, including 5 Afghan ministers and politicians and 4 senior representatives from Turkey, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.
Donor Agencies	3 senior representatives from USAID and WB
Mobile Network Operators	4 senior managers from MNOs in Afghanistan
Other telecommunications corporations	11 Afghan and 4 foreign senior managers
Mobile services experts and practitioners	6 Afghan and 2 foreign experts on mobile telecommunications

Table 4: List of speeches at the 2013 ICT conference in Kabul

Most of the observations were conducted in Kabul, as the security situation did not allow me to travel further afield, as described later. Observing corporate sites, vendors, mobile money agencies and call offices gave me an impression of how business partners are related to the MNOs and how the partnership works. These observations, along with the usage of M-services, provided useful insights from a consumer perspective. My observations of the CSR-partnerships with NGOs were more specifically focused on the CSR activities and gave me an impression of the corporate engagements and the NGO-partners' physical space and implementation. Moreover, my participation in the meeting of the Mobile Money Association enabled me to understand how such meetings were coordinated, the topics discussed between the competitors and how donors engaged in such meetings. Finally, I was lucky in using my personal network to meet one of the engineers of the companies who was able to take me on an informal visit to three tele-towers placed in the city of Kabul: in the outskirts of Kabul province and in the Panjsher province in North-East Afghanistan (see Appendix 1). This trip gave me very valuable background information about how the tele-towers operate, the challenges facing the corporations and how they try to deal with these challenges.

Number of observations	Purpose of observations	Location(s) of observations
4 observations of corporate office sites	- To get an impression of the corporate buildings and artefacts at local headquarters. - To observe employees and departments related to CSR issues at work	Corporate sites in Kabul city: - Roshan - AWCC - MTN - Etisalat
3 observations of corporate tele-towers	- To observe the infrastructure of tele-towers and to identify what is required to make them operative - To get a partial understanding of the challenges facing tele-towers in various locations	Tele-tower sites located in: - the residential area in Kabul city - Non-residential area of Kabul province - Outreach areas in the Panjsher province (North-East Afghanistan)
3 observations of public call offices (PCOs) in Kabul	- To observe how PCOs work - To observe how women operate PCOs that are especially made for women	3 Different areas of Kabul city: - 2 PCOs - 1 Women PCO (2011)
5 observations of street-vendors selling phone cards	- To observe how the street-vendors interact with consumers by selling cards to consumers on the streets	3 Different areas of Kabul city: - Central city - High-income residential area - Low-income residential area
1 observation of an Afghan Mobile Money Association meeting	- To observe how representatives of Roshan, Etisalat, MTN, AWCC discuss issues related to mobile money in Afghanistan - To observe how representations of USAID facilitate such meetings and agendas	Meeting held in Roshan compound in Kabul city.
3 observations of mobile money agencies	- To observe how mobile money agencies operate cash-in and cash-out of mobile money. - To identify where and how consumers engage with mobile money agencies	3 different areas of Kabul: - corporate stores - formal banks - independent kiosks licensed to operate as mobile money agents
6 observations of consumers of mobile services (M-services)	- To observe how consumers use M-services such as: - Mobile money - Mobile health - Mobile entertainment applications	1 Office and 1 house location in Kabul city
10 observations of ICT company exhibitions	- To observe the latest products and services that the four mobile network operators offer - To observe what other products and services are provided in the broader telecommunications industry	Kabul city in the exhibition area of the 1st ICT conference
2 observations of CSR practices implemented with local NGOs	- To observe how CSR partnerships between corporations and NGOs work	- 1 observation of a soup project practised within the compound of a local NGO (2011) - 1 observation of relief support to internally displaced people in outside of Kabul (2011)

Table 5: Overview of observations

Continuous desk research and requests for interviews after 2013

Finally, I also want to elaborate on my efforts to keep in touch with informants after the field study in 2013. The field study provided me with a crucial understanding of the actors and relations of the four corporations within the industry and towards their stakeholders. This enabled me to follow these actors through continuous desk research, including public reports and news updates that provided me with updates on the industry's development and important

background information. Table 6 provides an overview of the relevant documents and sources of information I used to gain background information about the case study and about socio-economic development in Afghanistan.

Actors/ organizations	Sources	Data type
Mobile telecommunications industry	Corporations active in Afghanistan – data both from headquarters and subsidiaries	Public digital archival and periodic documents: • Corporate CSR reports from 2002–2011 Websites: • News on CSR projects, topics and partners Social media: • Videos and news updates
	Mobile telecommunications industry association, Groupe Speciale Mobile Association (GSMA)	Public digital archival and periodic documents: • GSMA annual reports on trends and developments in the global industry
State institutions	MCIT	Public digital archival and periodic documents: • Public telecommunications policies and strategies • Public reports on trends and developments in the mobile telecommunications industry Websites: • Industry numbers and statistics • Mobile telecommunications maps on coverage and services
	ATRA	
Donor and development agencies	World Bank	Public digital archival and periodic documents: • Socio-economic development indicators and trends • Donor support for the industry
	USAID	Public digital archival and periodic documents: • Projects related to the industry
	UN	Public digital archival and periodic documents: • Human Development Index reports 2002–2016
Media	Local media	News coverage on national issues and challenges for the industry
	International media	News coverage on broader issues of private sector development in post-conflict contexts
Other organizations	Brooking institute	Reports on the fragility of the state
	Peace for fund institute	Statistics on aid inflow

Table 6: List of secondary sources of data

As an example, I realized that that the local media provided good coverage on the development of the industry and provided analysis and insights into the challenges facing the corporations that had refused my requests for information during the interview stage In particular, the

challenges that corporations face from the Taliban are well covered in the local media and were useful for my analysis. In various situations I tried to follow upon these cases and requested further interviews with the corporations, but my requests to ask about specific issues of security challenges were again rejected. I also used the reports of major donors to follow up on their engagements with the industry, which gave me a good understanding of the role of donors in relation to CSR. Some of the representatives of the donors were interviewed after the field study in 2013 and are indicated in Table 3 as 'Skype interviews'.

While I have so far discussed the ICT Conference as an enabling factor for my field study, my focus on the participants also limited my study. Next I will address these challenges and highlight how conducting field studies in (post-)conflict contexts can have more challenging dimensions than the typical challenges involved in field studies in developing countries.

Challenges of conducting a field-study in conflict-affected areas

Conducting field studies in developing countries, and particularly in (post-)conflict contexts, involves various challenges that can limit or even disenable the data-collection processes.

On the one hand there are only a few areas within Kabul and several other major cities that are assessed by international guidelines provided by embassies as being secure enough for foreigners to travel within. Accessing informants and communities outside Kabul is not only a matter of traditional concerns about planning logistics, having resources to travel and/or having the right research focus (Desai and Potter 2006a), but also involves much more vital concerns about continuous insecurity, including the risk of being kidnapped or of finding oneself caught in the midst of one of the multiple daily battles between insurgents and the Afghan national army. On the other hand, millions of Afghans manage to lead their daily lives and to travel between the cities and the insecure areas, which indicates that having the right network and knowing the right people allows you to travel around (Desai and Potter 2006b) a bit more safely than a foreign-looking person with no network in the specific area of visit. Since the corporations have staff working all over the country with crucial local knowledge and networks, I asked the four corporations to let me follow them on their next visits outside Kabul. However, this proposal was rejected due to security reasons, as their policies did not allow them to facilitate my visits to rural communities. Such reluctance obviously limited my movement, especially in rural areas where traveling without 'knowing someone' is very dangerous. To compensate for these limitations, I made use of my personal background as an Afghan-born male who speaks local languages, and more importantly my network, to gain access to meet particularly relevant rural people who were in some way connected to corporate activities and CSR projects. Using my network enabled me to meet a rural landowner from Northern Afghanistan, as listed in Table 3, who was visiting Kabul during the period of my field study. This person was renting his family-owned land to the corporations to install their tele-tower, which gave me valuable though limited insights into the relationship between landowners and corporations and into the issues of tele-towers in rural areas. My personal network also enabled me to obtain relatively safe and inexpensive accommodation in Kabul, as I lived with one of the

small research organizations that I knew from my previous trips to Kabul. Finally, the lack of security also led to unexpected challenges in Copenhagen prior to my travel to Kabul, since I needed to obtain the approval of the senior management at CBS in order to obtain CBS employee insurance.

In short, conducting field studies in (post-)conflict areas such as Afghanistan is highly relevant for academic work, as it entails unstudied empirical contexts. However, the lack of security imposed many constraints that I would argue go beyond the typical challenges of conducting field studies – even in the majority of developing countries (Desai and Potter 2006b). My study is therefore limited by these challenges, as my daily risk assessment in Kabul did not allow me to engage with all the stakeholders and other actors in the way I had envisioned in the process of planning my field studies. While my personal background and my network in Kabul has been touched upon as a strength for my study, in the next section I will reflect on how my background may have mediated my study, and furthermore what ethical issues I took into considerations during my study.

Ethical considerations

The challenges of conducting research study in Afghanistan also raise important ethical issues. The ethics of social science research have been debated at length, and ethical models of 'universal principles', 'utilitarian ethics of consequences' or 'virtue ethics of skills', have been presented (Kvale 1996, pp. 121–123). Retrospectively I have used my personal intuition, cultural skills and sensibility to engage in dialogue with my informants and agree upon the conditions for the data collection and future publication. First, in order to avoid my informants not being aware of the aim and consequences of my study, I practised 'informed consent' with all informants by explaining the aim of the study and the purpose of their engagement. This means the informants accepted the recording of all interviews prior to the interview. The drawback was that in some instances this ethical process prevented me from recording the whole interviews. Prior to the interviews I offered my informants full transparency on the parts of my publication that included their statements, but only as long as I referred to their specific names and positions. However, during the process of writing I decided to avoid using the names and specific titles of my informants in order to ensure they would not face sanctions within their organizations or even harsher negative consequences (Skrutkowski 2016). I assess this to be especially important in (post-)conflict contexts where the risk of violence and threats to individual lives are higher than in other contexts due to the lack of personal security and protection in society. Some of the topics I have touched upon in my study are highly sensitive, which also led to many rejections of requests for interviews and/or of specific questions asked during the interviews.

Second, conducting critical studies involves challenging conventional assumptions and practices and therefore leads to ethical challenges that are not easily solved by the guidelines of mainstream literature on qualitative research and ethics. Despite the fact that I engaged openly in a trustworthy and reliable manner with my informants about the topic and purpose of my

study, I am sure that their reading of my findings will be controversial for them. In my view this is an inherent logic in critical studies, as being critical towards the standpoints of representatives of elite groups will obviously not always be well-received by the elite itself. This puts the critical scholar in a well-known challenge of how far one can push the critical investigation while being ethical towards the informants (Jeanes and Huzzard 2014b, pp. 233–234). I learnt that sharing my papers with my informants before publication would end in a long process of feedback, as the informants requested particular changes in the paper before approval. I had a long dialogue with some of the informants, telling them that the informed consent agreement only referred to the specific parts of the paper where their statements were cited with names and positions. Based on this troublesome process, I decided to make all statements anonymous, as noted above, in order to avoid complaints and requests for rewriting the papers in accordance with some of the informant's viewpoints.

Reflections on 'data collection'

Finally, I reflect critically upon the process of data collection, as studying critically is not only a matter of the earlier mentioned de-naturalization and critique of performativity towards theories but also a matter of the researcher being reflexive about data and the analysis of data. The CMS movement underlines the need for r*eflexivity* in order to problematize claims about neutral and universal knowledge creation, as the researcher's ideology, interests and traditions will always affect a particular study. In other words, self-reflective processes are necessary to clarify the research study and its purpose. The CMS movement has a common point of scepticism towards positivism and assumptions about knowledge and knowledge creation being objective and disinterested (Alvesson et al. 2009a; Duberley and Johnson 2009). Knowledge creation is instead generally understood as a social process in which the researcher takes part, and therefore requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher to ensure an emancipatory and critical validation of knowledge and the creation of knowledge (Alvesson and Deetz 2000a, p. 3). As elaborated earlier, CR acknowledges not only that there are different domains of reality, but also that knowledge production is based on a mediated access to reality by the researcher. Hence, my personal background and interest will always mediate the empirical data gathered (Alvesson and Sandberg 2014). When I refer to 'data collection', therefore, I do not intend to refer to this process as if data were out there to be collected objectively, since such an assumption about 'raw' data would be a contradiction (Gitelman 2013). Instead, when I refer to 'data collection' I acknowledge that such a process of generating data is mediated by my personal viewpoints and the theoretical lenses through which I observe 'reality' (Alvesson and Deetz 2000b, p. 113). Hence, my use of data 'collection' implies the transitive dimension of knowledge generation that is always fallible, as elaborated upon above. I will therefore describe how my own personal background and academic interest have affected the priorities chosen for my research (Alvesson et al. 2008; Jeanes and Huzzard 2014b).

I have no doubt that my personal background had an important role in the field study I carried out in Afghanistan. I was in many ways looked upon as a 'local' Afghan during my field study

in Afghanistan. First, I am fluent in Dari, one of the official languages. I consider this a crucial competence in conducting studies in developing countries, as using interpreters not only reduces the efficiency of work and creates dependency but also unavoidably mediates the data and insights provided by the informants. Second, my multiple trips to Afghanistan have afforded me a good grasp of Afghan socio-cultural expectations and norms (Desai and Potter 2006a, p. 20), which is important in order to avoid unintended misconduct and misunderstandings in formal elite settings and in engaging with the poor and marginalized. Third, my Danish background and the fact that this is a Ph.D. study have also been very important to my gaining access to various places and people. I particularly experienced this when approaching people in senior positions in corporations and formal organizations through LinkedIn, which was much more effective than emails and phone calls, since my research title and profile from a European country such as Denmark was more clearly stated and validated through LinkedIn. Fourth, as a member of the diaspora I am typically well received among Afghans in Kabul, as Afghans offered help to make me feel welcome and appreciated my concerns about our 'homeland' Afghanistan. My personal background has, however, not always been an enabling factor and an advantage in conducting field studies in Afghanistan. While the literature states that coping strategies are necessary in conflict-affected contexts (Desai and Potter 2006b, p. 74), I assess that my personal background led to some resistance and tensions commonly seen with people from the diaspora. Under certain conditions, some locals were aggressive towards me, arguing that I had left Afghanistan in the tough times now returned with a European education to capitalize on the opportunities that are meant for them. In order to show that I am one of 'them', I have learned to emphasise that I was born in Afghanistan and can relate to the collective memories of the disastrous civil war, and not least to the harsh conditions of refugees in Pakistan that millions of Afghans have experienced. Moreover, I always emphasized that my aim is not to utilize their opportunities, but to critically study important issues in order to enable better development for 'Afghans'. In any case, my particular background and how I have capitalized on it affected my access to the field and how the informants perceived my study and me.

Another limitation of my study is related to the abovementioned conference held in 2013, which was not only an opportunity but also a constraint for my study. The fact that the conference was arranged and held by MCIT meant that all participants were identified and accepted by the MCIT beforehand. I personally needed to register and obtain an invitation card before I could join the conference. Hence the actors that MCIT viewed as relevant or not relevant for the discussion on 'ICT for human development' were very clearly visible in the list of participants. My personal notes show that I found it interesting that no consumer groups, watchdogs, NGOs or other types of representatives of urban and rural communities that could be affected by ICT solutions were to be found in the participant list or in the list of speakers. Instead the conference included a strong presence of private corporations in the ICT industry, senior politicians and ministers, representatives of donor agencies such as embassies, the World Bank and UN offices. This representation—or lack of representation—gave me the preliminary idea that a closely related 'elite' group drives the agenda on 'ICT for human development' and the related CSR debate within the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan. Most of my data

collection is therefore related to this group of informants. However, to ensure a critical understanding of the topic I also intended to gather data from communities and individuals excluded from this elite group. In order to meet those excluded from the 'elite's agenda', I planned to visit urban and rural communities to address the viewpoints of the recipients of the CSR projects and to engage with the very large community of NGOs that operate in Afghanistan. However, this plan did not succeed because the lack of security, particularly in rural Afghanistan, prevented me from following through my intentions for various reasons. I therefore consider my personal background as both an enabling and limiting factor for my study, as being 'native' implies a pre-understanding that affects the study (Skrutkowski 2016).

Finally, I will highlight my personal interest in the perspectives on the academic debate on CSR. Many scholars at conferences and during my research stays in Beirut and Toronto told me I was 'sitting on a gold mine', as my study on CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry seems to tell a positive story that easily contributes to the instrumental views on CSR. However, I have not utilized my data to present and support the positive stories and claims about CSR in developing countries. Instead, my focus has been on critical discussions of CSR, and I have used my particular case study to critically engage with the CSR literature. This critical approach is not only led by my personal viewpoints on business-society relations, but also by calls for critical studies of CSR and business-society relations in the academic debates. I would therefore argue that my personal interest and viewpoints have inevitably affected the focus of my study, but that these are also grounded in the academic debates within the field of CSR.

5.4. Summary

In this chapter I have described the methodological considerations of my research study, which build on critical realist ontology and epistemology. Inspired by CR, I have elaborated on how and why the abductive mode of inference inspired my study, which aims at recontextualizing and redescribing CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry through various theoretical lenses highlighted in the focus areas and used in developing my papers. Moreover, I have highlighted how the retroductive approach inspired me to summarize the findings and draw conclusions that seek for generative mechanisms and causal explanations in the final conclusion of my study. These modes of inference are built on an intensive case study of the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan, including four embedded corporate cases. I argue for the particularities of my case are driven by the multifaceted empirical context that enabled me utilize the case study approach for critically engaging with theory development. More concretely, I have provided a general overview of my field study trips and the various methods of data collection used for the case study. I have also highlighted the challenges of conducting a qualitative study in Afghanistan and the ethical issues involved. Finally, I have critically reflected upon my personal role in the study. The considerations and reflections addressed in this chapter set the scientific foundations for my study and thereby enable me to distinguish between the appearance and essence of CSR as I recall from Marx at the beginning of this chapter.

6. Overview of Paper 1-4

This thesis consists of four papers related to the three theoretical focus areas mentioned in the chapter 4, each responding to aspects of the overall research question. In the following I will present a brief background and summary of each of the four papers to provide an overview of each paper's research question, theoretical and empirical focus and key findings and contributions, as illustrated in Table 7.

Paper 1: '*CSR in Afghanistan*'

The first paper has been published as a book chapter in *Development-Oriented Corporate Social Responsibility* (i.e. Azizi 2015). This paper seeks to explore the characteristics and drivers of CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. To identify the characteristics of CSR, the paper capitalizes on the umbrella definition of CSR and illustrates how CSR practices are more focused on wider-society issues than issues related to the internal and/or business partner/supplier dimensions of CSR. To explore the drivers for such a CSR focus, the paper develops a multi-level framework that integrates the governance-level conditions drawn from the ALS literature with particular corporate modes of responses at the level of firms. At the governance level the paper identifies the shadows of 'global market & competition' and some degree of 'traditional community' pressures. These pressures trigger firm-level responses, with corporations responding either as 'victims' or as 'solutions'. This chapter and its findings is relevant for my thesis since it provides an initial empirical exploration of CSR and argues conceptually that the integration of governance-level conditions drawn from ALS literature and firm-level explanations from the CSR literature requires more studies. This realization helped me develop the next three papers, which are grounded in specific theory-led debates within the CSR literature.

Paper 2: '*CSR in Afghanistan: a global CSR agenda in areas of limited statehood'*

The idea for Paper 2 arose during my stay at the Olayan School of Business of the American University of Beirut, where I visited my second supervisor, Dima Jamali. After reading the initial drafts of the paper, she agreed to co-author this paper with me, which later led to its publication in a special issue on CSR in the *South Asian Journal of Global Business Research* (i.e. Azizi and Jamali 2016). This paper presents a more nuanced exploration of CSR characteristics than Paper 1 and, more importantly, aims to explain the emergence of such CSR practices in Afghanistan. The paper is thereby directly related to Focus Area 1, outlined in the previous chapter, since it sheds light on the local-global dynamics of CSR. Capitalizing on the concepts of organisational field and isomorphism from neo-institutional theory, the paper relates to the institutional debate in the CSR literature. However, it problematizes this debate by highlighting that the Afghan context differs considerably and cannot be conceptualized through applying a National Business Systems (NBS) approach. Instead the paper draws from the ALS governance perspective to point out the importance of various external actors within the organisational field. The paper therefore develops a multi-level understanding of the

organisational field to incorporate the various external actors operating at global, national and corporate levels. The dynamics between these external actors and the corporations are analysed in terms of coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphism. The findings highlight that the explicit form of CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunication industry is a new phenomenon in Afghan business-society relations. The isomorphic dynamics within the organisational field highlight how the CSR agenda in Afghanistan is driven by the policies and practices of global corporate headquarters, the norms of industry associations and donor agencies, and mimetic behaviour in the local market. Hence, local actors such as state institutions, local civil society and communities play a minor role in the emergence of the CSR agenda in Afghanistan, which implies that the explicit CSR agenda draws from the global CSR agenda to address specific local developmental challenges that are particularly relevant for specific global actors active in the multi-level organisational field.

Paper 3: *'Critical exploration of political CSR in the context of anarchy'*

The initial idea for Paper 3 emerged from a conference paper presented at EGOS in 2013. In contrast to papers 1 and 2, this paper focuses on the business-society engagements of the industry that are unreported and ignored in explicit corporate communications on CSR. The paper takes its point of departure in the second focus area highlighted in the previous chapter by relating the shadows of hierarchy casted by 'anarchy' and 'market' in ALS to the political CSR debate. The paper problematizes the assumptions and claims of the political CSR debate on the political role of business in society and sheds light on extreme contexts where the state is absent and replaced by other actors and governance structures. The paper argues that such actors and their pressures need to be identified in order to debate the political role of corporations in society. Conceptually, the paper analyses the political role of corporations in a context of anarchy by stressing a) societal conditions, i.e., the actors and pressures that corporations face in the context of anarchy, and b) corporate conditions, i.e., how corporations respond to such societal pressures. Empirically, the paper focuses on the market expansion of the mobile telecommunications industry in rural Afghanistan. The findings identify three particular settings in the context of anarchy that present novel empirical insights into the ways that non-conventional and controversial actors such as village strongmen and criminal and insurgent groups impose pressures on corporations. The paper discusses how the corporate responses to such pressures are driven by instrumental motives to ensure and increase profit-maximization through market expansion into rural Afghanistan, which stands in contrast to normative claims made in the political CSR debate about the nature and role of corporations. The paper thus underlines the importance of contextualization beyond Western-biased and state-centric assumptions and claims seen in political CSR, and concludes that in contexts of anarchy the instrumental and self-interested motives of corporations do not exclude but rather drive their political role. This paper will be submitted to the *Journal of Business Ethics* after the submission of the thesis.

Paper 4: *'Business as development agent or business as usual?'*

Paper 4 was inspired by a conference paper presented in 2013 at the 2nd Joint Nordic Conference on Development Research in Helsinki. The paper relates to business-development relations and takes its point of departure in the conceptualization of business as a development agent (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). The paper problematizes this conceptualization of the role of business in development by arguing that the conditions for 'how' businesses become development agents remain conceptually and empirically unstudied. The paper therefore presents a framework suggesting that the ways in which a) corporations assess the business case vis-à-vis development case condition, b) the modes of engagement of business in development, which thereby constrain/enable c) the ability of businesses to fulfil the three development agent criteria. These conditions call for the integration of insights from both the CSR literature and the debate about BOP markets in order to encompass the various engagements of business in development beyond a focus merely on 'solutions' and 'innovations' for development. Drawing from data on CSR and/or other developmental engagements of corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry, the findings suggest that businesses engage in developmental issues through philanthropic, integrative and innovative modes of engagement. However, it is emphasised that the business case subordinates the development case in each mode of engagement, which thereby constrains the ability of business to fulfil the development agent criteria. Moreover, the paper discusses how the business case orientation of corporations, their managerial mind-set, lack of scale/sustainability, and the process of commodification constitute barriers hindering corporations from becoming developmental agents in Afghanistan. The paper thereby advances the conceptualization of business as development agents by identifying the conditions that constrain or enable business in becoming development agents. The unbalanced relationship between the business case and the development case is particularly highlighted as a constraint disenabling businesses from becoming development agents, since the managerial mind-set and the lack of scale and sustainability are influential in all modes of corporate engagements. The innovative mode of engagement, which is seen especially in BOP markets, is argued to be constrained by the commodification of developmental needs into market services/products, which leads to a call for further studies.

	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
Research Question	What are the characteristics and drivers of CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry?	How has CSR emerged in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry?	What characterizes political CSR practices in the context of anarchy?	How are corporations enabled /constrained to become development agents?
Theoretical focus	To explore the characteristics and drivers of CSR by focusing on the relationship between governance and firm-level conditions in ALS.	Relates to Focus Area 1: To explain how global and local actors and institutional dynamics drive CSR in a national in which the National Business System is weak or even absent.	Relates to Focus Area 2: To identify which societal and firm-level drivers explain the social engagement of corporations in a context of anarchy, and what the implications are for the PCSR debate.	Relates to Focus Areas 3: To explain the conditions that enable/constrain businesses in fulfilling the three development agent criteria.
Empirical focus	The explicit CSR practices of four corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry.	The explicit CSR practices of four corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry.	Active social engagements of the four corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry in rural Afghanistan.	Active social engagements of the four corporations through products, services and philanthropy in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry.
Key findings	CSR practices are characterised by a wider society focus, where corporations mainly respond as 'victims' and/or 'solutions' to the pressures from the shadow of market and competition in ALS.	A new explicit form characterizes CSR practices in Afghanistan, which are driven by a multi-level organisational field wherein global external actors rather than national actors are influential.	In the context of anarchy, corporations engage in social engagements to respond to the violent pressures from non-conventional actors in order to gain access to land and to ensure the security of corporate personnel and assets.	Corporations address developmental issues through philanthropic, integrative and innovative modes of engagement, but are constrained by the business case that subordinates the development case.
Key contributions	The paper contributes with novel empirical data on CSR from Afghanistan, and highlights conceptually that a multi-level explanation that integrates both the governance and firm-levels conditions that are needed to explain the specificities of CSR in ALS.	The paper argues that the National Business System is inadequate to conceptualize the national setting in ALS. Instead, the emergence of CSR can be explained by the isomorphic dynamics among external global actors within the organisational field.	Corporate engagements in business-society relations in the context of anarchy are led by economic motivations, in contrast to the normative claims put forward in the PCSR debate. Such engagements drive rather than exclude a political role for corporations.	The paper argues that the unbalanced relationship between the business case and the development case constrain corporations to become development agents, and identifies the managerial mind-set, lack of scale/ sustainability and the process of commodification as implications of this relationship.

Table 7: Overview of the papers

7. Conclusion

Based on these papers outlined in the previous chapter, the study can respond to the overall research question: to *explore the characteristics and drivers of the various CSR practices in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry in order to critically assess the relationship between CSR and development in such context.*

In short, the findings show that CSR practices by the four corporations operating in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry are characterized by not only an explicitly form addressed in official reports, but also an implicit/informal form, where corporate engagements in business-society relations remain unreported in the official public documents by corporations and/or state institutions. Nevertheless, both the explicit and implicit/informal corporate engagements are mainly addressing wider society issues by targeting beneficiaries and stakeholder beyond the level of employees and business partners. Moreover, the study also highlights that corporations address business-development relations through both particular CSR practices and through process- and product-led engagements e.g., by utilizing mobile technology for social development. In terms of drivers of CSR, the findings suggest that both internal and external pressures and opportunities drive CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. Internally, corporate headquarter policies and the search for market potentials drive corporations to engage in explicit CSR. However, corporations also face isomorphic pressures within the organisational field to engage in specific explicit CSR practices led by competition in the market. In contrast, the informal/implicit practices are driven by market expansion in rural Afghanistan, where corporations face unconventional actors and pressures. Finally, in terms of assessing the CSR-development relations, the study concludes that regardless of the form and mode of engagement, the business case subordinates the development aspect and potentials of corporate engagement – even in Afghanistan where corporations as non-state actors have immense space to respond to the massive lack of social development in Afghanistan.

In the following, the conclusion will be elaborated further by specifying and relating the findings from the four papers to the research question. This process is inspired by the retroductive approach that seeks to identify the necessary vis-à-vis the contingent relations of objects, as mentioned in the methodology chapter.

Characteristics of CSR in Afghanistan

One of the main concerns in the CSR literature is how to define CSR (Carroll 1999; Dahlsrud 2008; van Marrewijk 2003), since universal definitions are too broad to be useful (Banerjee 2001), which thus calls for a context-dependent understanding of CSR over a predefined notion of CSR (Halme et al. 2009; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006) in relation to developing countries (Jamali and Karam 2016). The findings of my study support this argument since the characteristics of what is considered to be explicit CSR, as illustrated in papers 1, 2 and 4, differ significantly from 'CSR' practices in the context of anarchy, as shown in Paper 3. Drawing on the umbrella term of CSR (Blowfield and Frynas 2005, p. 503) enabled my study to explore the characteristics of CSR from a position whereby CSR comprises any voluntary engagement of

corporations in societal issues, particularly in relation to developmental issues. I thereby argue that a broad conceptual space for CSR is needed in order to encompass the varieties of business-society relations that exist in unstudied contexts such as Afghanistan. My study argues that the CSR debate ranges from explicitly communicated CSR practices to the kind of unreported engagements in society examined in Paper 3, since they all touch upon the issues that corporations assess as their *social responsibility* due to various pressures and drivers. Furthermore, the characteristics of CSR are complicated due to the massive lack of development in the Afghan context, as any corporate engagement in societal issues—whether intentional or unintentional, strategic or non-strategic—has implications for social development and can be related to the CSR debate. While papers 1 and 2 focus directly on what is considered as CSR by corporations, Paper 4 shows that corporate engagement in societal issues can also be led by mobile products and services and be directly related to the cores business operations of corporations.

Drivers of CSR in Afghanistan

In terms of exploring and explaining the drivers of CSR, all of the papers touch upon various explanations for the emergence of CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. To identify the relevant explanations for what drives/triggers CSR practices, I recall the critical realist distinction between necessary vis-à-vis contingent relations for theory development and generalization (Sayer 1992, pp. 99, 110). In particular, papers 1, 3 and 4 indicate that the key drivers of corporate engagements in societal issues are led by the corporations' profit-seeking or profit-maximizing structures. Paper 2 provides a slightly different explanation, with the emphasis on isomorphic dynamics within the organisational field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) as drivers of CSR. Whereas papers 1, 3 and 4 implicitly view corporate decision-making processes as rational and calculative, seeking profit and the maximization of profit, paper 2 explores the extent to which such process are driven by the search for legitimacy. Hence, paper 2 relates the classic notion of the bounded rationality of corporate decision-making (March and Simon 1958) to CSR, where the aim may not necessarily be to identify the 'best' approach for the business case or the development case but to gain legitimacy for what corporations do within the organisational field. I would argue that the latter explanation is still related to the profit-led structures in corporations, as there are limits to how much corporations can spend on CSR without implications for their financial performance. Papers 1, 3 and 4 also clearly show that while corporations are affected by the search for legitimacy externally, corporate decision-making in regards to what CSR is and how business-development relations can be addressed emerge from the necessary for-profit structures and contingent contextual conditions.

In addition to identifying the necessary conditions led by the for-profit structures of corporations, the study highlights the importance of context and how context can influence the characteristics, drivers and the assessment of CSR-development relations. The study conceptualizes the Afghan national context from the governance perspective on ALS, and draws from the various shadows of hierarchy in ALS to highlight the diversity of business-society settings in Afghanistan and how each setting influences CSR. I show in papers 1, 2, 4 how the

shadows cast by 'market' and 'external actors' influence CSR towards an explicit form related to specific development ideals of health, education, empowerment, etc. In contrast, Paper 3 shows how unconventional local actors influence corporate engagements in the context of anarchy and that these engagements remain unreported by the corporations. Context is important because the corporations operating in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry face various business-society settings and therefore need to respond differently to each setting, resulting in a process of decoupling (Scott 2013, p. 185), since conformity to one environment (paper 3) conflicts with the other environments (papers 1, 2, and 4). Such insights are important in advancing the call for contextualization of CSR in developing countries, since the governance literature on ALS has enabled me to analyse one national context with diverse business-society relations, and problematizes thereby the state-centric debates in the CSR literature. Taking my point of departure in the specific focus areas identified for my study, in paper 2 I have problematized the state-centric assumptions and claims made in relation to explaining the local-global dynamics of CSR, while in paper 3 I have problematized the political role of corporations through the CSR debate, and in papers 1 and 4 I have problematized CSR-development relations. On the other hand, however, my study has also indicated that the governance literature on ALS focuses on the governance-level of analysis and has not incorporated corporate perspectives. As shown particularly in papers 1, 3 and 4, I have therefore conceptually related the corporate level of analysis to the various shadows of hierarchy cast in ALS. Such conceptual modifications are relevant, since CSR is not determined but influenced by contingent contextual factors, which indicates that CSR practices—whether reported or not—are observable and produced by generative mechanisms emerging from the for-profit structures of corporations, but also influenced and conditioned by contextual factors in the various business-society settings of ALS.

CSR and development relations in Afghanistan

The structurally necessary conditions and the context-led contingent conditions are also relevant in assessing CSR-development relations as the last element of the research question. The aim of the study is not to conduct an impact-assessment of CSR on developmental factors but to highlight how and why corporate engagements in societies such as Afghanistan enable/constrain the potentials of CSR towards 'development'. In chapter 3, I underline how CSR has been promoted as a tool for development in the mainstream CSR literature and how a critical lens is needed to understand CSR-development relations. My study takes its point of departure in the conceptual distinction between the business case and the development case in order to problematize and advance beyond the normative and idealistic claims put forward about CSR in the literature. However, in order to advance the debate about the CSR-development nexus, my study emphasizes the structurally necessary conditions vis-à-vis the contextual contingent conditions for when and how for-profit corporations address developmental issues through CSR. My study therefore highlights how the development case of CSR is structurally subordinated by the business case of CSR, which indicates that this unbalanced relationship should be the premise for any debate about CSR-development relations in for-profit corporations. However, the way in which the business case is assessed and how such assessment conditions the

development case is not structurally defined but is context-dependent, as illustrated empirically in papers 3 and 4. The empirical findings of Paper 4 indicate that the unbalanced relationship between the business case and the development case implies that corporations are not able to act as development agents, and highlights their managerial mind-set, their lack of scalability, and the process of commodification as barriers led by the dominant business case. Similarly, Paper 3 highlights how instrumental incentives ensure market expansion and how growth drives corporate social engagements. In the context of anarchy such engagements mean that the corporate focus is on non-conventional and elite groups in society rather than on supporting the poorest in society.

The empirical and methodological contributions

The empirical insights presented in the study shed light on a novel empirical context and therefore make an important contribution not only to the CSR literature but also to the governance literature on ALS. Designing the study as an intensive case study has proved to be theoretically relevant and practically useful for the study, enabling in-depth exploration and explanation of the complexities in a novel business-society setting. Due to the focus of the study, an embedded case study approach has been relevant in presenting the mobile telecommunications industry as a whole rather than specifying or comparing the distinctiveness of each corporation in the papers. Instead the focus has been on identifying various sampling strategies to illustrate the relevance of the case study on the mobile telecommunications company in Afghanistan. In all papers it is more or less indicated that the empirical setting provides an extreme case (Flyvbjerg 2006) of business-society relations in developing countries due to the combination of the Afghan national context and the global and modern industry of mobile telecommunications. Each in their own ways the individual papers highlight how such extreme cases are relevant for problematizing the core assumptions and claims made in the CSR debates. However, it can also be argued that each of the papers is a critical case study, where for instance Paper 4 is a critical case study of the concept of development agent. The empirical focus on the national context of Afghanistan has thereby made an empirical contribution to the CSR literature. More importantly, the study highlights how focussing on such a rare combination of national and industry contexts can turn out to reveal a paradigmatic case that not only highlights new issues in the current governance debate on ALS but also calls for a new CSR agenda by integrating the governance literature on ALS. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the abductive mode of inference has been relevant in re-describing and thereby critically problematizing the different theoretical CSR debates addressed in each paper. The thesis has thereby not taken its point of departure in one particular theoretical debate but has been empirically driven to problematize various theoretical topics and debates in the CSR literature, as indicated by the three focus areas in the theoretical framework of the thesis.

Towards a future agenda on CSR in ALS

I have shown in my study that the integration of the governance literature on ALS is relevant for CSR literature in order to move beyond state-centrism in the search to gain a contextualized understanding of governance in the various settings of the developing world (Jamali and Karam

2016). While the ALS literature focuses primarily on the macro level, where the shadow cast by the state is replaced by other top-down shadows such as the 'market', 'anarchy' and 'external actors' (Börzel and Risse 2010), my study shows that the analysis of business-society relations in ALS also needs to integrate the firm-level structures as necessary explanatory factors. However, further studies are needed at the corporate and individual levels of analysis to dissect how, when and why 'agency' matters. Such a research focus is highly relevant for both the governance literature on ALS and for the call to contextualize business-society relations beyond the state-centrism prevalent in the CSR and the broader business-society literature.

First, it is unclear in the CSR literature how to understand which types of businesses engage in the provision of public goods in ALS, how they engage and, not least, why/why not. My study focuses on large MNCs in a specific industry, but other firm sizes, local/global industries and various ownership structures operating in ALS remain neglected. Moreover, my study indicates that development and donor agencies can engage in collaborations with business to create potential win-win situations that benefit the poorest segments of the population. Hence, related future studies could shed light on the diverse types of businesses operating in the broader telecommunications industry for comparative purposes and in order to gain a richer picture of the role of business in ALS settings. Such studies have practical relevance for corporate managers and donor agencies, since ALS typically offer immense space for businesses to engage in developmental issues as a result of their great need for development. The ICT4D agenda has addressed the ICT-development nexus, highlighting the potentials and limitations of the ICT4D agenda (Heeks 2010), but the business aspect remains neglected in this debate. In other words there is a need to explore the different types of business engaged in the broader ICT-industry in ALS and how they relate to the ICT4D agenda.

Second, it is also important to stress the development aspects of business in ALS and to scrutinize the meaning of 'public goods' that businesses as non-state actors can potentially provide. Here the problematization of what constitute 'public' or 'private' goods becomes crucial, as businesses not only engage in but also define the agenda, as indicated in Paper 4. The ALS literature proposes that intentionality and inclusiveness are important conditions when non-state actors engage in providing public goods (Risse 2011, p. 17). My study shows that businesses as non-state actors *may* provide *particular* public goods such as security, health, infrastructure, etc., in limited forms for specific areas. Future studies could therefore investigate how there are not only areas of limited statehood but also areas of limited provision of public goods, and the question of how and why public goods are limited therefore requires both empirical exploration and theoretical conceptualizations. My study emphasises that businesses are primarily led by profit structures when responding to external pressures and opportunities, which distinguish businesses from other non-state actors when debating the role of non-state actors in the governance of ALS. Such a focus of future research is especially relevant for corporate managers, who constantly face a dilemma as to whether to pursue short-term business case-led solutions or long-term development engagements that might prove beneficial for the business in the long run. The particularities of businesses therefore require further studies to

understand the potentials and limitations of business as providers of public goods. As highlighted by my study, isomorphic dynamics in the organisational field, the process of commodification and market growth-led drivers are some of the drivers for the social engagements of corporations; however, more studies are needed to assess how and why business are enabled/constrained in their provision of public goods.

Finally, applying business-level analysis to the governance literature on ALS problematizes the broad conceptualization of governance seen in the ALS literature. The governance literature on ALS views legitimacy, task properties and institutional design as key elements for the successful engagement of non-state actors in governance (Krasner and Risse 2014). However, the effects of the engagement of business on governance structures in ALS, whether alone or in collaboration with other non-conventional and conventional actors, remain unstudied. My study indicates, on the one hand, that there is a need for continuous support and collaboration between various actors to ensure the inclusion of local priorities and the integration of state policies to upgrade both companies and state institutions. On the other hand, however, various parallel structures of governance are simultaneously at play in ALS, where corporate engagements can perhaps unintentionally play a political role in the conflict between the state and insurgents, as seen in Paper 3. Hence the implications of business engagements in various governance structures need further study. Moreover, governance in ALS covers not only territorial areas such as urban vis-à-vis rural, but also various sectorial, sociocultural and temporal areas that are not covered in my study or in the broader ALS literature. Future studies could therefore focus on unravelling the role of business in the various modalities of governance structures and shed light on how and why businesses engagements enable/constrain the inclusion of the poor and accountability towards the poor in such governance structures. Such a research focus also has important practical relevance for corporate managers and donor agencies that operate in ALS, where both state-controlled and 'anarchy' contexts exist simultaneously. The ICT industry is particularly relevant, since the focus on ICT-led transformations of governance (Avgerou 2010) is an especially interesting and relevant tool for states in ALS (Poblet 2011).

In sum, I have contributed through the four papers of this thesis with novel empirical insights into the characteristics and drivers of CSR in the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan, which has led me to critically assess CSR-development relations in Afghanistan as an ALS. Each paper relates to a particular theoretical debate and empirical perspective in responding to the research question and contributing to the debate about CSR in ALS. While paper 1 and 2 are already developed for specific publication purposes, Paper 3 and 4 are yet 'publishable' papers written for the purpose of the thesis and will be adjusted to the requirements of suggested journals. However, as pointed out, my study, though theoretically relevant and empirically important, is only one input to the debate about the role of business in ALS. It is therefore reasonable to call for a specific agenda on the role of business in ALS, as the integration of the CSR and broader business-society literature with the governance literature on ALS holds immense potentials for future theoretical studies and promising empirical importance in understanding the role of business in society.

8. Bibliography - Part One

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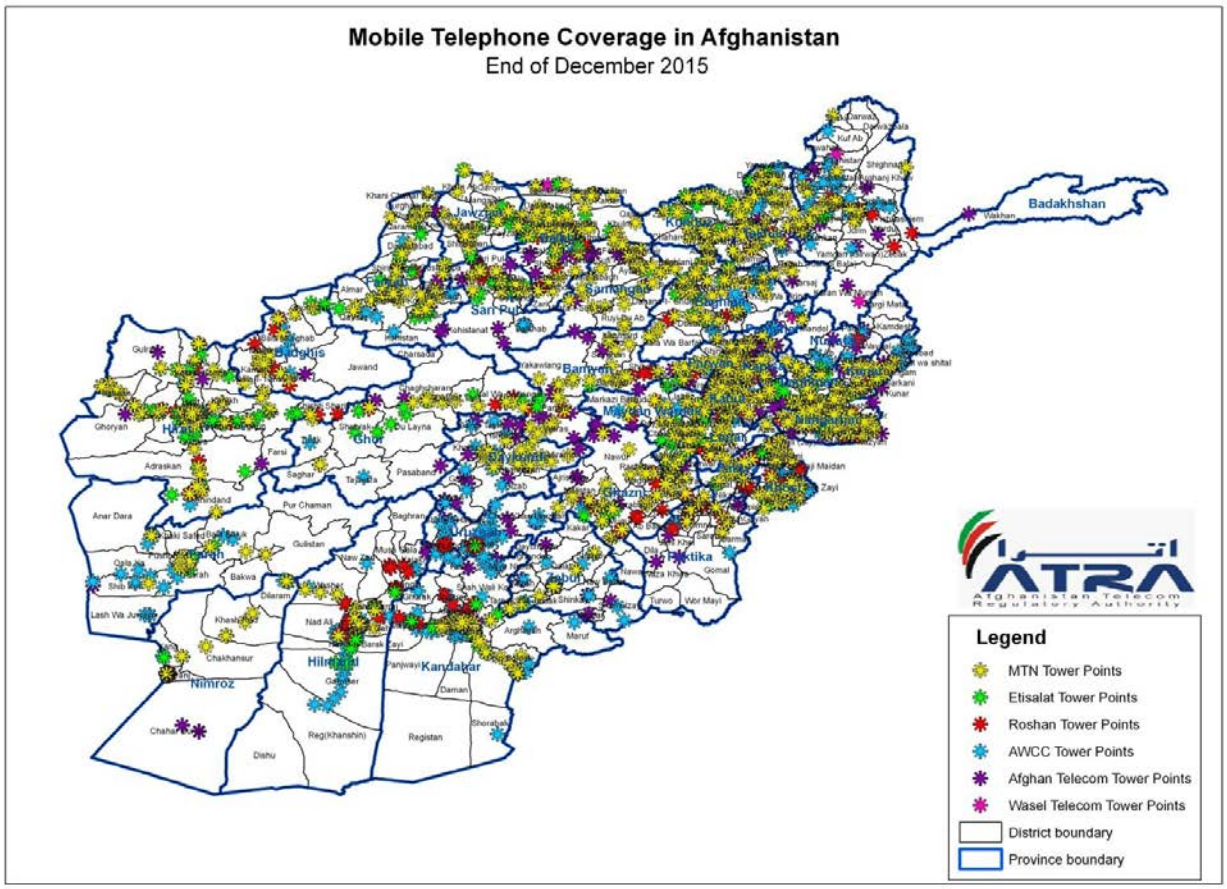
9. Appendixes - Part One

Appendix 1 – Map of Afghanistan

Source: **http://ontheworldmap.com/afghanistan/political-map-of-afghanistan.jpg** (Accessed 06 September 2016).

Appendix 2 – Coverage map of mobile telecommunications industry



Source: atra.gov.af (Accessed 06 September 2016).

PART TWO

Paper 1

CSR in Afghanistan

Author: Sameer Azizi
Post-print version of a chapter published in Blowfield, M., Jamali, Dima, & Karam, C. (Eds.), *Development-Oriented CSR* (Vol. 2, pp. 54–70). Greenleaf Publishing, UK.

1. Introduction

The point of departure of this chapter is that context matters for a critical study of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and development. Reviews of the literature show that empirical studies from Afghanistan are missing and the focus on CSR in the mobile telecommunication industry has been relatively neglected compared to, e.g., extractive industry and manufacturing industry (Egri and Ralston 2008). The empirical focus on CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry is relevant and interesting for this purpose. On the one hand, Afghanistan is characterised as a low-ranking least developed countries (HDI Report 2013) and a fragile state that is unable to deliver basic necessities (Fund for Peace 2014). On the other hand, the mobile telecommunication industry has in the past decades expanded dramatically in the developing countries and has proclaimed itself as an '*industry empowering people and society*' (GSMA 2014). This indicates that this specific industry's CSR could have an immense impact on development in contexts where there is an urgent need, such as Afghanistan. The focus on CSR in this particular industry and national context is therefore relevant and sheds new light on the developmental orientation of CSR. Since no academic insights exist on CSR in Afghanistan, this chapter aims to explore the *characteristics* of CSR and the *conditions* under which the Afghan mobile telecommunication industry engages in CSR, in order to critically address CSR in relation to development.

The remainder of this chapter begins with a presentation of the methodology. This is followed by a brief review of the CSR literature and an introduction to concepts from the governance literature that were combined to develop the analytical framework. CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry is then described and analysed using the aforementioned framework. Finally, a critical discussion of CSR in relation to development is conducted based on the findings.

2. Methodology

The chapter is based on a critical realist approach to case study, which focuses on explaining why an observable phenomena is occurring (Easton 2010; Reed 2009). To do so, the chapter first explores the characteristics of CSR in the mobile telecommunications industry and then attempts to

explain the emergence of CSR in Afghanistan. A mapping exercise was undertaken to explore the characteristics (e.g., health, education, sponsorships etc.) of the CSR practices based on data from corporate websites, corporate reports and social media from 2007–2013. This data were then coded in accordance with the analytical levels of CSR (Blowfield and Frynas 2005) defined in figure 1. Second, to analytically reflect upon the emergence of CSR beyond the empirical info, qualitative interviews were conducted to gain in-depth understanding of the Afghan contextual setting and the CSR responses observed in the industry. The topics of the interviews covered corporate perspectives on; what is CSR; why they engage in CSR, how is CSR conducted; and how they perceive their role in the Afghan society. Since 2007, over 30 semi-structured qualitative interviews have been conducted with senior management from the four corporations', and with relevant state institutions, NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs), project partners and international donors in Afghanistan. In addition, 25 speeches from the 1st International ICT Conference and Exhibition in Kabul (ICT Conference 2013) and several observations of CSR projects have also been used to enrich the empirical insights of the study. The interviews have been used to validate public statements and information from the industry, and have enriched the explanation of how the Afghan context is interrelated to the corporate CSR responses and why we observe such specific CSR practices and not others.

3. Towards an understanding of CSR in Areas of Limited Statehood

The nature and drivers of CSR in developing countries

The literature on CSR in developing countries has grown significantly in the recent decades (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Fox 2004; Jamali and Sidani 2012; Jeppesen and Lund-Thomsen 2010; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006); however not all contextual settings and/or industrial factors of the developing countries are explored in this debate. While it is acknowledged that developing countries entail a different CSR setting than industrialised nations (Dobers and Halme 2009; Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Visser 2008), little progress has been made to explain the emergence of CSR and its implications.

From a broad societal perspective, it is argued that corporations are engaging in what used to be, or least expected to be, state functions and roles (Crane, Matten, and Moon, 2008). From a firm-level perspective, CSR practices and drivers have been addressed in various forms, e.g., through access to new markets in global competition and cultural and religious traditions (Visser 2008: 484–488). In addition, specific studies of CSR in the Middle East show that CSR typically has a philanthropic nature based on existing Islamic norms and traditions (Jamali and Mirshak 2006, p. 260; Jamali and Sidani 2012). Moreover, efforts to reconceptualise Western-biased CSR concepts have been undertaken, such as the modified version of Carroll's CSR pyramid (Carroll 1979, 1991) applied to the African context (Visser 2008). While the literature has provided important insights on the characteristics and drivers of CSR by multinational corporations (MNCs), it lacks coherent

explanations of such, since the CSR literature encompasses multiple levels of analysis and theoretical streams (Garriga and Melé 2004).
The point of departure in this chapter is that context matters (Blowfield 2005; Halme et al. 2009) and accordingly, any analysis of CSR in developing countries requires coherent reflections upon the contextual conditions, the business responses and the specific CSR practices (Banerjee 2014). Both the current CSR literature on developing countries (Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006) and more particularly the mainstream CSR literature (Crane et al. 2008; Porter and Kramer 2011; Scherer and Palazzo 2008) address 'developing countries' uncritically and need to move towards a specified understanding of the diverse contexts entailed in the 'developing country' umbrella. The chapter therefore introduces concepts from the governance literature to specify the conditions for CSR and the role of business in contexts such as Afghanistan.

Introducing the role of business in Areas of Limited Statehood

To theoretically contextualise the Afghan context, the governance literature on Areas of Limited Statehood (ALS) is introduced (Börzel and Risse 2010; Risse 2013). The ALS debate aims to explain the role of business and the state in countries where the state is too weak – or entirely lacking – to deliver what we consider basic state functions, including the state authority to implement and enforce rules and provide social goods. The literature argues that the role of business is important in the social coordination of society *in spite* of - and in some instances *due* to - a weak/absent state,. Thus, a conceptual understanding of the role of business in such contexts must advance from the normative and euro-centric Weberian conceptualisation of the state (Risse 2013, p. 4), towards a governance approach understood as *"institutionalized modes of social coordination to produce and implement collectively binding rules, or to provide collective goods"* (Risse 2013, p. 9). This definition recognises that different actors (state/non-state) take part in the societal governance and redirects the state-centric understanding towards a more non-hierarchical mode of steering in which non-state actors can play an important role in providing/enforcing collective rules and social goods (ibid: 24). In reality, the conditions of ALS are not only relevant to the well-known examples of least-developed context or failed/weak states, but to a much broader range of 'developing country' contexts. This has implications for our understanding of CSR and the role of businesses, as the presumed 'shadow of hierarchy' by the state is lacking (Börzel et al. 2012). Concepts from the ALS debate are integrated into the CSR literature in the following analytical framework.

4. CSR in ALS – an analytical framework

Defining CSR

Several definitions of CSR are presented in the literature (De Bakker, Groenewegen, and Den Hond 2005). For analytical purposes, however, the 'umbrella term' of CSR is used in this chapter

(Blowfield and Frynas 2005). This definition frames CSR as the social and environmental responsibilities of corporations that businesses fulfil on a voluntary basis at three levels: a) at the firm level; b) at the company's business relations level; and/or c) at the wider society level (Blowfield and Frynas 2005: 503). The internal level covers CSR practices within the corporation, such as direct employee conditions, environmental products and processes owned by the corporation. The business relations level addresses issues related to actors in the value chain outside the ownership of the corporation, while the wider society level encompasses communities, customers and other stakeholders not directly related to the business operations. Thus, without narrowly stating what CSR is and is not, this definition clarifies the three levels of CSR activities. These levels are important for the categorisation of CSR practices from the corporation's point of view and describe *what* voluntary social and/or environmental initiatives corporations undertake.

Conditions for CSR in ALS

To explain *the conditions* under which corporations engage in CSR initiatives, it is important to acknowledge that CSR is driven by factors both at national and corporate levels.

At corporate level, one specific contribution that is useful for the purpose of this chapter is the business-poverty framework (Blowfield 2012). This framework aims to explain the developmental role of business in relation to poverty issues and categorises three conditions and responses to businesses' engagement in developmental issues. The first condition is when stakeholders assess businesses as the 'cause' of poverty. In response to this condition, corporations engage with stakeholders to gain legitimacy, typically through standards, codes of conduct and multi-stakeholder initiatives (ibid). The second condition is when businesses view themselves as 'victims' of poverty and lack of development in the context in which they operate. Here, responses include taking an active role in addressing the lack/absence of the state and other societal actors. Finally, the third condition is when businesses view themselves as the 'solution' to poverty, so that their products and services can fill expected gaps in the specific society in which they operate. Here the 'bottom-of-the-pyramid' (BoP) approach is applicable as businesses engage actively to provide necessities for a large proportion of society (Kolk and van Tulder 2010; Prahalad 2010).

From a national contextual perspective, these generic corporate responses fail to explain how and when conditions in ALS enable/disable such corporate responses. In other words, the question is what triggers businesses in ALS to respond as 'cause', 'victim' and/or 'solution' to poverty? As noted earlier, the ALS literature points out that in the absence of the state's 'shadow of hierarchy', several other functional equivalents trigger corporations to engage in CSR activities (Börzel et al. 2012).

First, *international actors* can cast a shadow of hierarchy, holding corporations accountable for the provision of social goods and/or enforcing international laws (ibid). A good example of this can be

found in Afghanistan after 2001 when the international community provided social goods and governance through the UN, the EU and USAID. Second, a shadow of *market anarchy* exists in ALS due to the absence/weakness of the state. This challenges market transactions, since basic common goods, which are taken for granted - such as security, basic infrastructure, regulatory authority for disputes, etc., - are lacking in ALS. In this regard, business operations and in particular CSR activities can be viewed as critical and necessary, since markets require a certain degree of state control, i.e. the provision and control of property rights, security and an educated work force, to function (Börzel and Risse 2010, p. 121). In the absence of vital state services, ALS contexts force corporations to actively engage in the provision of complementary or substitutive social services, typically for larger groups than only their employees (Börzel, Hönke, and Thauer 2012: 10–11). Third, the *global market and competition* can also trigger corporations to engage in governance actions. This can be through international campaigns that put a corporation's brand and reputation at risk for not obeying international standards (ibid: 12). Finally, *traditional communities* can also trigger corporations to engage in governance actions through local cultural/religious norms that frame what business action is appropriate and what is not.

In sum, the chapter argues that the ALS conditions are relevant for understanding least-developed contexts with both weak or absent state. Figure 1 illustrates the interrelations between the three levels with the arrowed lines. Hence, it is clear that the ALS conditions trigger the corporate responses listed, which then specify the level of CSR practices. However, it is yet unclear how such interrelationships play out in reality and will be the subject of analysis in the following section.

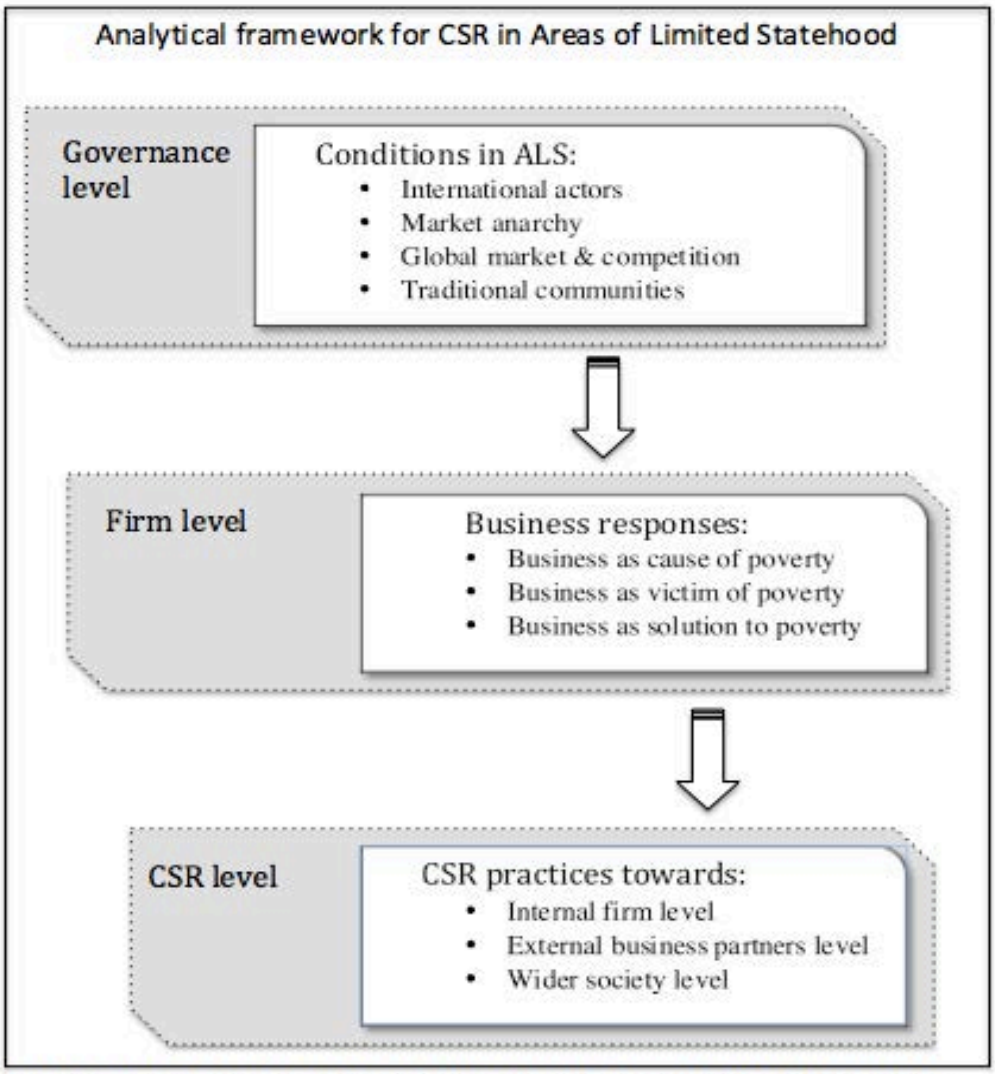


Figure 1 Analytical Framework - constructed by author based on Blowfield and Frynas 2005, Börzel, Hönke, and Thauer 2012 and Blowfield 2012.

5. The Afghan mobile telecommunications context

Afghanistan is a landlocked country located in a strategically important area between powerful nations (i.e. India, China, Russia, Iran and Pakistan). Since 1973, the country has been through political turmoil and instability with decades of war against the Soviet Union, civil war, and currently the US-led intervention and the war on terror. In 2001, the 'rebuilding' of the Afghan institutions began and around US$286.4 billion of aid was disbursed in 2002-2009 (Global Humanitarian Assistance 2011). Despite this inflow of aid, the Afghan state is considered one of the world's most fragile states and has one of the world's highest corruption rates as law enforcement

and the provision of public goods, such as security, infrastructure, health services and education, is very weak (Fund for Peace 2014; Rice and Patrick 2008). The model for development in the last decade can be characterised as a neo-liberal-inspired market economy (Barfield 2012), which has led to the privatisation of former state-owned industries (electricity, education, health, media, communication) and the newly emergent mobile telecommunications industry.

The Afghan mobile telecommunications industry

The mobile telecommunications industry is an important industry[1] that views new Asian and African markets, including Afghanistan, as 'discoverer' markets (GSMA 2014, p. 22). Here explosive growth rates of 50% were seen from 2002 to 2007, and these untapped markets are expected to experience future growth rates of around 10% (ibid).

According to the Afghan Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), an estimated 18 million mobile phone subscribers had been reached by 2013 and the industry has provided US$165 million in tax revenue for the Afghan state in 2011-2012, besides generating more than 110,000 direct and indirect jobs (MCIT 2014). Finally, it is worth mentioning that the mobile telecommunications industry has attracted US$1.7 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) since 2002, and has been supported by several donor agencies such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to achieve the rapid success (World Bank 2013, p. 100). The mobile telecommunications industry consists of four private corporations: the Afghan Wireless Communication Company (AWCC); Roshan; MTN; and Etisalat (Hamdard 2012). AWCC was granted the first business license by the Afghan MCIT in 2002. Roshan entered the market as the second operator in 2003 and was followed by the South African MTN in 2006. The latest market player is Etisalat, an Emirati corporation, which joined the market in 2007. With regard to market share by the number of subscriber registrations, Roshan is the leading company, followed by MTN, Etisalat and finally AWCC (ibid: 17). Recent surveys indicate that the youth population, which comprises those under 25 years old and covers over 65 % of the population, is the largest consumer segment of mobile services (USAID 2013). Moreover, Afghan women are rapidly closing the gender gap, as over 80% of women have access to mobile services either through private or shared ownership of mobile phones (ibid). Interestingly, this industry has also shown a deliberate and explicit engagement in CSR practices beyond the achievements stated above. This engagement will be analysed in the following section.

[1] The industry consists of four mobile telecommunications corporations, one landline and several small Internet providers. However, this chapter focuses only on the mobile telecommunications corporations.

6. Findings on CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry

In this section the analytical framework is employed to analyse the empirical data gathered on CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry.

Exploring the nature of CSR

The findings of the mapping exercise described earlier are illustrated in Table 1. First of all, the table shows that the CSR projects are related to seven topics: health, rural area development, education, private sector development, sponsorships, Islam-led initiatives, and disaster relief. These topics are derived from the corporate CSR communications, and are related to the practices of the four corporations. Second, the empirical findings reveal that the CSR initiatives presented in Table 1 are mostly related to the "wider society" level. This level covers a diverse range of projects that target beneficiaries from communities in both rural and urban areas, and which are not directly related to the business operations of the industry. However, some of the CSR initiatives (those here marked with an asterisk) also generate income for the corporations. They are at the borderline between what can be considered CSR and pure business operations. They are included here to show the diversity of social initiatives undertaken by these corporations.

In contrast to the "wider-society" level, very few initiatives are related to the two other CSR levels. The initiatives at the internal CSR level target employees, for example, and few initiatives can be related to such an aim. Likewise, few private sector development projects were observed that were aimed at the "business partner level".

Definitional levels of CSR	CSR practices
Internal level	Health: • Health-related initiatives for employees (AWCC, Roshan, MTN, Etisalat) • Health insurance (Roshan) Education: • Capacity development of current and future staff (all)
Business partner level	Private sector development • Supporting call offices for marginalised groups (Roshan, Etisalat) and entrepreneurship awards and support (AWCC) • Marketing development for SMEs and vendors (all)
Wider society level	Health: • Direct support for public hospitals (AWCC, Roshan, MTN) • General health services for specified locations (MTN, AWCC) • *M-Doctor (MTN), *Tele-medicine (Roshan) Rural area development: • Diverse range of projects including construction of water wells (AWCC, Roshan), mosques (AWCC, Etisalat), power projects (Roshan) in rural areas Private sector development: • *'Malomat' price information system for farmers (Roshan) • * Mobile money transfer: 'M-hawala' (Etisalat) and M-Paisa (Roshan) MTN and AWCC are soon to launch services Education/capacity-building: • ICT and other general business education/capacity building (All) • E-learning centres in 30 locations (Roshan) • M-education (AWCC), (M-lawyer) Sponsorships: • For professional sport teams (Roshan, Etisalat) • For orphanages (AWCC, Roshan, Etisalat) • For specific TV-shows (AWCC, Roshan, MTN, Etisalat) Islam-led initiatives: • Mosque-building and sponsorship of Islamic events (AWCC, Etisalat) • *M-Mufti (MTN) Disaster relief: • Emergency relief support (All)

Table 1 – CSR practices in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry
Source: Corporate websites: (AWCC) http://www.bayatfoundation.org/ , http://www.roshan.af , http://www.mtn.com.af , http://etisalat.af/ (Accessed 17 May 2014)

Explaining the conditions under which CSR emerges in Afghanistan

As noted in the contextual description, Afghanistan is characterised as a fragile state and least-developed country, where past decades of war have also resulted in widespread illiteracy, corruption, lack of infrastructure and insecurity. Hence, the conditions of 'market anarchy' are obvious, since the Afghan context lacks the basic necessities required to facilitate market transactions within the mobile telecommunication industry (GSMA 2014). In addition, there are few examples of community expectations and religious traditions that can be assessed as 'traditional community' pressure. The question that arise, therefore, is that of which CSR engagements are triggered by the conditions of 'market anarchy' and 'traditional community'?

AWCC and Roshan have publicly stated (speeches 24-25 September 2013) that they had to start from scratch in building the necessary infrastructure and the capacity of their staff, as well as in establishing sale channels by supporting SME vendors throughout the country. Moreover, the corporations emphasize that introducing mobile phone technology to the Afghan context, where the illiteracy rate is high, was challenging, and *"... reducing tele-illiteracy...*" (Interview Roshan CSR, February 2007) became an important aspect of growth.

In regard to the insecurity in rural Afghanistan, the CSR focus on rural community development is important for the industry. Roshan emphasizes that communities plays an important role in ensuring the security of assets and personnel (Rahim Kanani 2014). Data show that Etisalat utilize their Emirati background to address community development through Islam-related practices such as the construction of mosques, supporting Haj-pilgrim travels and food distribution during the holy month of Ramadan. AWCC also highlights the focus on giving back to the community, stating that the AWCC's chairman "*... felt a tremendous calling to initiate some way of helping rebuild Afghanistan* (AWCC speech September 2013).

These empirical findings suggest that both the 'market anarchy' and 'traditional community' have triggered two specific corporate responses: a) business as the victim of poverty; and/or b) business as the solution to poverty. The CSR initiatives related to business as 'business as victim' of lack of development includes support for health, education, sponsorships, etc., and are intended to nurture the communities in which the corporations are active. Thus development of employees, business partners and communities has direct importance for the industry.

The 'business as solution' response accounts for initiatives where innovative mobile services/products 'solving' developmental issues are employed not only to deal with obstacles to growth but also to create future markets. Projects such as M-paisa (Roshan) and M-Hawala (Etisalat) utilise mobile technology to transfer/receive money through mobile devices and to buy goods through basic mobile phones. While this approach is familiar in Kenya, where it has had a significant impact (World Bank 2012), in Afghanistan it is in its infancy. Supported by USAID,

each of the four corporations takes responsibility for a salary disbursement system for public institutions, whereby salaries are directly paid to local teachers, police officers, officials without a middle-man illegally demanding part of the salary (McGowan 2012). . Similarly, the four corporations are increasingly focusing on using the core competencies of mobile technology to enable development in the following areas: health (for example, M-health applications that provide health information to mobile phone users); law and religion (for example, the tele-lawyer and tele-mufti service provided by MTN, which allows mobile phone users to consult with religious and legal experts); and education (for example, services such as those provided by AWCC and other corporations that improve basic literacy projects through the use of mobile phones). All these projects highlight the emergence of mobile phone technology in Afghanistan and reveal the increasing role that the industry is playing in the daily lives of Afghan citizens. These are examples of 'business as solution' condition, in which corporations actively convert contextual barriers into new market opportunities.

In contrast, it is important to emphasise that the corporations in Afghanistan do not subscribe to the so-called 'business causing poverty' view that could be triggered by 'global market' and/or 'international actors'. Despite the massive presence of INGOs and international donors in the country, the industry has not experienced pressure from such sources. Interviews conducted in 2011 and 2013 with MCIT, INGOs and local NGOs, UN agencies and other international donors, confirmed that their focus has been on emergency relief and state-building projects in Afghanistan rather than on raising a critical voice towards the private sector in the country. The USAID support for the expansion of mobile money in Afghanistan is an example of cooperation with international donors rather than of a pressure to engage in mobile money initiatives.

In sum, the findings show that all four corporations are actively engaging in CSR practices targeted mainly towards the 'wider society' level. The findings suggest that this focus was triggered by the 'victim' and/or 'solution' corporate responses, which are conditioned by the 'market anarchy' and 'traditional community' pressures in Afghanistan.

7. Discussion of findings

Redefining CSR in ALS

Initially, it is pertinent to clarify what CSR is in such novel contexts, since the findings of the chapter add new empirical insights on the nature and characteristics of CSR in Afghanistan. According to the CSR definition employed in the chapter, the 'legal compliance and liability of individuals' (Blowfield and Frynas 2005, p. 503) is more challenging due to the lack of state regulation and enforcement. What CSR is and is not, is rather defined by mechanisms other than the dichotomy between legally mandatory vs. voluntary practices, indicating that businesses in such contexts have a larger space for manoeuvring in regard to defining and prioritizing CSR.

As a result, standard business services/products in more developed contexts become CSR initiatives in Afghanistan. This means that due to the lack of development in Afghanistan and the state's inability to deliver social goods, CSR practices comprise any activity that the *corporation* defines as more or less developmental. Thus, the umbrella definition of CSR used in the paper is on the one hand, analytically useful because it covers a complex range of practices and products/services at the three levels. On the other hand however, it must be recognised that CSR is driven by mechanisms other than the legal/voluntary state-biased dichotomy, which leads us to the discussion of conditions and roles of businesses operating in ALS.

The relationship between ALS conditions and business responses

The chapter argues that the shadow of 'market anarchy' and 'traditional community' is the predominant explanation for the emergence of CSR in Afghanistan and is directly related to the business responses of the mobile telecommunication industry. While all industries might face similar or slightly different challenges operating in such national settings, the responses herein show that CSR is industry-laden. As illustrated previously, the mobile telecommunications industry responds both as a 'victim' and as a 'solution' to such challenges. In particular, the industry utilises mobile technology to respond to the 'market anarchy' challenges through innovative solutions that are unique for this industry. The engagement in innovative projects is driven by the 'win-win' logic (Porter and Kramer 2011), whereby the corporations engage in self-defined CSR initiatives aimed at sustaining and creating new markets. CSR is thereby not *only* a tool to deflect stakeholder criticism (Banerjee 2008; Fleming and Jones 2013), but can *also* be triggered by market challenges and opportunities led by 'market anarchy' and 'traditional community' pressures. Moreover, the chapter shows that international pressures from NGOs and market/competitors are absent in Afghanistan, and that traditional communities pose limited pressure. This gives the corporations immense decisive power in defining and prioritising CSR based on self-interested motives. This calls for further comparative studies of specific corporations to demonstrate how corporate policies and resources drive CSR initiatives in ALS.

8. Reflections on Development Oriented CSR in ALS

The section critically relates the conditions for CSR found in the chapter to the debate about development-oriented CSR. The main argument is that the developmental orientation of CSR in least-developed contexts is enabled/disabled by conditions at corporate level and national level. The chapter shows how 'market anarchy' and 'traditional community' conditions trigger corporations to engage in CSR activities either through the 'victim' and/or 'solution' response strategies. However, the question is whether the corporations play the role of 'development agents' or as traditional businesses in Afghanistan. The term 'development agents' implies that the corporations intentionally use capital/resources to address pro-poor initiatives and account equally for the

development as well as the financial impact (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). The Afghan contextual setting enables all four corporations to play an important role as governance actors due to the large number of jobs, income tax for the state, and investments in infrastructure that enables over 80% of Afghans to access mobile services. However, such developmental impacts are due to unintentional consequences of traditional business conduct rather than intentional pro-poor initiatives. This raises the question of whether profit-seeking actors can nevertheless act in the interests of the 'public' through CSR (Banerjee 2014)?

The CSR practices that result from the business as 'victim' response are based on selective topics and selective beneficiaries, e.g. community projects in a specific locations, capacity development for current and future staff, supporting businesses in the sales/distribution channels, etc. While such projects can be developmental for the beneficiaries, they focus on a limited group of beneficiaries and only address specific market-related development issues. As noted earlier, they are only developmental because of the urgent and vast need for development in Afghanistan and would not be seen as CSR practices in more advanced settings. Hence, while the intentionality is strong, such CSR practices are exclusively tailored to specific business issues and beneficiaries. In contrast, the 'solution' response aims to benefit and give access to as many beneficiaries as possible, since they are seen as consumers. Mobile technology is utilized for a broad range of issues, e.g., health, money services, education, agribusiness, etc. In short, a greater impact is observed in terms of inclusiveness when the corporation's aim is to provide 'solutions' in response to the challenges of 'market anarchy' as compared to the 'business as victim' response.

However, such assessment of development is based on the 'bottom billion capitalism' logic, where the poor are seen as consumers, the market as a platform for development and the services/products as 'solutions' for lack of development (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). The findings of the chapter reveal that the businesses drive the CSR agenda based solely on the basis of their own needs and priorities, where the focus on market obstacles and maximising the potential of new markets become the goals of CSR practices. Such so-called managerial logic is criticized in the CSR literature for simplifying the complexities of development to instrumental market solutions (Blowfield 2005, 2007). This is seen in the Afghan context, where mobile applications are imported from international industry practices and diffused to Afghanistan to address complex poverty and corruption issues. Hence, from a critical perspective on development, such 'solutions' do not address and cannot fully embrace the complex realities of the Afghan socio-cultural context. More importantly, such technologies frame the CSR agenda on what is development and for whom? The findings show that while capital and resources are used to address the lack of development in Afghanistan, the voices and needs of the poor are not intentionally included in the process.

Without a representative critical voice towards the industry, serious accountability issues arise, since only corporate interests and priorities are heard, and other critical issues in relation to (child)

labour issues, female customer harassment, environmental issues in relation to the tele-towers etc. are not raised through CSR practices. The corporations can therefore only be held accountable for those developmental issues that *they* find relevant, how *they* choose to solve them and to whom *they* decide to address them. Currently, the only accountability mechanism available is to raise a 'critical' voice as an Afghan consumer through market relations. The poorest groups are even excluded here, as they do not have the income and literacy level required to gain from mobile applications addressing health, education and banking problems in Afghanistan. The poorest and most marginalized groups are a neglected group and are thereby not relevant stakeholders for the corporations (Jenkins 2005). Despite the hype about the BoP approach to development and through mobile services (Kolk et al. 2014) , the study supports the doubts about what role the poor will play in the development of new technologies and highlights the development implications such technological solutions can have for the poor (Heeks 2010). Critical impact assessment studies are needed to shed light on developmental role of such CSR solutions in ALS, where the differentiation between public and private interests is blurred.

In sum, the CSR practices of the four corporations in Afghanistan clearly qualify as a study of development-oriented CSR, but to what degree such CSR practices are developmental or not, is a theory-laden assessment. There is no doubt that due to the vast need for development in Afghanistan, the industry and its CSR practices serve as a vector for socio-economic development, either by complementing or substituting governance structures.

The findings suggest that the profit-driven managerial approach limits the huge potentials for the mobile telecommunication industry to become development agents. The crucial question is therefore whether CSR's contribution to development can ever overcome the limits of instrumental managerial development-logic, given the profit-driven nature of business in the current hegemonic and capitalist system (Banerjee 2014; Fleming and Jones 2013).

9. Conclusion

The chapter aims to address the relationship between CSR and development in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry as a novel context for the CSR literature. It is argued that this relationship is context-dependent and calls for an understanding of CSR practices in relation to corporate responses and the conditions under which corporations engage in developmental issues in ALS. Based on empirical data, the chapter concludes that CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry is mainly targeted towards 'wider society' beneficiaries, where the industry responds as 'victim' and/or 'solution' to pressures of 'market anarchy', and in some cases 'traditional communities', in Afghanistan. It is clear that the four corporations play an important role in the Afghan socio-economic context as governance actors, providing social goods that otherwise would be 'expected' to be provided by the state. However, the chapter points to the

paradox of self-interested actors providing public goods, and the implications for development. The current debate on CSR and development in 'developing countries' needs to be re-addressed and further specified. The chapter modifies the explanation of CSR's emergence and conditions in contexts such as Afghanistan, which constitute a different ballgame for business–society relations that has not yet been covered in the state-biased CSR literature. Due to the large-scale lack of development in Afghanistan, almost any CSR project can have some developmental impact; however the business-driven development agenda on CSR has inherent limitations and fails to grasp the immense developmental potential offered by mobile technology for the poor in contexts such as Afghanistan.

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Paper 2

CSR in Afghanistan: a global CSR agenda in areas of limited statehood

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Post-print version of a paper published in South Asian Journal of Global Business Research, 5(2), 165–189, 2016. DOI 10.1108/SAJGBR-01-2015-0007

1. Introduction

What explains the rise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)[i] in all corners of the developing world, including the particular national contexts of South Asia? The mainstream CSR literature views CSR as a tool to manage business-society relations in the developing world. However, this literature, although growing, has not reached a sufficient level of maturity or comprehensiveness to address variations in the business-society interface and in the ways large foreign corporations approach CSR across different developing world contexts. Taking note of the increasing body of scholarly work falling under the broad umbrella of CSR in "developing countries" (Dobers and Halme 2009; Jamali 2010; Jamali et al. 2015; Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006), we argue in this article that there are still likely to be variations across developing countries and that little attention has been accorded in the literature to what we refer to in this article as "areas of limited statehood".

This variation, we argue, is particularly anchored in the nature of institutional settings, and we need to go beyond analysis at the level of the firm to more systematic explanations that take into account the nature of the societal institutions at play in particular national and global contexts (Brammer et al. 2012; Campbell 2007). This is very much in line with institutional theory which posits that different institutional environments create different sets of incentives that serve to enable or constrain socially responsible behaviour, sensitizing to the need to look at the specific institutional profile of individual countries, or what has been referred to as the "national CSR institutional infrastructure" (Roome 2005), or "historically grown national business systems" (Matten and Moon 2008). We go one step further in this article by alerting to the need to understand the multi-level dynamics of the CSR organisational field surrounding firms. This is because, as argued by Jamali and Neville (2011), these dynamics help account for the complex amalgam of local and global institutional pressures for CSR that are increasingly diffused with the advent of globalization.

Accordingly, in this article we zoom in on Afghanistan as a novel context in both the mainstream CSR literature and the CSR in developing countries sub-literature. We examine what large corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry explicitly refer to as CSR practices,

and try to analyse the nature of the institutional processes at play from a multi-level account of the organisational field. Here we introduce the literature on governance with/without state in "areas of limited statehood" to frame the national setting as a substitute for the "historically grown national business system" (Matten and Moon 2008) that is taken for granted in the CSR literature. In addition, we emphasize the potential industry and global effects that are salient, particularly given the prominence of the mobile telecommunications industry across the globe and hence the likely diffusion of CSR phenomena. Hence, more concretely the article aims to identify the institutional conditions for the emergence of specific CSR activities and interventions by the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan. The article documents how an advanced industry operates in what in popular terms is referred to as one of the world's "least-developed" and "fragile state" contexts, and we analyse the nature of local versus global pressures permeating the organisational field and shaping CSR in this context. Through an in-depth account of the dynamics of CSR in the mobile telecommunications industry, anchored in institutional theory and in dissecting institutional pressures operating at multiple levels in the organisational field more specifically, we are able to advance our understanding of the nature of the specific business-society nexus and the orientations of multinational companies (MNCs) and large foreign corporations to CSR in such contexts.

We present in the subsequent sections a brief overview of the CSR literature, with a particular focus on CSR in developing countries. From this literature we adapt an analytical framework which we believe is particularly helpful in dissecting the salience of various isomorphic pressures at various levels of the organisational field within specific institutional contexts, accounting for an amalgam of global and national and/or local pressures. This is followed by a presentation of the methodological and empirical findings, as well as a discussion section highlighting the contributions of the article and how it helps advance the existing CSR literature. In light of the findings, we flesh out our main conclusions and highlight useful implications for future research on CSR in developing countries and CSR in South Asia more specifically.

2. Developing countries and the emergence of CSR

CSR studies in the "developing world"

In recent decades the notion of CSR has received significant attention and has become increasingly important as a field that addresses the issues of business-society relations in developing countries. With the mainstream rise of studies on CSR there has followed an increasing focus on CSR in developing countries, with an ambition to set an agenda for exploring CSR in the developing world (Blowfield 2005; Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006). A key point of departure for such debate has been the lack of formal institutions in such contexts and the prevalence of informal CSR practices (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Jamali and Sidani 2012; Muthuri and Gilbert 2010). Another explanation is the increasing infiltration of CSR best practices in developing countries,

driven in part by the growing market penetrations of multinational corporations (MNCs) (Jamali 2010). While the term "developing world" encompasses very diverse features of national and institutional contexts, the broader CSR literature tends to aggregate these contexts based on their different economic, social and political settings compared to the Anglo-Saxon contexts studied. However, the large variety of institutional settings that are lumped together under this "developing world" umbrella (e.g. CSR across BRICS countries, emerging markets, N-11 and least-developed and/or weak state contexts) entails complex national and global contextual settings that need further examination. There is thus a need to go beyond simplistic generalizations as to what CSR entails in such contexts and how it manifests itself across the board.

A call for contextualizing CSR to understand the macro, meso and micro level dynamics that are at play in specific environments has gained attention in recent years (Frynas 2008; Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Jeppesen and Lund-Thomsen 2010). Such a focus on contextualizing CSR is addressed through an increasing regionalization of CSR (Dobers and Halme 2009), whereby African (Idemudia 2011; Visser 2008), Middle Eastern (Jamali and Lanteri 2015; Jamali and Sidani 2012), South American (Haslam 2004) and Asian perspectives (Chapple and Moon 2007; Kim and Moon 2015) of CSR are increasingly studied. These regional perspectives look for similarities and differences across regions, and have the potential to contribute to the contextualization of CSR. However, we think the regional aspects cannot alone account for the particularities of the diverse national institutional and economic settings in question in each region. Instead we argue that institutional theory provides a useful foundation or lens for a contextual understanding of CSR (Brammer et al. 2012) because it enables us to dissect the potential influence of both national and global institutions and conditions to explain the emergence of CSR in specific national and global contexts in the developing world (Jamali 2014, 2015). Hence, contextualized analyses of CSR include the broad institutional conditions and mechanisms that influence CSR, increasingly accounting for the complex intertwining of global and national factors. The insights we can derive from such in-depth analyses are likely to significantly augment our understanding of how CSR plays out in specific nations and the institutional dynamics of CSR in specific contexts and across developing countries. In the following section we provide a brief overview of the institutional approach in relation to the CSR literature.

CSR and the institutional approach

The larger debate surrounding CSR has recently taken initial steps to move beyond a traditional economic (Friedman 2007; Orlitzky et al. 2003) and stakeholder view (Freeman 1984; Mitchell et al. 1997) towards an institutional explanation of CSR (Brammer et al. 2012; Campbell 2007). Neo-institutional theory implies that corporations as social actors strive to achieve not only efficiency but also legitimacy, which is driven by isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 153). This institutional focus has two implications for the study of CSR.

First, an institutional approach views corporations as social actors with social relations, and calls for studies that go beyond firm-level explanations towards an institutional understanding of business-society relations (Abreu et al. 2015; Campbell 2007; Nurunnabi 2015). In an increasingly globalised world where corporations and industries operate across national borders, the unit of analysis should go beyond the focal firm and account for the interrelationships between the national socio-economic setting, the transnational markets in which MNCs and large firms operate (Matten and Moon 2008) and, not least, the broader global context of CSR (Jamali and Neville 2011).

Second, the well-known framework for "implicit and explicit" CSR has been developed and proposed by Matten and Moon (2008) to address such complexity. This framework not only addresses the national setting through the national business systems approach (hereafter NBS), comprising specific constellations of political, financial, educational and cultural systems (Matten and Moon 2008) but also accounts for the potential diffusion of CSR best practices with the advent of globalization through isomorphic mechanisms within the organisational field. The framework has been praised for integrating the NBS and neo-institutional perspectives in a way that is useful for comparative studies (Blindheim 2015; Gjolberg 2009; Koos 2011), as well as for addressing the macro/micro and local/global dimensions of CSR (Bondy et al. 2012; Gjolberg 2009). Regarding CSR in developing countries, institutional theory is argued to be used to scrutinise and understand institutional similarities and differences within developing contexts (Amaeshi et al. 2016; Jamali 2014; Jamali and Neville 2011; Muthuri and Gilbert 2010).

Third, institutional theory has given rise to debates about the global-local tensions of CSR and how and whether these tensions shape forms of CSR when comparing to Anglo-Saxon contexts. The globalisation argument suggests that CSR is a by-product of market penetration by MNCs, where certain CSR practices are diffused throughout world markets (Blowfield 2007; Matten and Moon 2008; Scherer and Palazzo 2007). On the other hand, the national-context argument suggests that CSR is shaped and influenced by national institutional contexts rather than by the simplified global diffusion claims (Aguilera et al. 2007; Gjolberg 2009). These conflicting pressures, and the complexity of global convergence vs. local divergence claims, often translates into CSR cross-vergence (Jamali and Neville 2011). Jamali and Neville (2011) have used institutional theory and the Matten and Moon (2008) framework to gain an understanding of CSR in a developing country, Lebanon, identifying nuanced expressions shaped by companies and corporations responding to the complex interactions of multi-layered institutional pressures. Indeed, their findings suggest that the CSR expressions of MNCs take more explicit forms, while those of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) take more implicit forms. Where salient global institutional pressures continue to shape MNCs' CSR activities in these countries, it is the national business system, the local cultural and religious norms, and the salient institutions that together shape SMEs' CSR activities (Jamali and Neville 2011; Karam and Jamali 2015).

However, not all contextual settings of the developing world have been covered equally in this debate. Complex contexts where both MNCs and large firms operate in a globalized industry but within a national setting, where the NBS is weak or even non-existing, remain unexplored (Amaeshi et al. 2016). The mentioned frameworks presume a well-organised NBS or the varieties of capitalism approach (for more see Hall and Soskice 2001; Morgan 2007) that is often a proxy representation for the national setting. However, not all developing world contexts can be conceptualised through these standardized classifications, hence the need for alternative conceptualizations of national governance.

This article helps towards a better understanding of the emergence of CSR in such national settings, and elaborates on such complexities by emphasizing the importance of the organisational field and the inherent multi-level dynamics of institutional isomorphism as an extension of the current institutional explanation of CSR. While the CSR literature has emphasized how the *existence* of NBS elements influences CSR, this article will focus on how CSR emerges in contexts where there such elements are *weak* or even *non-existent*. An alternative understanding of the national setting is therefore introduced to help address the lack of classical NBS accounts or explanations, or the severe shortcomings of these accounts.

The analytical framework for explaining CSR

To develop an analytical framework for our study, the issues of governance in so-called "areas of limited statehood" are presented as an alternative approach to understanding the national setting of countries like Afghanistan. The article further argues that a multi-level conceptualisation of the organisational field is required to allow for a nuanced analysis of the emergence of CSR in such contexts. Finally, the dynamics of the organisational field are explained through institutional isomorphism processes. In the next section we dwell on the rationale for this choice of analytical framework and its basic components.

Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood

The "fragile" or "failed" states typologies that are used to describe some of the least-developed contexts across the developing world have been criticised as being normative and policy-led labels useful for Western donor countries and international organisations (Grimm et al. 2014). A recent stream in the political literature promotes a different account of such contexts by introducing the concept of "areas of limited statehood" to the debate about governance with/without the state (Börzel 2013; Börzel and Risse 2010; Risse 2011). In these areas, whether whole territorial areas or parts of such areas, state actors are unable to control the means of violence and/or enforce rules. These contexts have been referred to as "areas of limited statehood" (Risse 2011, p. 5). However, the argument is that societies in the developing world do not operate in a vacuum of governance and that, instead, the gaps encountered provide an opportunity for non-state actors to dominate in the governance of such contexts. In other words, governance processes are not led by a central state through a hierarchical top-down approach as presumed in the mainstream understanding of state-led

governance, but rather involve non-state actors through non-hierarchical steering processes (Risse 2011, pp. 9–11). Such a governance approach brings to prominence a broad range of actors that have traditionally been accorded less attention in mainstream writings on CSR, including national and international non-governmental organisations and donors (Börzel and Risse 2010) and, not least, MNCs (Börzel et al. 2012). Governance is thereby exercised in complex relations between non-state actors operating individually and/or in collaboration with other non-state actors and/or the state.

Such a governance approach has important implications for understanding the national context of developing countries in the analysis of CSR. First, it directs attention away from state-centric conceptualisations of institutional settings, acknowledging the existence of certain peculiar state formations that shape business-society relations and thereby CSR in the developing world. The realities in many developing countries are very different, with weakened or malfunctioning political, economic, educational and cultural systems that have often been permutated by decades of war, lack of economic development and political instability.

Second, the emphasis on non-state actors underlines the important role that corporations can assume in the business-society interface of developing countries with/without state engagement. Given the weakness of traditional NBS elements, non-state actors can have greater room for manoeuvring and influencing the national setting if they decide to engage in the governance of society. In other words, analytical attention is directed away from state pressures towards the dynamics of the governance field in which non-state actors act individually or in collaboration with other non-state actors or state actors. The potential role enabled by non-state actors is particularly important for the discussion of CSR in such contexts, and implies that a governance field with complex relations between non-state actors and a state with limited statehood replace the missing NBS elements. We therefore argue that in developing country contexts with "weak institutional settings", understanding the field of governance becomes central to gain insights into the various influences on CSR, and that this approach could offer a viable replacement or substitute for the classical NBS approach. Next, we draw on neo-institutional explanations of the organisational field to further explore the governance "field", employing the lens of institutional isomorphism to explain CSR dynamics at the level of the organizational field in a context or area of limited statehood.

Importance of the organisational field

In neo-institutional theory the organisational field refers to a rich community of actors who are in frequent interaction through a common meaning system (Scott 2013; For more on fields see Wooten and Hoffman 2008). We draw on the multi-layered institutional framework for CSR that was developed to provide a dynamic explanation of the emergence of CSR in developing countries (Jamali and Neville 2011). This framework modified the "implicit/explicit" model (Matten and Moon 2008) to develop a more embedded and multi-layered approach, as the initial framework "...

presents a sort of artificial bifurcation or separation between the national institutional pressures on one hand, and the organization and its organisational field on the other" (Jamali and Neville 2011, p. 604). Hence, the relationship between the actors and the organisational field is dynamically embedded, with the ability to influence the field as well as being influenced by it. This contrasts with the deterministic role in the original framework, where actors were seen as solely passive receivers of pressures stemming from the organisational field (Jamali and Neville 2011). Such emphasis on the embedded relations between the actor and the organisational field also reflects the space given for actors/corporations to engage in governance, as elaborated earlier. However, the conception of the organisational field is akin to a national domestic field for CSR, with the multi-level approach helping to highlight both the global and national actors and processes at play in this field. Such conceptualization also embodies the fragmented and multi-layered nature of the organisational field in which global industries, and especially MNCs, operate (Kostova et al. 2008)

Organisational field dynamics

Neo-institutional theory argues that the dynamics of the organisational field can be driven by isomorphic mechanisms. These include coercive mechanisms (e.g., regulations and informal pressures), mimetic mechanisms (modelling of "best practices") and normative mechanisms (professional standards and norms) (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Such isomorphic mechanisms are widely used in the CSR literature to bring in diverse explanations of the rise and impact of CSR. While some studies focus on the role of isomorphism to explain the emergence of CSR in relation to state pressures in BRICS (Abreu et al. 2012, 2015), the MNC headquarters pressures (Bondy et al. 2012) or pressures by employees and civil society (Reimann et al. 2012), others relate the impact of isomorphism to corporate social and financial performance (Ilhan-Nas et al. 2015; Nurunnabi 2015), to competitive advantage (Misani 2010), exploring whether isomorphic pressures comprise a process of conformity or of differentiation (Johansen and Nielsen 2012). We take the discourse further in this article by arguing that a focus on isomorphism cannot remain unconnected to a specific and delimited field. Our use of isomorphic mechanisms therefore aims to dissect the dynamics within the multi-level organisational field in which the increasing homogenization of CSR practices across national borders is occurring.

The multi-level approach to the organisational field implies that isomorphic processes are not only used at the level of the organisational field to diffuse or impose institutional change (e.g., CSR) on specific actors/corporations, but can also serve as mechanisms for individual actor/corporations to invent or negotiate such issues with the organisational field (Scott 2013, p. 237). Thus the multi-level approach advanced by Jamali and Neville (2011) accounts for the role of multiple players within the organizational field of developing countries, including state and non-state actors, hence directing attention to the complex mix of institutional pressures at play within the organizational field stemming from national institutions and players as well as international institutions and actors.

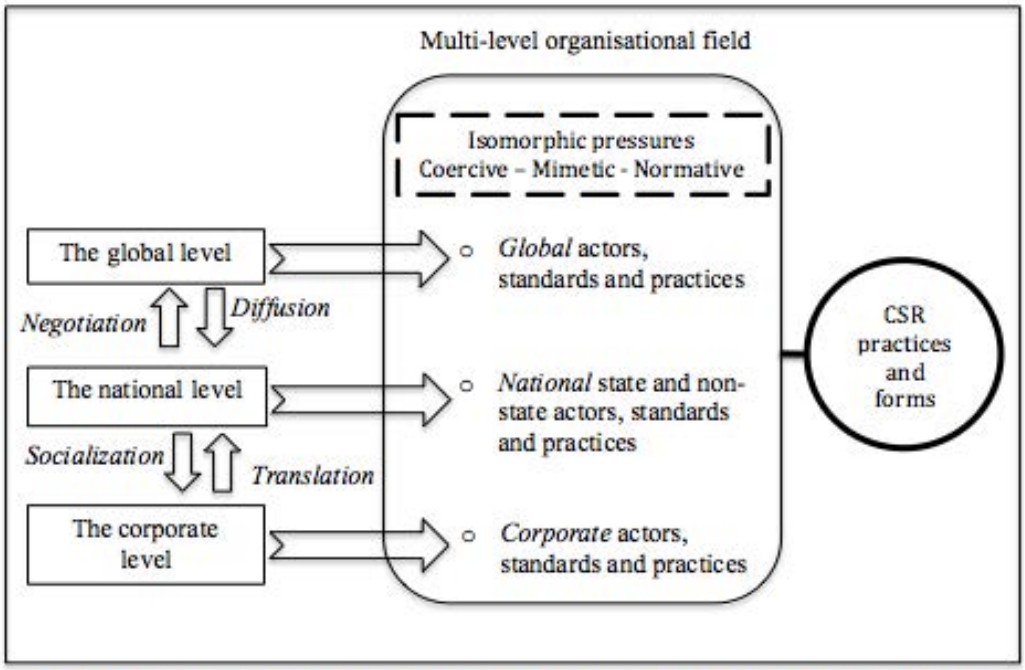

Figure 1 - Framework for multi-level organisational field, constructed by authors

Furthermore, consistent with neo-institutional theory, and as depicted in Figure 1, the multi-level approach highlights various top-down processes, including the constitutive activities of diffusion, negotiation, socialization, and translation, that allow both global and national institutional structures to shape (both constrain and empower) the actions of organizational actors. The multi-level approach also accounts for the salience of counter-processes by which lower level actors / structures shape – or by which organizational actors can reproduce and change – the contexts within which they operate through agency and mechanisms of selective translation and sense-making. Figure 1 depicts these various institutional actors at play in the CSR organizational field and the processes of diffusion/socialization and counter processes of negotiation and translation by organizational actors. The multi-level organizational field thus serves as the central unit of analysis and as the locus of interaction of micro- and macro-level pressures, as well as of institutional pressures stemming from the national and international scene.

In sum, we conceptualize the "fragile state" or "weak environment" as areas of limited statehood, which implies a focus on the governance field in which non-state actors have large space for manoeuvring to "govern" societal issues with or without the state. Neo-institutional theory is employed to conceptualize such a field and the institutional dynamics in order to explain how CSR emerges in such contexts.

3. Methodology

Case study selection and description

A key objective of the study is to investigate a neglected South-Asian context and to integrate it into the CSR debate. We focus on the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry, and aim to understand the CSR of a global industry operating in an area of limited statehood such as the Afghan national context. To understand this complexity, the study is designed as a case-study, as it *"… involves investigating one or a small number of social entities or situations using multiple sources of data and developing a holistic description through an iterative research process*" (Easton 2010, p. 119).

The mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan is a new industry that has expanded dramatically since 2001. Prior to the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, the industry was absent in Afghanistan; but only a decade later the industry has come to be seen as one of the success stories in Afghanistan. It is estimated that over 23 million mobile-phone subscribers have been reached since 2002, and that the four large corporations have invested a total inflow of more than US$2.4 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) in Afghanistan.[ii] As illustrated in Table 1, the first 15-year business licences were granted to AWCC in 2002 and Roshan in 2003 for US$5 million each. With the entrance of the South African firm MTN in 2008 and Emirati Etisalat in 2007, the license fees were increased to US$40.1 million (Hamdard 2012). The ownership models are included to illustrate that all corporations are the product of foreign direct investment (FDI), but only MTN and Etisalat can be categorised as MNCs. AWCC and Roshan are also foreign investments but are local brands that only operate in Afghanistan and will therefore not be referred to as MNCs. The point to emphasize here is that all four corporations have close connections to the international telecommunications industry due to their foreign shareholders.

Corporations/ Indicators	**AWCC**	**Roshan**	**MTN**	**Etisalat**
Start period:	April 2002	January 2003	July 2006	May 2006 (May 2007 in service)
Ownership share:	American telephone system international 80% + MCIT 20%	AKFED 51%, Monaco 36.75%, Telia-sonera 12.25%	100% MTN (Dubai) Limited.	100% Etisalat Telecommunications Corporation
Licence fee:	US$5 million	US$5 million	US$40.1 million	US$40.1 million
Licence period:	15 years (2017)	15 years (2018)	15 years (2021)	15 years (2021)

Table 1**: Overview of corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry**
Sources: Corporate website [iii] and (Hamdard 2012)

Data collection and analysis

The study draws upon data collected from multiple sources from the period 2007–2014, and particularly during the lead author's multiple field studies in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2013. During this period, 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the senior management and employees of the four corporations, with senior staff from Afghan state institutions, NGOs engaged in CSR activities with the industry, other formal and informal civil society organisations (CSOs), and, finally, international donors active in Afghanistan. In addition, 25 speeches from the first ICT conference in Kabul were also included in the study,[iv] and multiple field observations of telecommunication sites were used to enrich the empirical insights of the study. Finally, secondary data from websites, documents and audio/video material from the corporations, the industry at large, and state institutions, were also collected to enrich the understanding of the emergence of CSR in the Afghan telecommunications industry. These different sources of data enabled a process of triangulation to ensure quality analysis; in addition, they not only enable the search for convergence of findings but also allow space for divergence and contradictory findings (Marks and O'Mahoney 2014; Modell 2009).

The data analysis followed an iterative process of coding the data, identifying findings, comparing findings to the existing literature, and re-studying data and continuing the coding process. Hence, an overview of the industry and the CSR practices was initially obtained from corporate websites, reports and other means of communication, including social media and local news media, and was then related to the existing literature. Here the definition of CSR as an "umbrella" term (Blowfield and Frynas 2005, p. 503) was used, as it covers a broad range of social and/or environmental practices. Second, the overviews were supplemented by insights derived from interviews, which focused on understanding the explicit forms of their CSR, and the precise institutional pressures (national and/or global) at play in motivating or shaping this engagement. For instance, the respondents were asked about the history of CSR in their corporation, how CSR was introduced to the Afghan context, what internal and external factors motivated CSR, how the Afghan context was different/similar to other contexts where the corporation was operating. These data led to the preliminary coding process and the identification of specific elements for the analytical framework. Third, all the collected data were then coded in relation to coercive pressures (e.g., regulations, informal pressures, corporate policies), mimetic processes (e.g., best practices, competitive imitation – both national and international) and normative pressures (e.g., assumed responsibilities, values and ethical guidelines) at play within the Afghan CSR organizational field. In the final coding process our data was coded in relation to the dimensions of the analytical framework in order to compile the analysis relevant for the article.

The following section will present a brief contextual description of Afghanistan, followed by empirical findings including the actor level analysis of the corporations and their CSR practices. Finally, the organisational field is analysed by categorising how the coercive, mimetic and

normative isomorphic processes amalgamate or mix with national/global pressures (if any) in influencing the CSR practices in Afghanistan.

4. Context

Afghanistan in the 21st century

Afghanistan has experienced instability and war for more than four decades, starting with the Soviet-led revolution in 1979 that led to the Afghan civil war between 1992 and 1996, and the isolation phase with the Taliban regime taking control of large parts of the country until 2001. The political agenda of the past decade has been generally well-publicized and covered by the international media, since the start of the US-led "war on terror" in 2001 paved the way for a new constitution and political structure, an immense inflow of aid, and democratic elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014.

The last decade of US-led intervention has culminated in neo-liberal economic policies intended to liberalise the economy and privatise key socio-economic industries (e.g., the telecommunication, mining, aviation, and education areas, etc.). This market-led economic policy is explicitly supported by Article 10 of the country's new constitution: "*The state shall encourage, protect as well as ensure the safety of capital investment and private enterprises in accordance with the provisions of the law and market economy*" ("Private Sector Development & Trade Sector Strategy" 2008, p. 1). According to the World Bank, the Afghan economy has seen unprecedented rates of GDP growth in recent decades, ranging from 10–22% per year, primarily due to very low GDP baselines, the privatisation of the economy, and, not least, the massive inflow of aid money (*Afghanistan Economic Update*, 2014). Within the framework of the formal economy, the service sector accounts for about 40% of the GDP contribution, of which the telecommunication industry is one of the main contributors (ibid.). This particular industry is estimated to have provided an average of US$139.6 million in tax revenue for the state annually since 2006, and to have created approximately 100,000 direct and indirect jobs. [v] Such formal economic growth is highly aid-dependent, however, and Afghanistan ranked as one of the top ten aid-receiving nations in the period 2002–2014.[vi]

In addition, the country still suffers from instability and violent conflicts. The Afghan state is considered to be one of the most corrupt and "fragile" states, with very weak law enforcement and provision of public goods, including security, infrastructure, health services and education (Fund for Peace 2014). As a result, Afghanistan is still one of the least-developed countries in the world according to the UN Human Development Index (UNDP 2014). Decades of war and instability have destroyed educational institutions in Afghanistan, resulting in an 80% illiteracy rate. With the withdrawal of international combat forces in 2014, the World Bank assesses that the upcoming years are crucial years for the developmental progress made in Afghanistan, economic growth and

overall national security concerns, as the Afghans are taking responsibility for security with gradually reduced international aid and focus (Hogg et al. 2013).

5. Analysis

Overview of the four mobile telecommunication operators

As indicated earlier, the case study focuses on mobile operators that are illustrated in table 1 and includes four mobile operators that were active until the end of 2013 (AWCC, Roshan, Etisalat and MTN). All four corporations explicitly communicate that they undertake CSR/corporate citizenship practices in Afghanistan. Table 2 provides an overview of the main social issues addressed by the four corporations. These issues are instrumental in helping account for the explicit CSR topics that are adopted by the four mobile corporations in the specific Afghanistan context.

The CSR topics raised by the four corporations have two interesting features. First, it is interesting that the practices are mainly targeted towards wider-society or community issues, tailored specifically to local communities – whether in rural or urban areas. In other words, internal issues such as labour and working conditions and supply-chain issues are not high on the agenda in terms of explicit CSR themes for these corporations. Second, in this societal approach some variations can be seen in the CSR topics addressed by the corporations. While all four corporations explicitly address topics such as community development, education and/or capacity-building and M-services, not all of them address the remaining topics, as shown in Table 2. Explanations for such minor variations are provided as we analyse the dynamics of the organisational field in the following section.

Corporations/CSR topics	AWCC	Roshan	MTN	Etisalat
Health	Supports hospital constructions and equipment 'Walk to Help Save an Afghan Mother and Child' in USA	Dental & Health clinic and workshops for employees Medical Health Insurance for employees Telemedicine in 3 public hospitals	Community healthcare centres in remote areas beyond the reach of NGOs Mobile Clinic Support to "Gynaecology" hospitals	NA
Community development	Water well construction Cash grants for children and orphanages Winter Aid package Afghan Symposium on Humanitarian and Leadership Earth Day initiatives Afghan Trusted Network	Support for orphanages Build A Well Project Pamir Power Project Water-Tracker Alternative Livelihoods Programme TV Programmes Playground Project Soup Kitchens Stars Sing Out	Reconstructing bridges and digging water wells Support to Internally Displaced People (IDP) due to war or civil conflict	Social Welfare projects Annual Food Distribution to underprivileged children
Education, capacity-building	Support to Orphanage schools Educational Learning Centres Women grants	Teacher consultation line E-learning centres in 30 locations School Construction One Laptop Per Child Roshan/Cisco Networking Academy Teacher consultation line	Scholarship for students Contribute in reconstructing schools and orphanages	Graduate Trainee programme Several support initiatives to educational institutions
Private sector development	Empowering Women Grants for business, justice and humanity	Women's Public Call Offices	NA	Public call office Bicycle for handicapped
Sport sponsorships	Sports grants to Olympic medallists bicycle races	Youth Sport Centre Afghan premier league football	NA	Sport sponsorships and support for national cricket team
Religious practices	Ramadan Food Distribution	NA	NA	Building 38 Islamic mosques Annual Quran Recitation Competition Hajj support
Disaster relief	Disaster relief	NA	Emergency support	NA
M-services	My Money	Malomat M-Paisa	M-doctor M-Mufti M-Lawyer M-Paisa	M-Hawala

Table 2: Overview of CSR in the telecommunication sector in Afghanistan 2014
Source: Websites of the four corporations [vii]

The CSR dynamics at the organisational field

The actors at the multi-level organisational field

Besides the four corporations, the organisational field also includes not only national actors, but also global pressures stemming from the global non-state actors, e.g., shareholders, competitors, business associations and international actors operating in Afghanistan.

Our findings indicate that the main national actors in the field are the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) and the Afghanistan Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (ATRA). The liberalisation of the industry since 2001 implied that the MCIT was only mandated to provide policies for the industry, while ATRA was created as an independent regulatory body to formulate and review laws and solve disputes between the corporations, the MCIT and other stakeholders.[viii] This governance structure, i.e. of an independent regulatory body and a policy-making ministry, follows the conventional structure of governance for this industry found in Europe and in other parts of the developing world (Duso and Seldeslachts 2010; Noll 2003).

It is also important to note the role of foreign aid inflow and donor agencies in supporting the industry by granting loans and engaging in CSR projects. Afghanistan lacks national financial institutions able to provide capital for large-scale business investments. The establishment of Roshan and MTN are good examples of supplemented loans granted by international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Recently, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has engaged in closer collaboration with the industry to create synergy between development missions and private sector services by supporting mobile technology investments in banking, health and education services.[ix] These projects are seen as technologically innovative approaches to provide gains both for development agents and the mobile telecommunications industry. In short, the formal Afghan economy is mirrored in this field, as largely foreign investments and international agencies are key non-state actors engaged in the field in cooperation with relevant and newly established national state and non-state actors. However, to understand how CSR is shaped in this specific organisational field, we relate to and try to dissect the multi-level dynamics of the field. This can be explained through un-fleshing coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphic processes (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) that can reveal the influence or lack of macro-international institutions, national institutions, as well as the influence and counter-influence processes of local and global actors.

Coercive - corporate policies and lack of national pressures

Coercive pressures occur when formal and informal pressures are exerted by the international community to homogenise a certain phenomenon (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 150). At the national level, the formal regulatory setting in Afghanistan does not impose pressures to conform to a specific CSR agenda, as both ATRA and MCIT were initially not capable of making policies

and/or regulations pertaining to CSR. MCIT admits "… *after four decades of war, of course the ministry started from scratch and lagged behind the modern corporations that we licensed to operate in Afghanistan… but through dialogue and close partnerships with the corporations we managed to develop a successful industry today*" (MCIT senior official, October 2013, Kabul). As noted earlier, the governance structure of the telecommunications sector is inspired by global industry tendencies, but the Afghan state suffers from weak capacity to develop and enforce specific policies and regulations for CSR engagement. Instead, the regulatory framework for the industry was developed in partnership with the relevant corporations, themselves facilitated by the international donor agencies.[x] This framework implies that corporations have to pay taxes and licence fees and to contribute to a development fund, which supports the development and outreach of the telecommunications network. However, the legal framework is criticised as weak, with vaguely defined terms and conditions, in comparison to global ICT and telecommunications regulatory standards throughout the world (Hamdard 2012, p. 24). Hence neither the current national regulatory framework nor industry-level policies address CSR as a mandatory obligation or guidance in Afghanistan.

Likewise, local civil society organizations do not impose pressure on corporations in relation to business-society relations. Despite the presence of a large number of national and international NGOs, observations show that there are no reports on the mobile telecommunication industry's labour-related, social and environmental issues in Afghanistan. According to senior staff of one of the largest international non-governmental organization (INGOs) in Afghanistan *"... NGOs' main focus has been on service provision… private sector issues are not on the agenda yet"* (director, anonymous INGO, 2011). This indicates that the focus of both local NGOs and INGOs over the past decade has been the urgent need for health, education and relief services. Hence, the coercive pressures from the state, formal NGOs, and activist groups that are recognised in the CSR literature are missing in the Afghan context.

Findings instead indicate that coercive pressures at the global level are influential, as HQ corporate policies impose coercive pressures on their subsidiaries to engage in CSR practices in Afghanistan. This is particularly evident with MTN and Etisalat as MNC cases, which, by their nature, have developed specific procedures that are diffused to all operating subsidiaries. These procedures and policies shape their orientations to CSR and their selection of issues to address. For instance, MTN states that *"... all MTN locations engage in CSR… our HQ annually ask us to report what the developmental needs are in each location… we report back and based on this the HQ director chooses a specific theme/focus for MTN that year"* (MTN senior position, September 2013, Kabul). Hence, coercive pressures from headquarters force subsidiaries to engage in CSR practices, since, for example, *"...if the HQ focuses on health or education this year, we will find out how to embrace such agenda ... and what our budget allows for the year"* (MTN senior position, September 2013, Kabul). Moreover, it was revealed that their corporate policies have clear directions in terms of

having an ethical code of conduct that guides and prevents staff from engaging in corruption – even in Afghanistan, which is ranked high as a corrupt state. Hence, one of the explanations is that global corporate policies and procedures encourage the subsidiaries to engage in the specific CSR practices listed in Table 2.

Mimetic - competition and international best practices

While coercive pressures may explain some aspects of CSR for the two MNCs, mimetic processes are also useful in helping to explain the rise of explicit CSR. Mimetic processes are models or copies of "best practices" within the national and international organisational field, and occur to reduce uncertainties for the actors (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 151). Again, the multi-level features of the organisational field are illustrated, as two levels of mimetic processes are identified in Afghanistan.

At the global level, mimetic processes occur when international best practices within the international industry are diffused to a specific context. In Afghanistan, the introduction of M-services such as M-paisa, M-health and M-agricultural services indicates such modelling of best practices from the international industry. The largest industry association promotes specific mobile technologies that enable socio-economic development as best practice (GSMA 2014) and inspires corporations to engage with such technologies. Roshan's "M-paisa" application, for example, is directly copied from the Kenyan market where Vodafone has been successful in implementing mobile technology (Foster and Heeks 2013, p. 109). Moreover, as noted above, the role of international development agencies such as USAID also increases the diffusion of global practices through the salience of mimetic processes. A platform for cooperation between the four competitors, called "Association mobile money operators in Afghanistan" (AMMOA), was financially supported by USAID to promote the development of mobile money projects in Afghanistan (McGowan 2012). Observations from AMMOA meetings showed, interestingly, how the competitors discussed the barriers and opportunities of mobile money technology in Afghanistan (October 2013 in Kabul). However, such platforms also enhance the conditions for mimetic processes within the national level of the organisational field, as local market competitors are invited to diffuse global practices of M-services in the Afghan market and to learn from each other.

However, mimetic processes also occur at the national level, where uncertainties in the Afghan context enhance mimetic processes among competitors in the Afghan market. The corporations experienced a range of severe uncertainties in the Afghan context and embraced the lack of infrastructure and the high level of illiteracy in Afghanistan as both a challenge and an opportunity. AWCC, as the first corporation to enter the Afghan market, states "… *we faced severe challenges in Afghanistan… and had to build a new mobile telecommunications infrastructure from scratch*" (speech by AWCC senior position, September 2013, Kabul). Roshan further adds that "…*the*

capacity of employees and distributors in relation to customer service and management ... were very low, so we had to train our own staff and create our own distribution channel" (speech by Roshan senior position, September 2013, Kabul). Some of these activities are raised as opportunities for CSR practices, where education, health and private sector development practices are targeted towards potential future staff (as illustrated in Table 2).

However, the engagement in education of employees also mirrors the labour rights issues of the industry. While labour issues are generally raised in the CSR debates, these concerns are very rarely addressed beyond the voluntary engagement in Afghanistan for two reasons. First, after the fall of the Soviet-supported regime in Afghanistan, very little formal union activity exists today. Second, the state institutions formally governing labour issues have shown no interest in addressing problems with labour conditions within the industry. Hence, in reality each business negotiates informally with its employees on salary rates, conditions and payment issues because the industry is highly dependent on employees due to a lack of skilled labour. This is particularly evident when Roshan is enabled to claim that they are "*... the first company in Afghanistan to offer its employees private medical insurance*".[xi] Hence, while some employee issues are raised as CSR practices, there are no external pressures on corporations to adhere to specific labour standards. Instead, it seems that corporate policies on employment standards and conditions at national level are changing based on mimetic processes relating to attracting the best pool of labour.

Likewise, building customer and community relations also includes mimetic processes in order to cope with the ambiguity of cultural expectations. It was observed that AWCC and Roshan in the initial phases of the industry imitated each other in terms of CSR programmes and topics. The immense focus on community development, health and education issues is illustrative of how AWCC and Roshan attempt to build trustworthy relationships with both customers and local communities in area where the state institutions cannot provide basic services. Initial studies of this CSR in Afghanistan indicate that, due to the insecurity, illiteracy and lack of technical skills among their customers and business partners, AWCC and Roshan engaged in CSR towards communities to reduce such market uncertainties and risks (for more, see Azizi 2015). Similarly, when MTN and Etisalat later entered the market and introduced new features of CSR, mimetic processes were observable between all corporations. Particularly in relation to the abovementioned M-services and the level of communication about CSR, the four corporations have increased CSR communication from 2006 to 2014. They now all address CSR on their corporate websites and their accounts have become increasingly detailed and elaborate over time.

In short, it is important to emphasize that the examples shared illustrate mimetic processes because they relate to what is considered as legitimate best practice or standard behaviour within the limited organisational field of the mobile telecommunications industry. First, CSR practices such as M-services are highly industry-specific and cannot be an imitation from other industries. Second,

observations show that very few if any industries in Afghanistan are engaged in CSR as explicitly as the mobile telecommunications industry, which indicates that even the non-technological practices such as labour issues and community development are imitations within the CSR organizational field.

Norms – filtering and industry standards

Normative pressures are the third source of isomorphic change. They emphasise a professionalization of practices through either education or networks of professionals (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 152).

At national level, observations of the few private and public academic institutions operating in Afghanistan show that the CSR debates are still not part of the business curriculum. In the vacuum of national professional standards for CSR in Afghanistan, the international normative standards and practices of non-local actors permeate the "Afghan" CSR local debate. There is no official term for CSR in the Afghan languages, implying that AWCC and Roshan were the first corporations to address and introduce terms like "corporate citizenship" and "CSR" in Afghanistan around 2005–2006. Such processes, in addition to being influenced by coercive and mimetic pressures, also led by the global filtering process (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, p. 153), whereby industry managers trained and educated in the West diffuse a specific norm, in this case CSR. Due to the lack of educated staff within the local industry, CSR experts shift jobs among competitors in the Afghan market, thereby increasing the professionalization of CSR in Afghanistan.

Historically, local normative expectations were driven by concepts of Islamic obligation "zakat" (Jamali and Sidani 2012, p. 1) or the local understanding of "khairaat" as charity, whereby wealthy businessmen "gave" to the very poor as ceremonial acts of charity and philanthropy. Interviews with a senior staff member who was active in former state-owned companies during the 1990s reveal that "*... no company was forced to engage in such social projects that we see now with the mobile phone companies… only a few rich businessmen engaged in khairaat… but that was to very few poor families*" (former Afghan Cart senior position, Kabul, January 2014). Hence the current concept of CSR, which entails a broad range of activities towards employees and, in particular, towards communities and customers, is culturally and historically a new phenomenon in Afghanistan that has been driven by the engagement of the mentioned corporations since 2001.

Moreover, global influence is also visible in the diffusion of industry standards. As an example, Roshan introduced CSR certification and standards on issues of governance, workers, communities and environment, as they were the first corporation to be "B-corp" certified.[xii] Another example shows the adaption of Afghan norms to Western norms, with AWCC's CEO being praised as "Afghanistan's first philanthropist" as he introduced a new inclusive business philanthropy

initiative previously unknown in the country by reaching out to Afghans beyond ethnic, linguistic, religious and geographic limitations.[xiii] Hence we argue that the filtering process within the organisational field introduces norms from the international debate on CSR and even converts former local norms into the CSR agenda, thereby diffusing global norms at the level of the field.

6. Discussion

This article argues that the dominant explicit CSR agenda in the Afghan context can be explained by a) the expanded governance role of corporations and b) by dynamics at multi-level organisational field.

Governance in areas of limited statehood enables agency

This article argues that the national setting in Afghanistan cannot be framed as the kind of developed and coherent national business system that is presumed in the Eurocentric and state-centric conceptualisation of CSR (Matten and Moon 2008). The normative framings as "weak environments" or "fragile settings" used in the CSR debates on the developing world (Amaeshi et al. 2016) are also not useful for analytical purposes. The article therefore introduces "areas of limited statehood" as an alternative framing, which advances a governance approach that pays attention to the role of non-state actors in the national CSR agenda – with/without pressures from the state. This analytical lens implies that corporations have immense room for manoeuvring to define their local responsibilities and practices in Afghanistan as an area of limited statehood. In fact the mobile industry in Afghanistan introduced a new discourse on CSR and converted some former implicit responsibilities of businesses into explicit forms. Hence our findings support the argument that the specific emergence or expression of CSR is due to an extreme lack of pressure from the national setting (Matten and Moon 2008, p. 418). Here, the governance approach underlines that agency matters and that corporations are actively engaged in explicit CSR due to and/or because of the vacuum left for corporations to determine their explicit CSR practices. Afghanistan has "leap frogged" into the mobile telecommunication era due to the business ventures and some strategic CSR efforts of key players in this industry. Thus a multi-level organisational field conception enables us to account for how actors can channel their influence to set the CSR agenda in such contexts, mobilizing high levels of agency and manoeuvring through existing institutional voids to create business and social opportunities.

Explicit CSR driven by multi-level isomorphic interplay

While the governance conditions in such national contexts can enable corporations to proactively engage in CSR, they cannot explain the rise of explicit CSR in areas of limited statehood. The account synthesized above provides tentative support for the convergence thesis of Matten and Moon (2008). According to Matten and Moon (2008), we can expect to find strong elements of explicit CSR in national business systems that provide discretion to private economic actors in liberal markets. However, we might expect a similar space for explicit CSR in developing

economies, not so much by way of market-friendly ideology as through the lack of the state and NBS pressures. However, such space for manoeuvring does not itself follow explicit CSR, since implicit CSR forms are also evident in contexts with similar weak coercive pressures (Jamali and Neville 2011). Here the article argues that the potential distinctiveness and diversity of CSR in developing countries in comparison to developed countries can be explained through the framework presented in the article. By advancing the organizational field as the central unit of analysis and the locus of interaction of micro, macro, national and global pressures and various legitimacy-enhancing isomorphic processes, the framework helps account for the multi-level dynamics of CSR at the level of the organisational field. This is evident with our findings, where all the corporations examined in the article are acting/reacting within an organisational field that includes both national and global actors. The dynamics of the field emphasize the multiple pressures stemming from outside the national field level, including global isomorphic processes, which then influence and shape local CSR policies, norms and practices at corporate level. Our findings thereby support the argument that the debate about convergence/divergence and explicit/implicit CSR is shaped by multi-level relationships between the international, national, and organisational dynamics (Jamali and Neville 2011), hence advancing the call for more nuanced and contextualized analyses of CSR. Our findings also support the need for a wider governance approach to conceptualize the complex CSR dynamics of developing countries.

Relatedly, the article attempts to advance our understanding of the isomorphic dynamics that shape and incentivize the CSR agenda in areas of limited statehood. As the findings illustrate, it is clear that not only salient coercive but also mimetic and normative pressures emanating from the global scene have gradually permeated the local CSR agenda in Afghanistan. For example, the fact that corporations engage in explicit CSR is not propagated as expected through traditional civil society pressures or state regulations (Amaeshi et al. 2016) but rather through corporate policies. Such findings support the general coercive pressure argument in the literature (Campbell 2007) yet also suggest that corporate policies can act as proxy coercive pressures in areas of limited statehood in the absence of strong coercive pressures from the state and/or civil society organisations.

Moreover, the findings reveal the importance of the normative and mimetic isomorphic processes at play in the multi-level organisational field. The salient mimetic processes highlight the global diffusion of best practices, such as M-services from the international telecommunications industry to the specific national CSR agenda, and how they are reinforced through international development agencies. Other mimetic processes are evident through imitation dynamics between local competitors, as seen with the community development practices that aim to reduce uncertainties and risks in the Afghan context. Our empirical analysis also makes it clear that normative pressures for CSR are salient in the Afghan CSR organisational field, although these normative pressures do not stem as expected from national educational and professional networks but rather through norms being propagated through the international telecom operators that have entered the organisational

field and their industry managers trained and educated in the West. Hence the findings reveal that in the vacuum of national CSR policies, norms and practices, actors utilize and leverage mimetic and normative isomorphic processes within the multi-level organisational field to introduce and legitimize certain CSR practices and/or replace existing local norms regarding the responsibilities of businesses. The findings of the article thereby advance a broader conception of isomorphism in relation to CSR in developing countries. Departing from mainstream conceptions of isomorphism as related to coercive pressures from the state in BRICS (Abreu et al. 2012), we highlight isomorphism processes of a coercive, mimetic and normative nature stemming from global corporations and global actors. Our findings thus indicate the need for a wider governance lens in areas of limited statehood that accounts for the role of non-state actors (Börzel et al. 2012; Hönke and Thauer 2014). However, we do not suggest that only intra-corporate dynamics are driving CSR in areas of limited statehood (Thauer 2014), but rather a mix of micro, macro, national and global pressures and peculiar legitimacy-enhancing isomorphic processes (coercive, mimetic and normative) that are salient at the level of the organizational field. Such findings thereby emphasize that it is still important to recognise isomorphic pressures in explaining the emergence of CSR, but also that these pressures are driven by complex multi-level fields and actors (Kostova et al. 2008).

Novel contributions to the debate on CSR in South Asia

Finally, the article also contributes to the debate on CSR in South Asia by providing both novel empirical insights from Afghanistan and advocating for the multi-level explanation of CSR to advance the South Asian perspective on CSR. The article highlights that the Afghan context has been neglected in the CSR debate on South Asia, and thus presents novel insights indicating the large space for corporations to dictate their business-society relations due to the vacuum of pressures from state authorities and CSOs. The findings present a new account of how CSR is unfolding in South Asia (Rana 2012) and stand in stark contrast to, for instance, the Indian state-led agenda (Sharma 2013). However, the findings relating to the salience of an explicit self-serving and self-regulatory CSR agenda being championed by global MNCs is not entirely new in the South Asian debate. The explicit form of CSR arising in Afghanistan that is being driven by international global players, norms and practices risks side-lining local voices and traditions, as the convergence process is very foreign to local understanding (Khan and Lund-Thomsen 2011). Even traditional implicit CSR is being overshadowed and gradually transformed by this global convergence.

The findings here are based on a context-driven analytical approach (Khilji and Matthews 2012), and promote the need for a contextualized explanation of CSR that accounts for multi-level pressures and salient isomorphic processes at the level of the organizational field. Such an analytical lens can advance the debate about CSR in South Asia by enabling a comparison of complex organisational fields rather than a simplistic focus on the traditional national explanations of the rise of CSR. The emphasis on the organisational field could provide different accounts of the rise of CSR in other industries (Momin and Parker 2013) than the buyer-driven manufacturing industries (Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen 2014; Lund-Thomsen and Nadvi 2010) that have

predominantly been studied in relation to South Asia. Hence, despite the geographic borders and cultural commonalities that work as common denominators for the South Asian focus (Mahmood and Khilji 2013), CSR seems to be more influenced by the specific multi-level institutional settings in the countries in question. These contributions help sensitize readers to the existing contextual heterogeneity and the need for a more nuanced analysis of CSR that accounts for the specific complex interplay of national and global institutional conditions to enrich our knowledge of CSR in South Asia more broadly.

7. Conclusion

The article aims to explain what drives CSR in national contexts that are distinctly different from contexts previously studied in the CSR literature. The article has presented a nuanced institutional account of CSR in Afghanistan, focusing on the mobile telecommunications industry and the dynamics of the multi-level organisational field, embodying a mix of national and global institutional dynamics for CSR. The findings suggest that local institutional pressures are hardly salient in Afghanistan given the fragility of national institutions, which enables the international mobile operators to take advantage of existing institutional voids to deal with local needs through a global agenda on CSR within the field.

Theoretically, our article provides support to recent neo-institutional accounts of CSR and uses a multi-level institutional approach, including the global setting, the national context and the corporations and their CSR practices. The organisational field becomes a central unit of analysis and serves as a domain wherein an organisation's actions are structured by the network of complex relationships in which it is embedded (Wooten and Hoffman 2008). Here the findings also support the important elements of variation in terms of degree of agency, choice, and self-interest in responding to institutional pressures (Oliver 1991; Scott 2013). First, the article has documented that it is important to consider the severely least-developed national context in analysing CSR, and frames Afghanistan as promoting a "governance without state" approach in an "Area of Limited Statehood" (Risse 2011). This literature emphasizes the increasing role of non-state actors in governance, with or without the state (Börzel et al. 2012; Börzel and Risse 2010), and provides an alternative conceptualization to the well-known National Business System approach and the biased "weak" or "fragile" framings of national contexts in the CSR debate.

Second, the isomorphic pressures at the different levels of the organisational field highlight the complex amalgam of institutional pressures at play in the CSR organizational field of developing nations, increasingly stemming from the global/international scene in the context of globalization. Our detailed analysis has documented isomorphic pressures for explicit CSR, embodying global pressures from the global industry and a variety of international organisations at the national level, and finally from the corporate level, which have aggressively entered the Afghan CSR scene in

recent years. This has resulted in an unexpected level of convergence around explicit CSR themes that have great commonality with what is encountered in liberal and advanced developed markets, but is instead driven by the *lack* of coercive pressures at the national level.

Empirically, our article has documented the necessity and usefulness of contextualized analyses of national specifics of CSR, which remain rare in the literature. The empirical insights into CSR expressions in the Afghan context are also instrumental in enriching the regional South Asian understanding of CSR which, despite consisting of eight countries, has so far received very limited inputs on CSR in Afghanistan. We argue that our theoretically informed empirical insights from the novel Afghan context contribute to advancing the CSR literature on South Asia both theoretically and empirically. However, the findings of the article are focused on responsible practices that are *explicitly* stated, and calls for future studies to focus on corporate societal engagements that are excluded in the explicit CSR debate. More research on neglected national contexts will enrich the CSR debate going forward, as this sort of research may present clear elements of distinction or departure from what is encountered in the existing literature on CSR in developing countries.

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Endnotes: (All accessed 29.02.2016)

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[i] We define CSR as " an umbrella term for a variety of theories and practices all of which recognize the following: (a) that 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); and (c) that business needs to manage its relationship with wider society, whether for reasons of commercial viability or to add value to society." (Blowfield and Frynas, 2005, p. 503)

[ii] http://mcit.gov.af/en

[iii] http://roshan.af/Roshan/About_Roshan/Shareholders.aspx (accessed 29.02.2016)

[iv] http://mcit.gov.af/en/news/first-international-ict-conference-exhibition-in-kabul

[v] http://mcit.gov.af/en

[vi] http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/1%20World%20-%20Development%20Aid%20at%20a%20Glance%202015.pdf

[vii] http://www.bayatfoundation.org/, http://afghan-wireless.com/about-us/social-responsibility/, http://www.roshan.af, http://www.mtn.com.af, http://etisalat.af/ (Data collected until 09.03.2015)

[viii] http://atra.gov.af/en

[ix] http://blog.usaid.gov/2011/08/innovating-in-afghanistan/

[x] http://www.akdn.org/publications/eec/Case%20Study%20Telecom%20Sector%20in%20English.pdf

[xi] http://www.roshan.af/roshan/Roshan_Community/Work/Communities/Afghan_Medical_Health_Insurance.aspx

[xii] http://www.bcorporation.net/community/telecom-development-company-afghanistan-ltd-roshan

[xiii] http://www.bayatfoundation.org/

Paper 3

Critical exploration of political CSR in the context of anarchy

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Publication: Unpublished

1. Introduction

The debate on political corporate social responsibility (PCSR) highlights how the increasing engagement of business in society through corporate social responsibility (CSR) implies a new political role for corporations in the era of globalization, with corporations taking on roles formerly presumed to belong to the state, including administering citizenship rights (Matten and Crane 2005) and enabling democratic governance (Scherer et al. 2016; Scherer and Palazzo 2011). However, assumptions about business-society relations and related normative claims made in the PCSR literature about the political role of business have been criticized for their lack of empirical evidence from the 'developing world' (Banerjee 2010; Frynas and Stephens 2015). This paper acknowledges the increasingly political role of business in the developing world but also emphasizes that contextualized studies are needed to shed light on the roles that businesses play in the complex business-society relationships that exist in the diverse settings of developing countries.

The paper presents a case study of multinational corporations (MNCs) operating in the mobile telecommunications industry in rural Afghanistan, conceptualized as a context of 'anarchy' that lacks the state and formal civil society to enforce regulations and provide basic public goods (Börzel and Risse 2010). While such extreme cases are not generalizable for all developing country settings, they can be fruitful for problematizing the assumptions and claims made in the PCSR debate. To enrich this debate, the paper explores the kinds of actors and pressures that corporations face in a context of anarchy and the ways in which corporations respond to these pressures and actors. Such exploration is needed to advance the PCSR debate beyond discussions about what the political role of business *should* be towards a more contextualized understanding of the political role of business in the diverse settings of developing countries. The paper thereby argues that the political role of business in society is defined by concrete corporate engagements in society—engagements that are conditioned by business-society relations in a particular context.

The findings of this paper thus shed light on the non-conventional pressures and actors that corporations face in their search for market growth potentials in rural areas of Afghanistan where the state can neither provide safe access to land needed for corporate operations nor guarantee the

security of corporate personnel. In these areas, non-state actors such as village strongmen, criminal gangs and insurgency groups like the Taliban govern contexts of anarchy. The findings show how such actors exert violent pressures on corporations in various ways for economic or ideological gain. These findings problematize the claim that moral legitimacy rather than instrumental incentives drive corporations to engage in political roles in society (e.g., to enable citizenship and democratic governance). The paper suggests instead that corporate engagements in contexts of anarchy are driven by corporate self-interest to enable market growth, which necessitates not only engaging with controversial non-state actors but also implicitly supporting their causes. The instrumental nature of corporate engagements is thus not seen as excluding a political role for corporations (Scherer and Palazzo 2011); quite the contrary, this paper argues, it is just such instrumental motivation that defines and drives the political role of corporations in contexts of anarchy.

The following section (Section 2) reviews the PCSR debate with a particular focus on developing countries. Sections 3, 4 and 5 then present, respectively: the analytical framework; the contextual background of Afghanistan; and the methodology. The findings of the paper are presented in the analysis section, leading to the discussion and conclusion sections.

2. Review of the political CSR and CSI debate

The Political CSR debate

The political role of business in relation to regulations, corruption and/or lobbyism has long been studied; however, the role of business in social development remains neglected in such debates (Banerjee 2008a). The PCSR literature aims to take up this debate by emphasizing the political role that is emerging for corporations through CSR in the era of globalization (Matten and Crane 2005; Scherer and Palazzo 2011)—a role that has increasingly been related to the debate about the developing world (Frynas and Stephens 2015). The PCSR debate aims to conceptualize the role of business in society in the era of globalization on the basis of the following two conditions in global business-society relations. First, on the basis that globalization has led to the 'shrinking of the state' and diminished the ability of the state to provide public goods (Matten and Crane 2005; Scherer and Palazzo 2011), thereby offering a new international platform beyond nation-states to be occupied by the role of business (Scherer et al. 2016; Scherer and Palazzo 2007). Second, the new global context is claimed to have resulted in a 'race to the bottom' and even a 'vacuum of regulation and social responsibility' (Scherer and Palazzo 2008, pp. 422–423), which have opened a new space for corporations to engage in business-society relations. Corporations have thus gained increasing power to influence the environments they operate within, which in turn—it is argued—has changed their nature from that of solely economic actors to that of increasingly political actors in society through the operationalization of CSR (Scherer et al. 2013, 2016; Scherer and Palazzo 2007, 2011). The debate touches upon two political areas drawn from related debates on the role of business in

society. First, the new political role of business relates to the debate about the increasing regulatory power of corporations, which emphasizes self-regulation as an alternative to national laws and the shift from 'hard' to 'soft' laws in developing countries (Gond et al. 2011; Utting et al. 2012; Vogel 2009). Second, the political role of corporations relates to the debate about business-development relations, where the provision of public goods and development were the subject of debate prior to the PCSR literature (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Newell and Frynas 2007; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006).

Conceptualising the nature and drivers of the new political role of business through CSR, however, remains a central puzzle in the PCSR debate—a debate dominated by the following two approaches. The corporate citizenship approach employs the metaphor of citizenship (Moon et al. 2005) to provide a descriptive conceptualization of the political role of corporations, arguing for an extended version of citizenship to encompass the political role of business in society (Crane et al. 2008; Matten et al. 2003; Moon et al. 2005). The argument is that corporations not only act as corporate citizens (Matten et al. 2003) but also have the ability to provide social rights and enable civil rights and thereby act as a channel for political rights through their engagements with society (Matten and Crane 2005, p. 174). In this way the nature and role of corporations is reconceptualised from being purely economic into a political nature and role in society, as corporations can potentially act beyond profit-maximization to address issues of citizenship and rights in society (Crane et al. 2008; Matten et al. 2003; Moon et al. 2005). The extended corporate citizenship approach aims to be a descriptive framework eluding normative claims as to what the nature and political role of business in society should or should not be.

The 'deliberative democracy' approach, in contrast, aims to provide a normative framework for the new political role of corporations by introducing the Habermasian concept of deliberative democracy (Scherer and Palazzo 2007). This approach argues that corporations need to adapt to the post-national era, in which nation-states have limited capacity to tackle global governance challenges, by re-developing the nature and role of business beyond the merely instrumental (Scherer and Palazzo 2011, p. 1108). There is a need for collaborative solutions to be driven not only by the state but increasingly by international and local civil society organisations (CSOs) and businesses to solve issues of global governance (Scherer et al. 2009; Scherer and Palazzo 2011). The Habermasian deliberative democracy approach is proposed as the normative ground for how global governance issues that strongly affect corporations and are affected by corporations can be solved by the ideals of the deliberative democracy mode of governance (Scherer and Palazzo 2007).

Critique of PCSR in relation to developing countries

The PCSR debate has also drawn critical voices, questioning two central elements of the debate. First, the assumptions about changing business-society relations in the era of globalization are questioned. In particular, assumptions about post-national governance as a consequence of the

‘shrinking’ of the state are criticized on the grounds that states still have a vital role to play in business-society relations through their coercive power to enforce regulations and provide public goods (Whelan 2012). It is argued, further, that the new governance space for corporations has arisen not as a natural consequence of the ‘era of globalization’ but as a result of the neoliberal ideology of privatization and deregulation (Fleming and Jones 2013, p. 39; Shamir 2008). Within such neoliberal governance models, businesses have the power to neglect accountability and exclude the marginalized and poor in decision-making processes—a situation that calls for alternative global governance frameworks (Banerjee 2014). These issues are well-known in the broader CSR debates about developing countries, where the importance of specific contexts is highlighted (Halme et al. 2009) in contrast to the umbrella view of ‘developing countries’ that encompasses different institutional settings (Azizi and Jamali 2016; Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Jamali 2014; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006) and varying degrees of state-capacity (Chapple and Moon 2007; Gond et al. 2011; Jeppesen and Azizi 2015). Recent studies within the PCSR debate also point out that assumptions about the political role of business are Western-biased ideals about democratic norms, since local communities in developing countries have a range of different perspectives on corporate legitimacy in society (Ehrnström-Fuentes 2016). Contextualizing the PCSR debate to developing countries thus entails problematizing assumptions about business-society relations that are currently based on Western-biased ideas such as corporate citizenship (Moon et al. 2005), Habermasian deliberative democracy (Scherer and Palazzo 2007) and the Rawlsian reading of political CSR (Whelan 2012). In particular, the presumed historical development of statehood, civil society and business in governing business-society relations requires further contextualization. Such contextualisation is necessary to address the question as to what the responsibilities of corporations are when the presumed (former) responsibilities of the state have never existed in certain contexts of developing countries.

Second, the claims made about the political role of business in society require further scrutiny in relation to developing countries. The PCSR debate emphasizes that the post-national governance space requires a reconceptualization of corporations as political actors rather than solely profit-maximizing actors (Scherer et al. 2014, 2016; Scherer and Palazzo 2011). However, the presented conceptualization, both through the citizenship approach (Crane et al. 2008; Matten and Crane 2005) and the deliberative democratic governance approach (Scherer and Palazzo 2007) are criticised for being normative without consideration of the abilities and interests of corporations in addressing societal concerns (Banerjee 2008b; Fleming and Jones 2013; Hanlon and Fleming 2009). Claims that corporations can administer and enable citizenship rights and democratic governance are seen as being in contradiction both with the core economic rationale that drives corporations and with their nature as authoritative and hierarchically organized entities that aim at maximizing profit and efficiency (Fleming and Jones 2013, pp. 86–87; Hanlon and Fleming 2009). The claims made in the PCSR literature rest on examples of multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and presume a common interest amongst various actors in engaging in

collaborative processes that hold actors accountable for their engagements (Scherer and Palazzo 2007, p. 1110). However, this attempt at empirical grounding is criticized for relying more on exceptions than on the rule in both developing countries and developed countries (Banerjee 2014, pp. 90–91), since the process (e.g., collaboration to further a common interest), the output (e.g., standards and certificates) and the impact (e.g., increased accountability) may not be in the interests of corporations and/or local power-holders. In contrast, various studies on corporate engagements in development have for decades problematized the for-profit nature of corporations as leading to business-case-led engagements that either neglect or transform the nature of 'development' and 'public goods' into a managerial logic (Blowfield 2005, 2007). Furthermore, corporations are criticized for lacking the capacity and interests to address and engage in societal development, with the result that the poorest sections of the population remain untouched, marginalized, and unable to share the benefits of CSR (Jenkins 2005; Newell 2005; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006; Utting 2007). Thus Banerjee argues that the PCSR debate is led by normative assumptions about how and why corporations *should* act beyond profit-maximization, though neither of such claims have been theoretically or empirically proven (Banerjee 2008b, p. 62).

This paper acknowledges and elaborates on the political role that corporations play, as suggested by the PCSR literature, in societies of developing countries (Matten and Crane 2005; Scherer et al. 2009, 2014; Scherer and Palazzo 2011; Whelan 2012); however, in line with the critical views summarised above, the paper maintains that this political role does not imply corporate engagement in social development, finding rather that the debate about the role of business in providing public goods is inconclusive and that this role remains a puzzle. The paper argues that the complexity of assessing the political role of corporations through CSR calls for further conceptual development (Banerjee 2014; Fleming and Jones 2013) and that empirical studies representing the complex realities of developing countries are crucial in order to advance the PCSR debate (Banerjee 2010; Frynas and Stephens 2015). Recent reviews of the PCSR debate in relation to developing countries call for studies that a) empirically include the diverse settings of developing countries in the PCSR literature, and b) integrate theories and analytical domains to advance the conceptualization of the political role of business in developing countries (Frynas and Stephens 2015). The most recent PCSR 2.0 agenda argues that studying the political role of corporations in the new post-national setting is even more relevant after a decade of debates, but acknowledges that further empirical studies are needed to shed light on diverse governance settings throughout the world (Scherer et al. 2016). To follow up on these recent developments of the debate, this paper presents an analytical framework that conceptualizes the context of 'anarchy' as a governance setting in developing countries that has so far been neglected in the literature—a framework that enables an exploration of the actors and pressures faced by corporations in a context of anarchy and of the corporate responses to these actors and pressures, thus facilitating and informing an examination of the claims and assumptions made in the PCSR debate.

3. Towards a framework for PCSR in the context of anarchy

The paper takes its point of departure in the critique of the PCSR debate to develop an analytical framework that enables an exploration of the political role of corporations in developing countries. First, the novel context of 'anarchy' is presented to the PCSR debate as a particular context of business-society relations in developing countries that is relevant for revising the assumptions and claims of PCSR. Second are presented the necessary dimensions within such contexts that enable exploration of the political role of corporations.

Conceptualizing 'anarchy' as a context for business-society relations

The term 'anarchy' has been addressed in various ways in debates about business-society relations. A particular focus has been placed on conflict-affected contexts, where an increasing role of business in such contexts is observed, calling for further investigation of the role of businesses in the economic dimensions of conflict (Bennett 2002; Haufler 2010). In the specific CSR literature, a few studies have integrated the literatures on CSR, conflict and peace, and political theories to provide an overview of the challenges of business (Jamali and Mirshak 2010; Nelson 2000; Oetzel 2012); however, the CSR debates have not conceptualized the conditions for business-society relations in the context of anarchy, whether with or without violent conflict. Empirically, studies have mainly focused on the extractive and oil industries in Africa (Frynas 2005; Idahosa 2002; Kolk and Lenfant 2010), highlighting not only the way that CSR reports neglect conflict-related challenges (Kolk and Lenfant 2010) but also how corporations are increasingly partnering with NGOs and other development actors in such contexts (Kolk and Lenfant 2013). Common to all studies on CSR in conflict-affected contexts is their call for further examination and conceptualization of business-society relations in contexts where the state is absent or weak (Haufler 2010; Jamali and Mirshak 2010; Kolk and Lenfant 2013; Oetzel 2012).

This paper presents a different conceptualization of 'anarchy' based on the political governance literature arguing that 'anarchy' does not imply a complete lack of hierarchy but rather a lack of state-led hierarchy and authority, since the state is absent and thus unable to govern business-society relations. Such a governance perspective implies a realization that states in many developing countries cannot and have never been able to impose the state-led hierarchical authority that is presumed in the euro-centric and Weberian concept of statehood, where statehood is understood as "an institutionalized authority structure with the ability to steer hierarchically (Herrschaftsverband) and to legitimately control the means of violence" (Börzel and Risse 2010, p. 118). On the contrary, many national states—beyond popular notions of 'failed/fragile states' (e.g., Afghanistan, Somalia, Haiti and Sudan)—are limited both in their ability to exercise such control over the means of violence and to steer hierarchically and can thus be conceptualized more accurately as 'areas of limited statehood' (ALS) (Risse 2011, p. 5). However, limited statehood does not imply that there is no societal coordination between the various (non-state) actors in such contexts. An emphasis on governance defined as "*institutionalized modes of social coordination to*

produce and implement collectively binding rules, or to provide collective goods" (Risse 2011, p. 9) instead suggests that the 'shadow of hierarchy' cast by the state is not the sole or primary driver of business-society relations, as is taken for granted in consolidated states and developed economies (Börzel 2013; Börzel et al. 2012). In ALS, the provision of public goods such as security, law enforcement, health and education, etc., may be defined and provided by non-state actors engaged in the governance of their societies (ibid: 24). More concretely, the literature suggests that a) external actors (e.g., donor agencies, consumer watchdogs, and NGOs), b) markets and competition (e.g. industry standards and norms), and c) contexts of anarchy (e.g. lack of basic security and property rights) can act as functional equivalents to the role of the state and thereby condition business-society relations in ALS (Börzel et al. 2012; Börzel and Risse 2010). This shift from a state-centrist to a governance perspective redirects attention from presumed state-business relations to various other types of relations between business-state, business-business and, not least, business-non-state relations, whether in conflict-affected areas or areas unaffected by conflicts. The emphasis on 'areas' in the literature underlines the fact that various degrees of statehood in business-society relations can (co-) exist within a national state (Hamann and Börzel 2013). While the roles of external actors and market mechanisms have been studied (Börzel 2013; Börzel and Thauer 2013), the context of anarchy remains relatively unstudied in relation to what actors and drivers condition the business-society relations.

Analytical framework

The ALS literature and the focus on governance in contexts of anarchy provides a relevant conceptualization of particular settings in developing countries where non-state actors play pivotal roles in business-society relations due to the absence of a state. The context of anarchy thereby provides fertile ground for problematizing the assumptions and claims made about societal conditions and about the political role of corporations in the PCSR debate, and calls for an exploration of the space available for non-state actors to act as governance actors, whether in collaboration or not with national states and the various local and global actors.

First, the context of anarchy presents a contextual setting that challenges the assumptions of PSCR at the societal level of analysis. PCSR literature particularly emphasizes how the shrinking of the state enables the role of business to take over responsibilities formerly belonging to the state. In contrast, the governance view of contexts of anarchy highlights the absence of the state and recognises that in such contexts the state may perhaps never have had an influential role in governance or in determining the taken-for-granted consensus about the public responsibility of the state. Instead the ALS literature suggests that business-society relations are influenced by non-state actors, which could indicate that such actors define corporate responsibility. The ALS literature highlights the way that non-conventional actors act as governance actors in such contexts, though it is less clear who these non-conventional actors are and which of them influences business-society relations. This calls for an exploration of which actors are involved in the business-society relations

of contexts of anarchy. Furthermore, such exploration of non-state actors also implies the need for a critical understanding of how the interests of various actors influence business-society relations (Fleming and Jones 2013, pp. 54–57). The PCSR debate highlights the need for collaborative efforts between business and external actors to provide public goods and democratic governance due to the shrinking of the state in the post-national governance constellation of the globalization era. The importance of the external environment is also highlighted in the broader CSR literature, where it is argued that institutional pressures on corporations through hard laws (i.e., tax regulations, human and workers' rights) and/or soft laws (i.e., voluntary standards, certificates and codes of conduct in relation to child labour, harsh working conditions, and environmental damage) determine whether corporations act responsibly or not (Campbell 2007). However, due to the different institutional settings for CSR in developing countries (Jamali 2014; Jamali and Neville 2011), the claims made about hard and soft laws have been problematized, leading to a need for a contextualized understanding of CSR in the diverse settings of developing countries (Dobers and Halme 2009; Halme et al. 2009). Hence, from the societal level of analysis, there is a need to explore which actors in business-society relations exert which pressures on corporations operating in the context of anarchy.

Second, the context of anarchy also calls for revision at the corporate level of analysis. The claim made in the PCSR debate that corporations are taking over former state responsibilities due to external normative pressures in the post-national setup implies that corporations act beyond motives of profit to engage in political roles through CSR. As indicated by the earlier review of the debate, however, criticism has been directed at this conceptual shift from an understanding of business as instrumental in its nature towards seeing a political nature and role for business in society. Addressing this controversy, the paper argues that the PCSR debate has been more concerned with claiming certain political roles for business than with understanding the complexities of responsibility in particular settings of developing countries; hence the need to explore how corporations respond to non-conventional actors and pressures in the context of anarchy. Such an exploration sheds light on the corporate drivers of social responsibility and evokes a classic debate about whether engaging in responsibility to maximize profit towards shareholders can lead to irresponsibility towards other stakeholders in society (Armstrong 1977; Lorig 1967). Such contradictions are neglected in recent CSR debates, where studies have emphasized that although profit and societal responsibilities are mutually exclusive they nonetheless share a symbiotic relationship (Jones et al. 2009), since being responsible is viewed as a condition for profit-maximization (Carroll and Shabana 2010). Studies have thus focused on how to avoid obvious *Corporate Social Irresponsibility* (CSI) (Basu and Palazzo 2008; Jones et al. 2009; Lange and Washburn 2012; Lin-Hi and Müller 2013), which has led to a range of studies on the consequences of irresponsibility for corporate performance (for more, see Murphy and Schlegelmilch 2013). The paper argues that the PCSR debate views corporate responsibility from this dualistic viewpoint—i.e., supporting the view that CSR is the antithesis of CSI (Jones et al. 2009, p. 303)—because

corporations are expected and alleged to act in both corporate and societal interests. The limitation of such a dualistic view of responsibility is that in this view corporate responses can only be seen as either responsible or irresponsible, thereby failing to address the tensions and potential contradictions that might occur when corporate managers align the interests of owners/shareholders vis-à-vis other societal stakeholders through CSR. These tensions and contradictions are particularly relevant in contexts of anarchy, since non-conventional actors have diverse interests and ideas about corporate responsibility in society. Exploring such contexts can thus shed light on the kinds of challenges and expectations that corporations face and how they respond to these challenges and expectations. Accordingly, there is a need to explore the societal conditions, i.e., actors and pressures, and the corporate conditions i.e., corporate responses, in order to gain a contextualized understanding of the political role of corporations through CSR.

As illustrated in Figure 1, this paper aims to examine the political role of business by exploring corporate engagements in society. These engagements are conditioned by societal actors and pressures and by corporate responses to these actors and pressures. To examine the political role of business through CSR in contexts of anarchy, the paper therefore seeks to critically examine corporations' engagements by paying attention, on the one hand, to the societal actors and pressures in contexts of anarchy, and on the other hand to the corporate responses. Such exploration is relevant for the PCSR debate because the context of anarchy problematizes current assumptions and claims about societal and corporate settings—and not least the claims made about the political role that corporations play in society. The framework thus enables a discussion of the two main critiques of the PCSR debate in relation to developing countries. First, the exploration enables a discussion of how business-society relations are different in contexts of anarchy vis-à-vis the assumptions in the PCSR debate. Second, the exploration sheds light on the responses of corporations, which can be contrasted with the normative claims made in the PCSR debate about the nature of corporate engagements and whether profit or norms are the driving forces behind the political role of corporations in society.

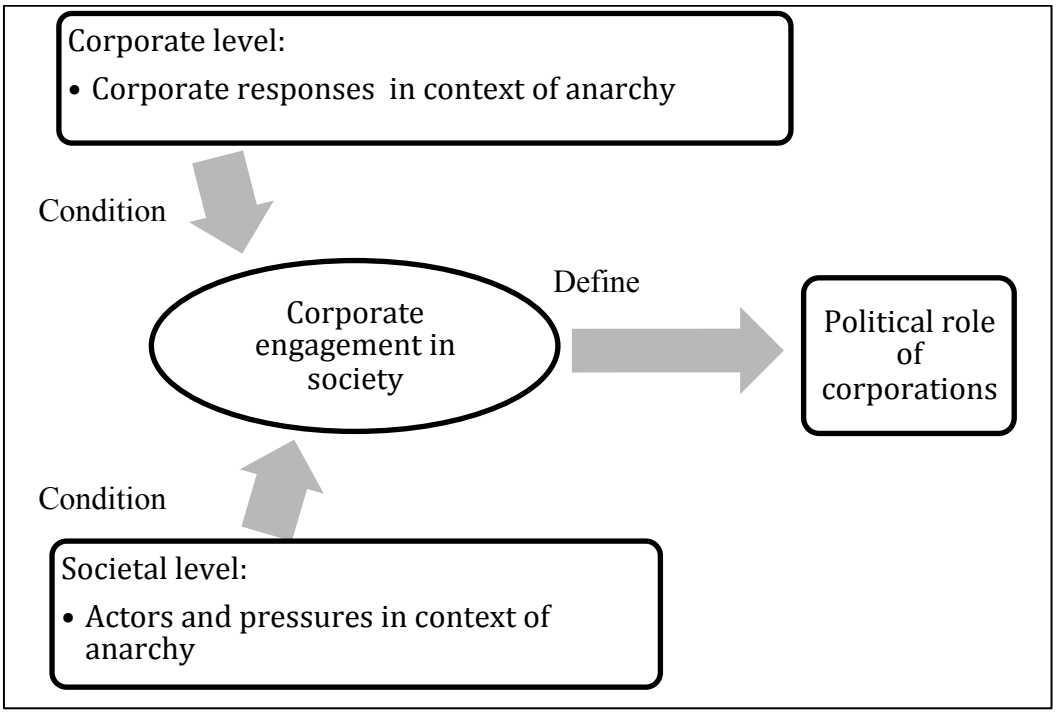

Figure 1: Analytical Framework – Author's construction

4. Methodology

This paper is based on a critical realist case study of the mobile telecommunication industry in Afghanistan, an approach which enables the investigation of specific patterns and relations within a limited field of study (Easton 2010). The study aims to conduct a critical exploration of political CSR in contexts of anarchy as exemplified by the mobile telecommunication industry in rural Afghanistan. This focus can be described as an extreme case, as since the conditions of the case may be rather particular than general (Flyvbjerg 2006), with the intention of gaining an in-depth understanding of conditions and mechanisms that can lead to critical modification of theories (Danermark 2002, p. 110; Easton 2010).

Another characteristic of the case study approach is that it enables the inclusion of a variety of qualitative data. The author has conducted field studies in Afghanistan for this particular research in order to collect various types of qualitative data, including interviews with senior officials from all the corporations studied, three relevant Afghan state institutions, and five civil society actors and local experts. All of the corporations studied are driven by foreign investments and can be categorized as MNCs in which the investors are active in multinational operations, either with the same or different brand names. In addition, visits to tele-tower fields within and outside Kabul province were conducted to enrich the material collected from the interviews. Finally, public information from the corporations and Afghan state institutions, including CSR reports, official

documents and policies from Afghan state institutions, as well as data from social media such as YouTube and Facebook, were all collected for the analysis to address the official viewpoints of the corporations and state institutions. It is important to point out, however, that the topic of the paper was (and remains) a highly sensitive issue for the corporations studied, which meant that not all respondents were keen to talk about the topic. Matters of security and the ways in which corporations respond to challenges in contexts of anarchy in Afghanistan were controversial issues that required acceptance from the very top managers of the corporations before interviews could be conducted. This sensitivity resulted in the cancellation of various interviews with managers prior to, or even during, the interviews, either due to lack of permission to talk about the issues or for personal reasons. For ethical reasons, every statement from the respondents was made anonymous to ensure the security of the respondents.

Such interviews, observations and reports do not necessarily always provide a rich and nuanced picture of the actors and pressures involved or of the controversial responses of corporations to these actors and pressures. Ideally this situation calls for independent data collection that would include all actors and viewpoints. Such data collection was limited for this study, however, because of the high level of insecurity involved in travelling outside of urban areas of Kabul into the aforementioned contexts of 'anarchy'. To compensate in part for the lack of primary data from rural areas it was necessary to rely on various secondary data sources, such as newspaper articles from local and international media. A total of 30 articles from local and international media covering the issues related to the industry in Afghanistan were collected from recognized newspapers (e.g., *The Guardian*, *The Wall Street Journal*, the Associated Press, *The New York Times* and Tolonews). These articles are relevant because they not only report on incidents related to business-society relations in contexts of anarchy but also integrate the various perspectives of national and international military commanders, local province leaders, and ordinary local Afghans. A process of triangulation between interviews, observations and secondary data sources was conducted to identify key empirical findings. In terms of analysis, these various data types were continuously collected and recorded with Nvivo software. Initially, to gain an overview of the topic, coding was conducted based on the key dimensions of the analytical framework (e.g., 'rural business operations', 'corporate responses', 'actors', and 'pressures'). This process influenced the development of the focus of the paper and led to the second coding-phase that looked for interrelations between the coding in order to present illustrative examples of, for instance, the ways corporations respond to particular pressures from certain actors.

5. Background

Afghanistan and the context of anarchy

Since the formal creation of Afghanistan as a territorial state in 1747, the central state has struggled to centralize power and control in the capital, Kabul (Cramer and Goodhand 2002). The authority

and control of the state in Afghanistan has historically been limited to cities, while local clans, strongmen and various other actors have governed the rural areas (Rubin 1995). After the 9/11 attacks, the USA initiated the War on Terror and gained support from an international coalition to intervene in Afghanistan with the primary goal of disenabling the Al Qaeda network from using Afghanistan as a safe haven for conducting international terrorism—a military intervention that has affected the role of the state in Afghanistan since 2002. Following the initial removal of the Taliban regime from urban areas in 2001, a state-building project was initiated in the country (Barfield 2012). Despite a massive inflow of aid and the employment of strong coalition forces to support the Afghan central government in Kabul, however, the Afghan state is still considered one of the world's weakest states in terms of its lack of control over the means of violence and its lack of authority to enforce the rule of law throughout the country (Fund for Peace 2014). Since 2005, insurgent groups such as the Taliban have increasingly managed to regain power and control in the majority of rural areas, where fighting between insurgent groups and the Afghan state continues to escalate. These rural areas can therefore be conceptualized as contexts of anarchy (Börzel and Risse 2010), since the state, when it is not entirely absent, is severely limited in its ability to legitimately control the means of violence and/or in its authority to steer hierarchically (Risse 2011). Basic state functions and services such as police forces for security, courts for law enforcement, schools for state-led public education, and general public infrastructure, etc., are not provided by the state authorities, meaning they are either lacking or are delivered by various non-state actors. Research in such contexts indicates that local clan leaders, warlords, insurgent groups and other groups operate as governance actors, either in parallel with or in substitution for state control (Chojnacki and Branovic 2011). These conditions have tended to discouraged foreign-led investments in these areas, since corporations are either unwilling to take the risk of investing in such uncertain and unstable areas or/and do not identify a market in these areas. The experience in Afghanistan is that the instability in these areas has also discouraged local and foreign NGOs. However, the mobile telecommunications industry remains active and is even expanding in rural Afghanistan.

The Afghan mobile telecommunication industry as a vector for development

The mobile telecommunications industry is viewed as a vector for development by the Afghan state and the international community, since the industry is not only the largest tax-generating industry for the Afghan state but also employs over 100,000 people directly and indirectly (Azizi 2015). The industry's significant success in reaching out to rural areas is seen as an important achievement, moreover: the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) claims that over 89% of Afghans throughout the country have access to mobile services[1]—an extent of rural access and coverage that neither the state nor the NGOs can claim in Afghanistan.

[1] http://mcit.gov.af/en (accessed 22.06.2016)

Finally, the industry is praised for being active in CSR practices that address important social development issues. Studies show that the industry primarily focuses on wider-society issues and engages explicitly with a diverse range of community development projects, using mobile applications and technology to provide banking services, agricultural price information, health and education (Azizi 2015). A recent study indicates that such engagements are driven by international norms, coercive powers from HQs, and mimetic pressures from competition, and argues that local actors such as Afghan state institutions and CSOs are ignored in formal CSR initiatives (Azizi and Jamali 2016). What remains unstudied is how corporations act in rural Afghanistan, where actors and pressures other than those seen in urban areas drive business-society relations. In other words, the explicitly reported CSR engagements driven by the norms and practices of the global industry do not include all of the business-society engagements of the industry. The question is thus that of how the corporations in the industry respond to the challenges and pressures they face from various actors active in the context of anarchy.

6. Analysis

Expansion into a context of anarchy

After the first corporation entered as a mobile operator in the Afghan market for mobile telecommunications in 2001, four other competitors followed. The initial focus was on major cities, where investments were made in expanding the tele-infrastructure in Kabul and in few other large cities. Since the emergence of market consolidation and keen competition in the cities, the focus of the industry has increasingly shifted towards exploiting the potentials for market growth in the rural areas of Afghanistan, where large parts of the population have so far been unable to access the mobile telecommunications services of the operators. This expansion into rural and remote areas of Afghanistan is conditioned by three crucial elements. First, the corporations need access to land in order to install tele-towers and antennas that facilitate the provision of mobile telecommunication services, which is challenging for various reasons (as shown later). Second, market expansion into particularly remote rural areas also requires – in addition to the physical tele-infrastructure – the out-stationing of staff for sales and maintenance purposes; and ensuring the security of staff in such areas is challenging because corporations cannot rely on the state to provide security. Third, market expansion also means that corporations have to face the insurgent groups operating in rural and remote areas of Afghanistan, fighting against the Afghan state and the international coalitions that seek to support the Afghan national army. Corporations can therefore be drawn into specific battles or even into a larger ideological war, imposing severe challenges on how they engage in business-society relations. Hence the data suggests that corporations face different pressures and actors, which can be summarized as the following three conditions that influence corporate engagements in contexts of anarchy: a) gaining access to land in rural villages; b) ensuring security of assets and personnel; and c) gaining licences to operate from insurgent groups in areas under the control of such groups.

Rural villages and access to land

As noted above, the expansion of the mobile telecommunications industry into rural Afghanistan requires the instalment of tele-towers in rural communities, which poses a particular challenge for corporations in terms of how to gain access to land for such instalments. The Afghan regulatory framework for land registration is generally considered weak and is dysfunctional in most rural communities, which compels corporations to ask local communities to grant them the land rights they need. The challenge for corporations has been whether or not to cooperate with local communities and, if so, how and under what conditions to cooperate.

Corporate responses

The data suggest that only local strongmen and powerful community leaders are in a position to provide access to land on the scale needed by corporations for their tele-towers. These community leaders are not only in a position to provide access to sufficient land but can also ensure the security needed for corporate assets. Corporations thus engage with local leaders in rural communities by renting land for the instalment of tele-towers, which further entails 'outsourcing' security obligations to local landowners and using rent-payment as a means to control the security risk. Such engagements appear to be a win-win solution for both the corporations and the community leaders, since the community also gains access to mobile telecommunication services. Some corporate employees evince enthusiasm for such engagements, as expressed by one corporate tower engineer:

> […] some communities welcome us to set up antennas and towers. They have been isolated from the world for decades and want to be connected with friends and families […] once they realized the benefits of mobile phones, they warmly welcomed us to their villages and homes so we could build or fix the antenna-towers. (Anonymous engineer, outskirts of Panjshir 2011.)

Nonetheless, not all villages are satisfied with the benefits of connectivity, and the approach has led to many conflicts in villages. Rent-led engagements can generate very high incomes for landowners and can thereby have important implications for the governance of local communities and landowners. The task of ensuring security for tele-towers can in some cases complicate local micro-politics, as rival strongmen in the community will seize the opportunity to attack towers to spoil their rivals' chances of earning large amounts of money. This indicates that strongmen need to gain legitimacy from the local community to ensure security for their income-generating towers, to which end they may employ a number of different means, including paying dividends to other members and gaining trust through community development projects. State officials from MCIT and the corporations are therefore increasingly advocating a more inclusive mode of engagement to ensure that the voices of communities are heard and acted upon. MCIT officials highlight the importance of corporate engagement with the local 'shura' or village councils, since *"*[…] *our communities want connectivity* […] *it's a need despite political mind-sets* […] *but Shuras want to*

be engaged in the process – otherwise they vandalize and claim the Taliban did it" (anonymous senior officer, MCIT, Kabul September 2013). This statement underlines the fact that the rent paid by corporations can have important economic and political consequences for landowners in such villages and that general consensus through the 'shura' in the village is needed to ensure legitimacy amongst the villagers. The inclusion of local councils is thus a sustainable solution for the corporations, since any attack or damage inflicted on a tower has consequences for the landowner, the 'shura', and the corporations. While some of the corporations acknowledge the role of local communities in attaining a sustainable solution, a senior manager interviewed in Kabul also admitted that "[…] *we feel trapped with initial contracts with these guys* […] *or else we get attacked*" (Interview with a senior corporate manager, Kabul September 2013). This indicates that strongmen exert violent pressures on corporations until the terms of the contracts are in their favour. The findings indicate that the outsourcing of security risks by corporations have led, in the best case, to the empowerment of particular members of communities, and in the worst case to a struggle for economic gain between various strongmen and shura members in the communities. In both cases, corporate engagements mainly support powerful land-owning community leaders, tribes and families in becoming even stronger through increased income from subletting their land at overpriced rates compared to local earning potentials. The direct benefit for the poorest villagers is mobile connectivity, albeit only if they can afford to own a mobile phone and the call credits needed to use mobile phone services.

Criminal groups and the security of assets and personnel

Another example of corporate engagement in remote areas and, in some instances, in rural villages, is driven by a lack of security that enables criminal groups to pose threats to both tele-towers and personnel. Corporations have experienced an increasing number of incidents of theft, abduction and vandalism by criminal groups, operating either as groups of individuals or as members of larger gangs, for various motives. First, observations show that large fuel generators are needed to power the tele-towers due to the lack of electricity supply. The tele-towers thus come with equipment worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, making them vulnerable to theft of material and fuel. Second, realizing that tele-towers are crucial for corporations to deliver mobile services, criminal gangs threaten to vandalize the towers unless they are paid (Trofimov 2010). Third, the corporate personnel out-stationed to visit these tele-towers for engineering and construction work are targeted by criminal groups who threaten to abduct them in return for ransom money. Criminal gangs thus seize the opportunities created by the lack of any provision of security by the state and/or local informal authorities to gain extra income by theft, threats of vandalising assets and abductions of staff. In comparison to the strongmen in villages, criminal groups are driven by short-term aims without any legitimacy relation to the villagers and rural populations, as they are not necessarily associated with the village councils, insurgent groups or other militant strongmen. These criminal groups therefore mainly operate in remote areas on the outskirts of such communities or villages in order to target corporate assets and personnel in 'no man's land'.

Corporate responses

The corporations have various options for responding to theft, abduction and vandalism by criminal groups. One option, as noted above, is to ensure security through village strongmen and/or by engaging local councils. This option is limited, however, since the strategy of attempting to gain village support to ensure the security of staff and assets can, as presented earlier, then become intertwined in local micro-politics. Moreover, the outskirt areas are not under the control of local villages or strongmen in villages. Another option employed in certain cases is to place the antennas either within or close to military bases in remote areas that are either controlled by the Afghan state or by the international military coalition. Since such bases are heavily guarded, corporate assets are ensured protection and can be easily accessed by corporate technicians and engineers. However, such close cooperation with the military units challenges the legitimacy of the corporations since they can easily be viewed as 'partners in crime' by local insurgent groups (as shown below). As with the strategy of using village councils, the problem is that these military bases are not present in the specific areas needed for the telecom-infrastructure, precluding this option in rural areas. A third option is the employment of 24-hour local armed security guards to prevent theft and vandalism, an option frequently used by corporations. While such guards ensure some degree of security for the towers, however, they are not always a guarantee: local media reports relate how criminal gangs can buy off low-paid guards and that guards simply run for their lives when an attack is underway (Moosakhail 2015), or remain untouched but neutralized and rendered unable to prevent the actions of criminals.

The corporate response to the abduction of their staff can be much trickier, not only because the ransom money is typically set very high but also because engagements with abductors are costly. If corporate staff are abducted, the corporations either negotiate directly or through village councils or councils of elders in the specific area. In both cases this requires the company to pursue dialogue either directly with the abductors or through the councils, which is not without costs. The greater dilemma for the corporations is how to respond to abductions in general, since paying ransom money might increase incentives for more abductions, while not paying might end fatally for the abducted personnel. Although payments of ransom money are typically not reported in order to avoid further abductions, local media have reported cases of employees being killed due to their corporations not paying ransom-money (Ziaratjayee 2015). In the sad turnouts of abduction cases where personnel are killed by the abductors, the attention of the media and the police forces is on the criminals, whereas the responsibility of the corporation is not questioned at all.

Insurgency war and license to operate

A third example of business engagement in the context of anarchy is related to the on-going war between the insurgents and the state security forces in Afghanistan. Since 2004, security in Afghanistan has deteriorated due to the increasing success of insurgent groups in carrying out

explosive attacks in public spaces with the aim of destabilizing the state institutions. Since the insurgent groups operate in areas where state security forces are weak, the mobile operators find themselves in the middle of the battlefield. This has resulted in increasing threats issued by the Taliban against corporations, requiring them to shut down mobile services when demanded (Boone 2011; Lakshmanan 2010; Trofimov 2010). The Taliban, meanwhile, argue that mobile services are used by local communities to inform state security forces about the movements of the Taliban in their communities (Lakshmanan 2010). Local media also report that the Taliban has linked international military operations with the corporations, as it is feared that tele-towers help international forces track the movements of the insurgents even without local informants (Associated Press 2008). In 2014, WikiLeaks claimed that Afghanistan and the Bahamas are the only two countries in the world where all mobile phone conversations are recorded by the NSA for surveillance purposes (Assange 2014). The insurgents therefore require the corporations to shut down tele-services during night-time in specific areas where they are active so as to disenable local communities from reporting their movements to national security forces. According to the Afghan Telecommunication Regulation Agency (ATRA), this problem has only increased, with corporate towers still being attacked, resulting in blackouts of tele-services from dusk till dawn in vast areas of southern and south-eastern Afghanistan. These challenges are highly complex for the corporations, who are forced to take sides in the on-going war between the Taliban and the Afghanistan state supported by international coalition forces.

Corporate responses

In 2008, when corporations complied with a decree from the former president of Afghanistan to stay connected for 24 hours a day, an increasing number of attacks on tele-towers were conducted by the Taliban (Boone 2011). Since these initial attacks by the Taliban, the corporations have increasingly operated with a continuous shutdown of mobile services from 6 pm to 6 am in specific locations, as demanded by the Taliban. Such corporate responses are now recognized by the state authorities in Kabul, and the MCIT admits that their initial approach of pressuring corporations to disobey the demands of the Taliban proved very costly for the corporations (Trofimov 2010). The corporations argue that the high cost of repairing tele-towers after attacks has forced them in the long run to obey the demands of the Taliban, although they also indicate that the current solution is not a perfect business scenario since they lose revenues for each second that the mobile services are down (Shevory 2016). While corporations comply with the violent pressures exerted by the Taliban as the best business option available, these corporate responses can have severe implications for the Afghan state security forces and for Afghans caught in war-affected areas. For the national security forces the shutdown is a disadvantage, both because it may lead to a lack of important intelligence from local villagers and because it is a symbol for the local population of the weakness of the state vis-à-vis the Taliban. For ordinary Afghans the reduced mobile phone connectivity during night-time certainly also leads to a lack of information, when information can often be crucial in war-affected areas. The Taliban's recent sudden takeover of the highly populated city of Konduz in

northern Afghanistan revealed the importance of mobile telecommunication services as a widespread technology in modern Afghanistan. Several communities were left uninformed about the takeover and were caught in isolation without information for several days, with fatal consequences. Moreover, the Taliban reportedly initiated a boycotting campaign in Konduz against one of the corporations that did not shut down its mobile services, threatening to punish citizens as 'spies' of the state (Chopra 2016). The decisions of the mobile telecommunications corporations thus have severe impacts in such societies, and these impacts are only gaining in importance with the increasing insecurity seen not only in rural but also in urban contexts of anarchy in Afghanistan.

Furthermore, both local and international media report that the corporations have been negotiating a new annual tax agreement with the Taliban and that such conversations have been conducted in Quetta, Pakistan (Chopra 2016; Hamid 2016). This agreement is intended to work as a tax system in parallel with official tax payments to the official government in Kabul. In return, the Taliban are expected to provide security for corporate assets and staff in the specific areas they cover. While this agreement cannot be verified, it is an illustrative example of how actors can overtake the role of the state in such an extreme case of the absence of the state.

Summary of findings

The findings highlight how, due to the great market potential, mobile telecommunication corporations have increasingly expanded their operations into rural Afghanistan. The findings unfold the complex business-society relations in the context of anarchy by presenting three conditions that challenge corporate engagement in such a society (as summarized in Table 1). These conditions all suggest that contexts of anarchy are not characterised by a vacuum of governance but rather that non-conventional actors such as village strongmen, criminal gangs and insurgent groups are all important governance actors. Due to the lack of a central authority, these actors exert coercive and violent pressures on corporations in order to gain various economic or in some cases ideological benefits from corporate engagements in society. The findings thereby also illustrate how corporations respond when seeking to overcome such pressures and actors so as to enable market expansion.

Challenges for corporate engagements	Actors and pressures involved	Corporate responses
Gaining access to land in rural villages: **Land is needed to expand the tele-infrastructure into villages in rural areas. Corporations face challenges in gaining access to land in rural villages where the state authorities do not govern land rights.**	• Only the strongmen in villages control areas of land sufficiently extensive for the instalment of tele-towers. • Local village councils can be used for identifying land and ensuring the security of corporate assets.	• Land is mainly rented from strongmen who can ensure the security of corporate assets in villages. • There are several examples of 'sustainable' solutions through arrangements with local community councils whereby mobile connectivity is used as an incentive to ensure the security of corporate assets.
Ensuring the security of assets and personnel: **Particularly in the outskirts of villages, corporations face the challenge of criminal groups, since neither the state nor the villagers can ensure the security of corporate assets and personnel.**	• Criminal groups and individuals may or may not be connected to strongmen in villages and/or to insurgent groups. • There is a risk of theft of equipment and fuel, abductions of personnel and vandalism of corporate assets by criminal groups seeking short-term gains.	• Assets are placed in secure military compounds when possible. • Ransom or extortion money is paid with the risks of creating incentives for more attacks. • Not cooperating with criminal gangs puts corporate assets and the lives of personnel at risk.
Gaining licence to operate in war-affected areas: **War battles between insurgents and state security forces challenge corporations to gain licence to operate.**	• Insurgency groups threaten to vandalize corporate assets unless mobile services are shut down in order to disenable digital tracking and intelligence from local informants. • The President's office and the Afghan security forces demand 24-hour mobile services	• Obeying the insurgents' demands by decreasing turnover in night hours. • Rejecting the demands of insurgent groups and risking vandalism. • Calling on state security forces to protect corporate assets.

Table 1: Overview of findings

7. Discussion

Contexts of anarchy and business-society conditions for PCSR

The analysis problematizes the assumptions and claims in the PCSR debate about actors and their pressures on corporations. The findings stresses on the presence of non-conventional actors, and the irregular pressures they impose, thereby challenging the political role corporations can play in contexts of anarchy. In contrast to path-dependent assumptions about the 'shrinking' of the state (Crane et al. 2004), this paper shows that contexts of anarchy are rather an issue of the historical absence of the state. The findings thus suggest that the PCSR debate rests on naïve assumptions about moral legitimacy driven by pressures from the state and local and international CSOs in addressing and holding corporations responsible for their practices (Scherer and Palazzo 2011). The findings of the paper particularly challenge the claim that global legitimacy pressures drive corporations to engage in CSR even in the absence of state regulation (Amaeshi et al. 2016). The findings instead suggest that corporations operating in contexts of anarchy also seek legitimacy from local actors. These actors exert pressures by means of physical violence for material and ideological gains that are different from what are known as institutional drivers of corporate engagement in the literature (Campbell 2007). As opposed to the claim that an explicit CSR form is occurring globally (Matten and Moon 2008), the findings indicate that corporate engagements in contexts of anarchy remain formally unreported and unnoticed, which could indicate that corporations responsibility in such contexts are driven by parallel governance actors and drivers different from the formal global governance structures generally studied in the CSR literature.

The political role of corporations in the context of anarchy

The paper also sheds light on the relationship between corporate responses and the political role of corporations in contexts of anarchy. The findings suggest that corporations respond to the pressures of non-conventional actors in order to gain license to operate and to gain access to land and protection for their staff and corporate assets. These examples raise serious questions about the claims made in the PCSR debate that corporate engagements are driven by proactive and socially connected engagements (Scherer and Palazzo 2011) in order to administer citizenship rights (Matten and Crane 2005) and/or to enable democratic governance (Scherer and Palazzo 2007). Instead the findings indicate that corporations respond reactively to pressures from actors in the knowledge that this could lead to support for insurgent groups (e.g., by obeying the Taliban's demands), for criminal groups (e.g., by paying ransom and extortion money) or for asymmetrical power relations in villages (e.g., by partnering with strongmen in villages). Rather than being conducted with the aim of providing public goods, corporate engagements are characterized by a pragmatic approach driven by corporate self-interest to overcome local challenges and pursue market growth potentials in rural Afghanistan by exploiting the vacuum of regulation to enhance profit-maximization (Banerjee 2008b; Gond et al. 2009). The paper therefore argues that deliberative acts for dialogue cannot align corporate interests with societal interests and vice-versa, as suggested in the PCSR debate (e.g., Scherer et al. 2013, 2016; Scherer and Palazzo 2007, 2008,

2011). The paper thus argues for a move away from the dualistic understanding of corporate responsibility towards an understanding that distinguishes between corporate/shareholder interests vis-à-vis the various interests of diverse societal actors. Any attempt to understand the political role of corporations needs to take its point of departure in an understanding of the nature of business as an organisation authoritatively governed for profit-seeking purposes (Banerjee 2010; Fleming and Jones 2013, p. 21; Hanlon and Fleming 2009). The pragmatic and instrumental engagements of corporations drive their political role in society, as exemplified by corporate engagements with the Taliban vis-à-vis the state in Afghanistan and by corporate support of criminal groups and strongmen in villages that might empower non-state authorities and delegitimize the state and state-building process in Afghanistan. From a corporate viewpoint such engagements are not irresponsible acts, since they serve to enable market growth, which challenges the classical alignment of corporate and societal interests in understanding 'license to operate' (Davis 1960). The findings thus suggest that the instrumental for-profit nature of corporations is not in contradiction with their political role but, on the contrary, serves as a driver for their political role in society.

8. Conclusion

The paper argues that contextualized studies are needed to grasp the complexities of business-society relations in the diverse settings of developing countries. As an example of such an endeavour, the paper presents a case study of corporations operating in the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan and seeks to explore how these corporations engage in business-society relations in Afghanistan. The paper integrates the governance literature on contexts of anarchy with the PCSR debate in order to conceptualize the business-society conditions in rural Afghanistan. The introduction of a governance perspective on contexts of 'anarchy' to conceptualize business-society conditions beyond the state-centric and western-biased mode of governance serves to problematize the assumptions in the PCSR debate in relation to developing countries.

The findings present novel empirical insights into the ways that non-conventional and controversial actors such as insurgent groups, criminal groups and strongmen in villages impose pressures on corporations, and how corporations respond to such different business-society conditions. The paper argues that corporate engagements in contexts of anarchy are driven by instrumental purposes and pragmatic engagements, which stands in contrast to the biased business-society assumptions and normative claims made in the PCSR debate about the political role of corporations. The study clearly indicates a need to move beyond the state-centric understanding of governance and calls for further contextualized studies to problematize the western-biased assumptions and claims made in the current PCSR debate (Banerjee 2014; Ehrnström-Fuentes 2016; Frynas and Stephens 2015). However, the paper also highlights that there is a need for further scrutiny of the assumptions made in the PCSR debate about business-society conditions in the era of globalization and about what

kinds of political roles corporations undertake in developing countries. Such studies could encourage a focus on power relations in governance (Banerjee 2014) and could suggest that material means of violence such as physical vandalism, abduction and/or extortion, rather than only discursive means of power, are utilized to marginalize particular voices. However, further studies are needed to conceptualize the types of political roles that corporations can play through such profit-driven engagements in business-society relations, where non-state actors not only act as governance systems in parallel with the official state but also violently fight the state. Until these realities in developing countries are appreciated in the debate, the agenda of the PCSR debate will continue to neglect the tensions and contradictions that arise when it is claimed that for-profit corporations act in a 'societal' interest through CSR.

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Paper 4
Business as development agent or business as usual?

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Publication: Unpublished

1. Introduction

The question of whether large for-profit corporations can be agents for development in developing countries is crucial in the on-going debate about 'Bottom Billion Capitalism' (BBC) (Collier 2008), a debate that has increasingly focused in recent decades on the role of business in 'Bottom/Base of Pyramid' (BoP) markets and in which the claim has been made that integrating the poorest populations of the world as consumers and/or producers yields developmental results (Blowfield and Dolan 2014; Based on Halme and Laurila 2009). While it is certain that corporations affect the poorest populations of the world in various ways through BoP markets, the role of business in development still remains unclear, giving rise to calls for a debate about the extent to which for-profit businesses have the potential to act as development agents (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). Taking its point of departure in these calls for debate, this paper critically studies the conditions that either enable or constrain corporations in fulfilling development agent criteria, including prioritisation of the poor, resource allocation and accountability to the poor (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). The paper argues that any assessment of the role of business as a potential agent for development must first acknowledge that the corporate profit-seeking structure is the raison d'être of corporations. This in turn implies a need to study the ways in which the 'business case' conditions the 'development case' and the engagement of businesses in development, rather than pursuing the current binary analysis seen in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) literature (Blowfield 2005; Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006). Second, the paper takes a critical stance towards the claim that the role of business in development is driven only by strategic and innovative solutions (Casado Juan and Hart 2015; Prahalad 2010; Prahalad and Hammond 2002; Simanis and Hart 2008), arguing instead that businesses in BoP markets relate to development issues through various modes of engagement which in different ways enable or constrain businesses in their ability to act as development agents. The paper thus highlights conditions that shift the focus from an idealistic envisioning of the role of business in development towards a more critical and realistic assessment.

This paper specifically relates the debate about the role of businesses as development agents to the mobile telecommunication industry, making use of on an in-depth case study of the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan that provides novel empirical insights to inform the debates. Such a focus is empirically important in view of the fact that donors – and the industry itself – have praised the role of the telecommunications industry in development (GSMA 2014;

World Bank 2012). Recent trends in the BoP literature highlight the focus on solutions, co-creations and innovations devised by the information communications and technology (ICT) industry, presenting these as success stories of how businesses engage in developmental challenges (Kandachar and Halme 2008a; Kolk et al. 2014; Casado Juan and Hart 2015). Studying the telecommunications industry in the context of Afghanistan, as an example of a least-developed country in great and urgent need of development, is thus highly relevant for deepening our empirical and conceptual understanding of the role of business in development.

The following section reviews the literature and briefly highlights various key perspectives on business-development relations. This section is followed by a presentation of the analytical framework for the paper. The methodology and the contextual background of the study are then elaborated, followed by the analysis section that presents the key findings of the paper. These findings are discussed in relation to the current literature before the conclusion is presented.

2. Literature Review

Perspectives on the role of business in development

The role of business in the development of society has long been a subject of discussion; however, the recent BBC literature and the focus on BoP markets have readdressed the debate due to the consequences of neo-liberal policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization of national economies and markets in developing countries (Blowfield and Dolan 2014, p. 28). These policies, promulgated through supranational institutions such as the IMF, the WTO, and the World Bank, have enabled multinational corporations (MNCs) to access national and global markets (Chomsky 1999; Harvey 2007) and to engage in the domain of social and environmental development (Banerjee 2008, 2014; Colen et al. 2012). A fundamental shift has taken place in this debate about the role of business in development, from its former preoccupation with considering business as a 'tool for development' towards a consideration of business as a potential 'development agent' (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). In the former view, the private sector was seen as an enabler of economic growth (Sumner 2008). Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) by MNCs are claimed to enable 'trickle-down' effects (e.g., generating jobs and increase tax-revenues) or a 'climb to the top' (e.g., through the upgrading of local industries). However, critical counterclaims have also highlighted the 'race to the bottom' effect, whereby states deregulate markets to reduce labour costs in order to attract MNCs' investments (Crotty et al. 1998). This debate thus remains inconclusive as to the impact of FDI and MNCs in developing countries (Colen et al. 2012; Reiter and Steensma 2010; Rugraff et al. 2009; Sumner 2005; Zhang 2001).

However, in the latter view business-development relations in developing countries have moved towards an emphasis on the proactive engagements of various types of businesses within the wider

debate about BBC (Collier 2008). While this debate encompasses various market-led approaches (Kolk et al. 2014), such as fair trade initiatives (Blowfield and Dolan 2008), social entrepreneurship (Mair and Marti 2009) and the microfinance approach (Roy 2010), this paper focuses especially on the engagement of for-profit corporations in BoP markets (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). Such a focus on business-development relations redirects attention from unintended trickle-down-effects towards a focus on inclusive markets (George et al. 2012), where businesses, through market mechanisms, offer innovative products and services that have the potential to resolve developmental issues (Kandachar and Halme 2008a; Halme et al. 2012, 2016; Blowfield and Dolan 2014; Blowfield 2012). MNCs in particular, it is claimed, can play a significant role in providing innovative solutions to developmental issues by considering vast segments of the world population as consumers (Prahalad 2010; Prahalad and Hammond 2002), producers and/or co-creators in BoP markets (Hart 2005; London and Hart 2010; Simanis and Hart 2008). However, such claims as to the positive effects of business in development have been met by counterclaims. Karnani (2007a, 2011a), in particular, has criticized the alleged opportunities available in BoP markets, arguing that the logic of BoP consumption is overrated and unethical (Karnani 2008, 2009, 2009, 2010), suggesting instead a focus on increasing decent jobs and income for the poor (Karnani 2007a, 2007b) through cooperation with the state (Karnani 2010, 2011) and civil society (McKague et al. 2015). However, neo-liberal-led market mechanisms are viewed as the main drivers and enablers for MNCs' engagement in BoP markets, which indicates that national state interventions are not necessarily needed for businesses to engage in BoP markets (Bonsu and Polsa 2011; Varman et al. 2012). Hence, acknowledging market mechanisms as foundations for BoP markets, it is highlighted that MNCs need to engage in context-based exchange relations with locals in order to realize developmental potentials (Gupta and Khilji 2013). While the emphasis in such debates is mainly on solutions and innovations provided by corporations, the paper argues that business-development relations are more complex and include various other modes of engagement that are previously addressed in the CSR literature.

The business-development nexus in the CSR literature

The debate about the role and engagement of business in society and the extent to which the priority of profit enables or constrains such engagement is not new in the CSR literature but can be traced back to the first modern concept of CSR as expounded by Bowen in 1953 (Carroll 1979; Garriga and Melé 2004). While a vast literature on CSR has emerged since Bowen, it is surprising to note that current debates continue to discuss the nature of CSR (Carroll 1991, 1999; Garriga and Melé 2004; Lockett et al. 2006; Moon 2007) and the business case for CSR (Carroll and Shabana 2010) as either strategic or non-strategic (Husted and Allen 2009; Husted and de Jesus Salazar 2006; Lantos 2001). Corporations are claimed to gain strategically from CSR as CSR can lead to a) cost and risk reductions, b) competitive advantage, c) reputation and legitimacy, and/or d) the creation of synergistic value (Kurucz et al. 2008). Hence corporations need to be creative, integrative and

synergistic in order to "demonstrate a convergence between the firm's economic objectives and the social objectives of society" (Carroll and Shabana 2010, p. 102). The popular outcome of this debate is the proposition of 'shared value' and 'win-win' potentials, which takes point of departure in the value chain and comparative advantage dimensions of business strategy (Husted and Allen 2009; Porter and Kramer 2002, 2007, 2011; Zadek 2006). Here it is argued that the defensive and fragmentary approach to CSR must be replaced by a proactive and integrative attitude to CSR in order to create strategic relations between CSR and business operations (Porter and Kramer 2011; Zadek 2007). Such a strategic perspective on CSR underlines profit maximization operationalized through the business case as the primary purpose of CSR, and is thereby aligned with Friedman's famous statement that "there is one and only one social responsibility of business - to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud" (Friedman 2007, p. 6). However, as highlighted by Drucker, while such enlightened self-interest in CSR enables corporations to seek business opportunities in developmental challenges, corporations might lack the competence and authority to deal with complex and challenging developmental issues (Smith 2009). Put simply, "No business can solve all society's problems or bear the cost of doing so" (Porter and Kramer 2007, p. 13).

Tensions and contradictions in the business-development relationship

The political and economic liberalisation seen in recent decades has enabled MNCs to operate in numerous national markets across developing countries and has driven CSR as a by-product of such global operations (Crane et al. 2008; Scherer and Palazzo 2011; Utting and Marques 2010). However, the 'developing world' offers particularly complex business-society relations, as weak national institutional settings are incapable of responding to the immense and increasingly urgent need for social development (Blowfield 2005; Dobers and Halme 2009; Halme et al. 2009; Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Muthuri and Gilbert 2010). Hence, the instrumental and strategic view of CSR has been criticised for its simplistic assumptions and claims about the role of business through CSR (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Newell and Frynas 2007; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006). While CSR is not rejected as a means for development (Blowfield 2007, 2012; Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Jamali et al. 2015; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006), the critical debate has raised objections to the win-win claims made for CSR, arguing that "CSR works for some firms, in some places, in tackling some issues, some of the time" (Newell and Frynas 2007, p. 674). In particular, the 'business case' logic is criticised for being based on an instrumental and managerial approach, with inherent limitations in addressing the complexities of CSR and development (Blowfield 2007; Fox 2004; Nijhof and Jeurissen 2010). It is argued that the logic of the business case simplifies complex development issues, reducing them to manageable practices that can be measured in relation to profit rather than development outcomes, and that the business case subordinates the development case (Blowfield 2005, p. 524). Jenkins points out that corporations neglect the poorest and most marginalized

groups in developing countries because these groups have no stake in corporations (Jenkins 2005). Newell highlights the problem of issues of accountability in business-led CSR practices in which corporations neither involve beneficiaries nor are accountable to beneficiaries (Newell 2005). Local-global tensions and conflicts of interest are also highlighted, including the argument that CSR is a concept diffused from the West that does not reflect the realities of developing countries (Khan and Lund-Thomsen 2011). The different political, economic and cultural aspects of developing countries call for a more contextualized understanding of CSR practices and of the developmental implications of CSR (Dobers and Halme 2009; Halme et al. 2009; Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Jeppesen and Lund-Thomsen 2010). While studies have increasingly focused on the complex institutional settings of developing country contexts (Blowfield and Frynas 2005; Chapple and Moon 2007; Dobers and Halme 2009; Jamali 2014; Jamali and Neville 2011), there is still a call to nuance the debate further by shedding light on other neglected contexts of developing countries (Azizi and Jamali 2016; Jamali and Karam 2016).

However, another critical stream of literature argues that the debate requires more than contextualisation, as the for-profit nature of corporations and the broader capitalist governance system impose structural limitations on the CSR-development relations. The for-profit nature of corporations entails a process of capital accumulation and maximization as an end-goal that necessarily imposes structural limitations on any business-society engagements in both the developed and developing world (Banerjee 2008; Hanlon and Fleming 2009; Fleming and Jones 2013; Banerjee 2014; Jones 1996, 1998). Recent decades of neo-liberal policies have enabled the expansion of MNCs throughout the world and have promoted CSR as a tool for corporations to gain legitimacy to operate (Shamir 2008). Banerjee further adds that the debate about the role of business as a provider of social development neglects discursive power relations and highlights the undemocratic processes in current business-society relations (Banerjee 2014). While some scholars debate how to achieve the developmental potentials of CSR practices (Blowfield and Dolan 2014), this critical stream points to the improbability of corporations ever serving as agents for development unless the nature of corporations is transformed into a form of democratic governance—in which case there would be no need for CSR (Banerjee 2014; Fleming and Jones 2013).

In sum, the BBC perspective has recently argued that the proactive engagements of businesses in BoP markets can potentially create a new development-oriented role for businesses. However, as highlighted the BBC perspective remain entangled, after decades of studies, in the fundamental puzzle of how profit-seeking motives and modes of engagement enable or constrain businesses to act as development agents. Based on insights from the CSR literature, which has long debated this challenge, the paper problematizes businesses as 'development agents' (Blowfield and Dolan 2014) to broaden the analytical focus the BBC perspective.

3. Revising the role of business as development agents in BoP markets

Blowfield and Dolan argue that the potential and the improbability of businesses acting as 'development agents' lies in their ability to allocate resources to pro-poor issues, give primacy to the poor, and to account for the impact they make (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). While these criteria are acknowledged as indicators for assessing the developmental role of businesses, the paper argues that the conditions regarding 'how' businesses are enabled or constrained to fulfil such criteria remain unaddressed and calls for further empirical and conceptual scrutiny. In order to advance the debate, the paper draws on neglected insights from the CSR literature to inform a critical assessment of 'how' businesses engage in development, and thus seeks a greater understanding of the potential and limitations of businesses as 'development agents'. The paper thereby aims to nuance the debate by problematizing 'how' businesses are enabled/constrained to become development agents.

The three criteria for business to fulfil the role of a development agent

As noted earlier, Blowfield and Dolan differentiate between the role of business as a 'tool for development', i.e. as making unintentional contributions to development through core business activities, paying taxes, creating jobs, etc., and the role of businesses as 'development agents', i.e. intentionally engaging in solutions to specific development concerns (Blowfield and Dolan 2014). The focus here is on the latter role, and more specifically on the three criteria that distinguish between the role of corporations as 'development agents' and their role as mere 'tools for development' (Blowfield and Dolan 2014, pp. 28–34). To fulfil the first of these criteria, corporations would need to allocate resources and assets to address developmental issue(s) proactively. This would entail corporations problematizing and recasting developmental challenges as market opportunities, using business resources, assets and expertise to construct solutions to address what they identify as developmental deficiencies. To meet the second of these criteria, corporations would need to give primacy to the 'poor', intentionally focussing on the poorest groups of society in making their business decisions. Such a focus is crucial for development, since it is the poorest groups of the population who are typically marginalized in market transactions and relations. Finally, to meet the third criteria, corporations would need to account for both the financial and the developmental outcomes of their activities by showing transparently how they manage to tackle developmental challenges and candidly assessing the impacts of their actions. It is important to emphasise that these ideal criteria are developed in order to define the boundaries that determine when corporations do or do not act as agents of development, and that the aim is thereby to advance the debate about the role of business. The three criteria are mainly aligned with dimensions addressed in the 'bad development' perspective, since they address the needs for pro-poor prioritization, resource allocation (Blowfield 2005; Fox 2004; Frynas 2008; Jenkins 2005; Prieto-Carrón et al. 2006) and accountability (Frynas and Stephens 2015; Newell 2005; Utting

2007).

Towards a framework for assessing *how* business engage in development

Responding to the call for studies that show the potential and the improbability of businesses acting as development agents (Blowfield and Dolan 2014), this paper highlights two problematic conditions related to how businesses are enabled or constrained in taking on such an ideal role in society.

The first of these problems is that, despite a growing interest on the part of scholars in BoP markets, the BBC debate continues to assume that profit alone enables businesses to provide solutions for development (Hart 2005; London and Hart 2010; Prahalad 2010) and fails to discuss how profit-seeking constrains the engagement of business in development. As indicated in the review of the CSR literature, the distinction between the business case and the development case inevitably arises when businesses engage in development issues. However, it is important to conceptually separate between business and development case (Blowfield 2005; Edward and Tallontire 2009; Idemudia 2008; Sagebien and Whellams 2010) in order to ask the crucial question that of 'how' businesses manage relations between the business and development case. While these two dimensions have so far mainly been studied in the CSR literature either through the strategic or the developmental dimensions of CSR, this paper offers the alternative proposal of understanding that the business case is an inescapable condition for corporate engagement in development issues and is thus highly influential for the developmental case. In this view, the ways in which businesses can become development agents are better understood by first acknowledging that the business case always takes precedence over the development case in for-profit corporations and that developmental concerns are always subordinated to the corporate priority of business survival. The current analytical focus on relations between business and development needs to progress beyond either/or arguments towards an understanding of how the business case enables or constrains the subordinated development case and corporate engagement in development. Insights from the CSR literature can contribute to the recent debate about BoP markets by nuancing our understanding of the conditions that determine how corporations act as 'development agents' (as illustrated in Figure 1).

The second of these problems concerns the way that assumptions about profit and development have led to an increased emphasis in the BBC literature on how corporate engagement in development can lead to innovative solutions (Simanis and Hart 2008; Kandachar and Halme 2008a; Gupta and Khilji 2013, 2013). Such assumptions preclude other modes of corporate engagement from being understood as strategic or developmental. BBC debates on BoP markets focus primarily on corporate engagement in developmental issues through innovative products and services (Casado Juan and Hart 2015; George et al. 2012; Kandachar and Halme 2008a), especially

when debating the ICT sector and mobile telecommunications industries (Foster and Heeks 2013; Mahmoud and Hinson 2012). In contrast to such a narrow focus on market transactions with the poorest groups of the population in developing countries, this paper argues that businesses also engage in development through a variety of other modes. In order to fully encompass this variety of engagements, the paper seeks to expand the analytical space for discussing how corporations have the potential to act as development agents. For this purpose the analysis draw on insights from the CSR literature, which has long debated corporate modes of engagement in society (Halme and Laurila 2009; Husted and de Jesus Salazar 2006; Jain and Jamali 2015; Mirvis and Googins 2006; Zadek 2004). More specifically, the paper draws on the framework developed by Halme and Laurila (2009) which conceptualizes the modes of engagement of corporations in society through three types of action: philanthropy, integration and innovation (Halme and Laurila 2009). According to this framework, a 'philanthropic' CSR is defined as one that undertakes extra activities unconnected with its core business strategy, typically with the aim of improving the firm's brand and reputation (ibid: 329). Studies show that CSR in developing countries often has a philanthropic character (Jamali and Mirshak 2006; Visser 2008) and tends to be driven by religion and traditions, particularly in the Middle East (Jamali and Sidani 2012). As noted earlier, such philanthropic practices are disregarded in the mainstream CSR literature on account of their not being strategic and thereby not enabling win-win situations. Instead it is presumed that a more strategic approach to CSR will improve the 'business case' and the developmental impact of CSR (Porter and Kramer 2002, 2007, 2011). However, recent modifications of Halme and Laurilia's framework cast light on the way that philanthropic engagements can also integrate strategic and/or cause-related purposes (Jain and Jamali 2015). This integrative mode of engagement relates to the embedding of developmental issues in internal organization and value chain relations. Such practices are often cited in the CSR literature, where concerns about labour issues, low wages and environmental issues in developing countries are addressed through CSR. Whether as a reaction to criticism or as proactive efforts to address social/environmental issues, the integrative mode is relevant to companies' core business activities and thereby regarded as strategic CSR. The innovative CSR mode, meanwhile, aims at creating new products/services to address specific developmental challenges in society and is thereby fully embedded in the core business strategy (Halme and Laurila 2009, p. 331). This innovative mode of engagement identifies developmental challenges as market opportunities and assumes that corporations can address these challenges through core business logic. These three modes of engagement make it clear that corporations are not limited to addressing development concerns only through innovative products and services; thus it is also relevant to include philanthropic and integrative modes of engagement in assessing the potential role of businesses as development agents (as illustrated in Figure 1).

Rather than asking whether businesses can or cannot act as development agents, this paper proposes that what is needed is an assessment of how businesses are enabled to or constrained from performing the role of development agents. As illustrated in Figure 1, such an assessment requires

an understanding of the following two conditions that together enable or constrain businesses in fulfilling the development agent criteria: a) corporate assessment of the business case vis-à-vis the development case conditions; and b) corporate modes of engagement.

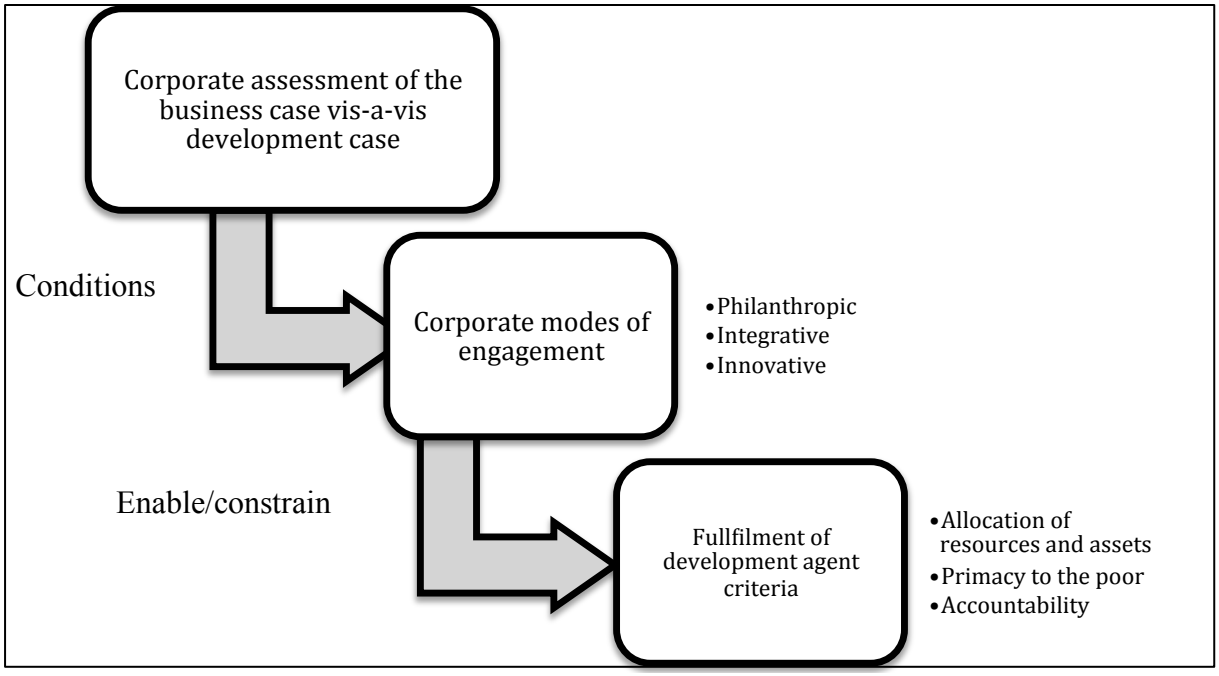

Figure 1: Analytical framework

Source: (Blowfield and Dolan 2014; Based on Halme and Laurila 2009)

4. Methodology

The case study

This paper is based on a critical realist case study (Easton 2010) undertaken to enable an intensive study of a specific phenomena to gain in-depth insights (Sayer 1992, pp. 244-245). While the case-study approach has been viewed as a limited research design unable to provide generalizable claims (Eisenhardt 1989), the strength of case studies is their potential to gain in-depth insights that shed light on the nuances and complexities of a particular debate. The case-study method is useful for this purpose because, in the words of Easton (2010, p. 119), it "involves investigating one or a small number of social entities or situations about which data are collected using multiple sources of data and developing a holistic description through an iterative research process". The case study approach is thus relevant for studying the claims and assumptions made about the developmental role of corporations in the ICT-led BoP markets. While such claims and assumptions tend to consider the ICT sector as a homogeneous group of businesses with common interests and

conditions for engaging in development, this paper acknowledges that the ICT sector involves many actors and products, including landline phone services and Internet services. In order to delimit the case to a controllable size for intensive study, however, the case study focuses only on mobile operators in the Afghan telecommunications industry. More specifically, the paper pays particular attention to the business-development practices of four MNCs operating in Afghanistan.

Corporations/ Indicators	**AWCC**	**Roshan**	**MTN**	**Etisalat**
Start period:	April 2002	January 2003	July 2006 (Sept. 2005 – Areeba)	May 2006 (May 2007 in service)
Subscribers:	3.5 million	5.6 million	4.5 million	3.5 million

Table 1: Overview of corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry

Source: (Hamdard 2012)

Table 1 shows the history of the four corporations in the Afghan market since 2001 and their estimated market shared based on number of mobile subscribers[1]. Although figures on the market share are not reported to the public, the numbers of subscribers from the latest research, conducted in 2012 and presented in Table 1, are indicative of the corporations' market share.

In terms of data the paper draws on several sources of qualitative data recorded through desk research and multiple field studies undertaken by the author in Afghanistan from 2010 to 2013. These include 30 semi-structured interviews conducted with the following stakeholders: senior management and employees of the four corporations, senior staff from relevant Afghan state institutions and NGOs, and staff from formal and informal civil society organisations (CSOs) and international donors active in Afghanistan. Moreover, statements from 25 public speeches presented in First International ICT Conference and Exhibition in Kabul[2] from key actors in the field, as well as multiple field observations of CSR projects and telecommunication sites are used to enrich the data of the study. Finally, secondary data has been gathered from industry association websites, corporate documents and official documents from Afghan state institutions.

[1] Table 1 does not cover new developments in the industry since 2015.
[2] http://ictconference.af/en#

The data is analysed on the basis of the coding of engagement modes and the developmental criteria listed in the analytical framework. In the first stage, all corporate practices that explicitly addressed developmental challenges under various labels (e.g., CSR, corporate citizenship and/or philanthropic practices) were identified in formal corporate documents, websites and advertisements. In the second stage these CSR practices were categorized into the three modes of engagement described in the analytical framework. For instance, to identify innovative CSR practices the codes 'mobile-service' and 'mobile services/products' were used, while for integrative practices, codes such as 'production-related', 'internal processes' and 'distributors' were used. For philanthropic activities the focus was on 'community', 'non-mobile', and 'cultural/moral practices'. Similarly, codes were used to address whether and to what extent corporations related to the three criteria that qualify a development agent. For this particular analysis, interviews were the main source of data. The interviews aimed to cover what the explicitly stated CSR projects entailed, how corporations engaged in CSR, e.g., processes of decision-making, and how the success or failure of the CSR practices was measured. All coding was processed in NVIVO software through an iterative process to identify and categorize the engagement modes and gains insights to inform the three development agent criteria. In the following section, Afghanistan will be elaborated upon as a least-developed context and BoP market for the mobile telecommunications industry.

5. The context of the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan

The mobile telecommunications industry and BoP markets

The focus on the mobile telecommunications industry is relevant because of the massive growth and coverage of the industry over recent decades, particularly in BoP markets (Donner 2008; Heeks 2009, 2010). According to the largest association of mobile operators, Groupe Speciale Mobile Association (GSMA), the industry has achieved an increasing share of GDP in developing countries (Best and Kenny 2009), not least because of the explosive growth in the number of unique subscribers to over 3.4 billion, amounting to a threefold expansion since 2003 (GSMA 2014, p. 2). The general pattern of neo-liberal policies of deregulating and privatizing formerly state-owned telecommunication sectors (Duso and Seldeslachts 2010; Noll 2003) to attract MNCs to penetrate markets throughout the world (Fink et al. 2003; Varoudakis and Rossotto 2004) explains these explosive growth rates. Studies indicate that the industry consists of less than forty large players, with most of the top ten internationalised mobile operators being European-based, and a blend of newly emerging regional players from, particularly, India, Middle East and South Africa (Curwen and Whalley 2013, p. 1161). These main players are actively expanding into new markets in the developing world and tend to disregard national regulatory and social norms as barriers to entry (Pogrebnyakov and Maitland 2011). The future growth markets for these operators are in 'fast grower' markets (e.g., BRICS countries and emerging markets) and 'discoverer' markets such as Southern Asian and African markets, where only a third of the population are unique subscribers at

the time of writing (GSMA 2014, p. 22). Here the vast majority of customers are in BoP markets, where the UN, World Bank, state donors and NGOs are increasingly viewing mobile technologies as tools for development within the ICT4D agenda (Heeks 2010; Kandachar and Halme 2008b). The role of mobile technology has gained importance over recent years in global policy debates about transforming societies and enabling development in relation to banking, health, education and other sectors (Donner and Tellez 2008; Hamel 2010; World Bank 2012). Even in the recently declared UN Sustainable Development Goals, ICT and mobile technologies are specifically mentioned in relation to goals for advancing gender equality, partnerships, education and infrastructure, especially in least-developed countries.[3] Similarly, the academic literature on ICT4D is driven by the hype about the capacity of ICT4D to provide user-friendly, accessible and affordable services and products to BoP markets (Heeks 2009, 2010), although this literature typically fails to critically assess the role of technology in development (Avgerou 2010; Donner 2008). In relation to the debate about ICT4D in BoP markets, this paper underlines that this debate needs to acknowledge that technology is value-laden, implying that the role of business in ICT4D and the win-win claims made about its role in BoP markets need to be subjected to further scrutiny (Donner 2008; Donner and Tellez 2008; Kandachar and Halme 2008b). Before embarking on the analysis of what businesses do and how they engage in development issues in Afghanistan, a description is given of the contextual setting of the industry in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan as an area of limited statehood

Since the fall of the Afghan monarchy in 1973, Afghanistan has experienced decades of conflict led by internal and external factors (Barfield 2012). The civil war period in the late 1980s and the first Taliban era from 1992 to 2001 was a dark period for people in Afghanistan, with restricted access to education and health services and a economic isolation from the rest of the world (Cramer and Goodhand 2002). The 9/11 attacks in the USA and the US-led international coalition's response to initiate the fight against global terrorism in Afghanistan turned the international spotlight on Afghanistan again, creating hope for a better future. This process led to an initial withdrawal of the Taliban from major cities of Afghanistan, to be replaced by the creation of new democratic political system heavily supported by a massive inflow of development aid from the international community in 2001-2014. However, Afghanistan is still categorized as a 'failed state', unable to provide security and rule of law for all of its citizens, unable to reduce corruption in one of the world's most corrupt states, and unable to provide access to basic public services, including health and education (Fund for Peace 2014). A recent governance literature conceptualize such countries as 'areas of limited statehood' (ALS), indicating that states in such contexts are limited in providing basic public services (Risse 2011). The key assertion is that the provision of public goods in ALS is

[3] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300

not necessarily performed by the state but also driven by non-state actors such as businesses (Börzel 2013; Börzel and Risse 2010; Risse 2011). While recent studies indicate that corporations in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry is actively engaging in developmental issues (Azizi 2015), it is also highlighted that corporations and international donor agencies rather than local actors and voices set the agenda for business-society relations (Azizi and Jamali 2016).

In terms of social development, the UN Human Development Index (HDI) provides a snapshot of the current development situation in Afghanistan. The first HDI measurement of Afghanistan was undertaken in 2004 and ranked Afghanistan in the list of countries with the lowest HDI out of a total of 185 ranked territories (UNDP 2004). The country's HDI ranking for 2015 indicated slight improvements since 2004, though the country scored very low on three core measurements: a) decent living standards (GNI per capita: 1,885 USD); b) long and healthy life; c) access to knowledge (9.3 expected years of schooling; mean years of schooling: 3.2 years).[4] Although these indicators are static and generic, they do underline the country's urgent need for social development despite the international development support for over a decade. Women and children are viewed as especially vulnerable groups in Afghan society, which is persistently labelled 'the worst place' for mothers and new-born children (Save the Children 2015). There is thus a widespread and urgent need for development in Afghanistan - one that offers opportunities for both short-term and long-term interventions by the Afghan state, by international and local development actors, and not least by various other non-state actors.

The widespread and urgent need for human development in Afghanistan thus offers businesses abundant opportunities to intervene and act as 'development agents'. Studies of ICT in areas of limited statehood highlight the potential for achieving transparency and accountability through ICT (Siegle et al. 2014) and the ability to form alternative modes of governance driven by social media and other ICT-platforms, especially for women in Afghanistan (Sengupta et al. 2007). These studies conclude, nonetheless, that in such areas of limited statehood ICT only enables the provision of public goods that are communication-led rather than material-led (Livingston and Walter-Drop 2014). While these studies all relate to the broader use of ICT in relation to development, they do not address the role of specific actors in the industry. Hence we know little about how the engagements of businesses such as mobile operators in the mobile telecommunication industry enable or constrain their role as development agents.

Afghanistan before 2002 was an untapped market with enormous potential, albeit one lacking any telecom-infrastructure, technically skilled labour and consumer knowledge (Hamdard 2012). The country's new constitution introduced in 2004 supports market-based economic policies in line with global trends and has led to the privatization of industries, including the previously state-owned

[4] http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/AFG.pdf

post and telecommunication companies, in order to attract FDI. The Afghan market for mobile telecommunications has since experienced enormous rates of growth and can be categorized as a 'discoverer market'. There is keen competition in this market, which has attracted approximately 1.7 billion US dollars in investments since 2001.[5] This success has been hard-won because the corporations involved have needed to build the industry from scratch. When AWCC initiated the first investments in the Afghan market, a telecommunication infrastructure including towers and antennas had to be developed in mountainous terrain throughout the country to enable Afghans to use mobile phone services. Suppliers had to be found to deliver equipment and other material from neighbouring countries, and capacity-building activities had to be provided to improve the technical and sales skills of the staff. Having overcome these initial challenges, the Afghan state now views the mobile telecommunication industry as one of the country's major success stories since the US-led invasion in 2001.[6] All four of the main mobile telecommunications corporations are thriving in an untapped market that has achieved massive expansion since the liberalisation and deregulation of the market: from a few thousand mobile phones to 21 million mobile phone subscribers in 2014.[7] Over 80% of the populated area of Afghanistan had been covered by mobile services by 2014, and new products and services are being provided to promote the use of mobile phones beyond simple calling and texting utilities to M-services using simple mobile technology and even 3G Internet utilities. The four competitors are not only reaching out to untapped population groups but also focusing on retaining and advancing the use of mobile phones by their existing customer pools. The development of the industry in the Afghan context demonstrates a massive expansion of products and services and is in line with global trends in the industry. However, the Afghan context is also characterized by a particular lack of development due to the state institutions' limited ability to provide public goods in a post-war situation. The increasing involvement of industry in development-related issues raises questions about how the industry engages in such issues and whether corporations qualify as development agents in Afghanistan. The next section will analyse the practices of the industry in relation to the analytical framework presented above.

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[5] http://mcit.gov.af/en/page/4876/6005
[6] http://mcit.gov.af/en/page/4876/6005 (accessed 30.07.2014)
[7] http://mcit.gov.af/en (accessed 30.07.2014)

6. Findings on CSR in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry

How are corporations engaging in developmental issues?

A mapping exercise for this study has been undertaken on the basis of the three modes of engagement conceptualised in the analytical framework above (see Table 2). The findings provide an overview of the philanthropic, integrative and innovative modes of engagement of the four corporations and their specific practices in the Afghan mobile telecommunications industry. It must be noted, however, that all four corporations clearly stated during the interviews conducted for this study that they are for-profit organisations and that profit is required in order to contribute to development.

Philanthropic engagements

Philanthropic engagement is defined as consisting of charitable actions on the part of a corporation that have no direct relation to a corporation's core business (Halme and Laurila 2009, p. 329) and which are targeted at beneficiaries who are not directly related to the corporation. The findings show that while the philanthropic projects of the four corporations did relate to the broader public, all of these seemingly philanthropic projects had direct or indirect marketing purposes as ways by which corporations sought to brand themselves and increase awareness of their brands. Roshan, for example, sponsored the first official national football league, called the 'Roshan Premier League', which according to the Afghan Football Federation is a major step towards professionalizing football in Afghanistan (interview with senior official, Kabul September 2013).

Indirect marketing, though inevitably less visible, also aims to 'do good' while creating awareness about a specific brand. Etisalat emphasises that their support for Islamic events is related to the Islamic brand they want to create for Afghan consumers. A senior manager in Etisalat explained "surveys show that Afghans view us as an Islamic brand […] and we use our CSR practices to support religious projects to support that brand" (Senior manager, Etisalat, September 2013). Likewise, Roshan supports orphanages and children's playgrounds because they believe the Roshan brand "should be linked to fun, freedom and opportunities in a war-torn country" (Senior CSR manager, Roshan, 2007). Such engagements are illustrative of the corporations' philanthropic mode of engagement in Afghanistan, which are not pure philanthropy but can better be assessed as cause-related and strategic philanthropy due to their branding purposes in the country's highly competitive market (Jain and Jamali 2015).

Integrative engagements

The integrative mode of engagement in development consists of practices related to existing core business activities, such as improving socio/environmental conditions for employees, suppliers and customers (Halme and Laurila 2009, pp. 329-330). The findings suggest that such integration of developmental issues into core business is performed through either internally or externally oriented

practices. Internally, CSR practices are aiming at improving the skills of employees and/or providing health benefits for the employees. In terms of standards, three of the four corporations are engaged in ISO standards and other certified standards of reporting such as Global Reporting Initiative or B-Corp that impose specific requirements as to which business-society relations the corporations should report on. These standards and certifications offer corporations an opportunity to re-assess and improve existing business operations within the framework of new guidelines and standards. According to observations of CSR reporting, however, standards and codes of conduct have only recently been placed on the agenda in the Afghan context and are therefore not yet fully embedded and operationalized in the corporations.

The four corporations are also increasingly integrating issues related to women and other marginalized groups into business operations, such as public call offices (PCOs). Women's PCOs and the PCO-cycle for men with disabilities are illustrative examples of the corporations' integrative mode of engagement. The corporations intentionally support both women and war-disabled men as marginalized groups in Afghan society by creating business opportunities for them. Equipment, training and loans are provided to them to enable them to own businesses and earn higher profits than other ordinary PCOs due to the subsidized rates offered by the corporations. These practices are thereby integrating marginalized groups into their sales channel not as employees but as business partners, though still with a strategic purpose in mind. In particular, the women's public call offices are directly linked to existing business operations since they aim to overcome the cultural barriers that women faced in Afghanistan immediately after the fall of the Taliban. According to Roshan, "Many women in Afghanistan were restricted by their husband, brother or father to enter PCOs […] so creating a PCO for women removed such barriers as only women were allowed to enter these PCOs" (Senior CSR manager, Roshan 2007). The creation of PCOs exclusively for women made it legitimate for women to connect with friends and family without breaking the cultural norms of some parts of Afghan society. A recent survey conducted by USAID shows that 48% of Afghan women now own a mobile phone while 32% have indirect access to a shared phone, still leaving 20% of women without any access to mobile phone services (USAID 2013). The study indicates that the high cost of buying and maintaining a mobile phone, combined with cultural obstacles to women owning mobile phones, constitute the major barriers for women who do not yet have access to mobile phone services.

		AWCC	Roshan	MTN	Etisalat
Philanthropy	Health	Support for hospital construction and equipment 'Walk' health-campaign in USA	NA	Mobile Clinic Support to 'Gynaecology' hospitals	NA
	Community development	Support for water well construction; cash grants for orphanages; Winter Aid; Earth Day initiatives	Well-building; Pamir Power Project; Alternative Livelihood Programmes; Playground Project	Reconstructing bridges; water wells; Support to Internally Displaced People	Support for orphanages and women's centres
	Sponsorships	Olympic medallists; bicycle races; Orphanages	Youth sport centres; Afghan premiere league football	NA	Women's sport; and the national cricket team
	Relief or religious practices	Ramadan food distribution; Disaster relief	Support for food distribution and support for orphanages	Emergency support; Contribute to reconstructing schools and orphanages	Annual food distribution to underprivileged children; Building mosques; Annual Quran Recitation Competition, Hajj support
	Education/ capacity building	Learning Centres; Women's business grants	E-learning centres; School construction; One Laptop Per Child	Scholarship for best students; School building construction	Building computer labs; stationary gifts to state schools
Integrative	Equality	Women's awards for business, justice and humanity	Women's Public Call Offices	Employee child care	Women Public call office; Call office cycle to employ disabled; Women mobile money agents
	Education	NA	Employee Roshan/Cisco Networking Academy	NA	Employee graduate trainee programme and assistance
	Health	NA	Dental & Health Insurance for employees	MTN safe employee insurance	NA
	Standards /Codes	NA	B-Corp certificate, ISO 9001: 2008	ISO 9001: 2008 (HQ), GRI reporting	GRI referenced reporting
Innovative	Private sector development	My-money	M-Paisa, Malomat	M-Paisa	M-Hawala
	Health	NA	Telemedicine in three public hospitals	M-doctor	NA
	Community development	NA	NA	M-Mufti, M-Lawyer	NA
	Education	Mobile education Learning by Ear	Teacher Consultation line Water-Tracker	NA	NA

Table 2 **- Overview of CSR in the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan 2014**

Innovative engagements

The four corporations also use the innovative mode of engagement to promote business-development relations. This mode of engagement is neither philanthropic nor integrative but promotes business-development relations through the provision of products and services with the aim of catering to "the poor or to benefit the environment so that it also makes business sense" (Halme and Laurila 2009, p. 330). Findings indicate that such innovative services and products are provided in Afghanistan either directly through fee-based services or indirectly in the form of free public services for beneficiaries.

First, most of the M-services shown in Table 2 are illustrative examples of fee-based services and products that utilise core mobile technology to address developmental issues in Afghanistan. M-services are simple applications that can be installed on any mobile phone (not only smart phones) and enable a broad range of services from banking services, primary education services, information about health and many other consultation services, to simple SMS texting or voice commands. The corporations gain revenue by charging fees for each transaction between the customer and the corporation. The mobile money application, for example, enables Afghans to have a bank account, to receive and send money locally and globally, and eases money transactions, reducing the risk of travelling with cash in a country that ranks amongst the lowest in the world in terms of personal security.

Second, another approach to innovative services and products aims to provide public goods and services that are co-financed by donor agencies, NGOs and/or the Afghan state. These services also use mobile telecommunications technology to address developmental issues, but are typically provided free of charge for end-users. The 'Tele-medicine' and 'E-learning' projects undertaken by Roshan virtually connect local hospital/schools to expert hubs in Kabul and even outside Afghanistan. Such connections enable video-conferencing and the sharing of, for example, medical data between less-developed hospitals to more advanced hospitals in order to gain second opinions on diagnoses, treatments and, interestingly, even staff capacity building. E-learning centres are used in similar ways, with certified pedagogical teachers educating pupils through live or recorded video sessions. The water tracker service, meanwhile, enables over 100,000 communities to report problems and on the water pollution of wells through free-of-charge automated phone calls. These services are developed to benefit the poorer segments in rural Afghanistan, but the costs are covered either by donor agencies such as USAID or the ministries responsible for these specific areas. Roshan co-finances these particular projects by providing the connection and technology and training, though the company also states that these costs will in future be fully covered by the Afghan state.

How do the various modes of engagement serve to enable or constrain companies in fulfilling role as development agents?

While it has been shown that the four corporations engage in developmental issues through philanthropic, integrative and innovative modes of engagement, the question arises as to how each mode of engagement enables or constrains corporations in fulfilling the criteria of development agents.

Practices of the philanthropic mode of engagement can be divided into direct and indirect marketing projects covering various development issues such as health, community development, disaster relief, and general education (see Table 2). The allocation of resources in this mode is mainly based on corporate financial support to address the urgent needs of local communities in rural areas and the large youth population in both rural and urban areas of Afghanistan. Because the country's need for development is so immense, however, while the corporations' budgets for philanthropic engagements are limited, the corporations are compelled to prioritize amongst different development needs when allocating financial support for such engagement. The corporations' indirect use of the philanthropic mode of engagement as a marketing tool is thus driven by a combination of the urgent needs of the poor and the corporate interest in engaging in developmental issues. The more directly marketing-led philanthropic engagements (e.g., sponsorships), in contrast, are driven by commercial interests to brand the corporate image. This distinction has important implications regarding the development agent criterion of giving primacy to the poor, since the corporations' indirect marketing philanthropic engagements focus more on the poorest segments of the population than do their more directly marketing-led engagements. The corporations' indirect marketing-led projects aim to reach out to groups of society who are otherwise neglected by the state and by other development agencies, in which cases the corporations perceive such beneficiaries as receivers of aid and not as being related to business related activities. For instance, MTN's focus on providing mobile healthcare services for internally displaced Afghans is an illustrative example of a philanthropic engagement that targets beneficiaries who are otherwise generally neglected. The case is similar when corporations immediately respond with relief projects to address natural disasters such as the destruction of villages by floods or avalanches. In contrast, marketing-led philanthropic engagements by their very nature do not focus on the poorest segments of the market but on the middle and upper tiers that can afford to consume mobile services. In relation to the criterion of accountability as a precondition of fulfilling the role of a development agent, both types of philanthropic engagement have no clear accounting mechanisms for their impact on the poor, since the corporations address specific urgent needs with random one-time financial support without any obligation to continue further assistance. The poorest segments therefore have no stake or power in evaluating the efficiency and developmental outcomes of philanthropic engagements, since philanthropic projects are not systematically accounted for by any of the corporations. As Roshan puts it "we do not evaluate […T]he successfulness of the project is given when we see the changes in the community" (Marketing Manager, Roshan, September 2013). This statement indicates that it is Roshan itself that assesses the success of its projects and decides

upon which developmental changes are needed for the communities.

In contrast to the case of philanthropic engagements, the strategic and commercial interests of corporations play a much greater role in the integrative and innovative modes of engagement. As related above, some integrative engagements include projects that involve women and men with disabilities as business partners, indicating that corporations a) utilize their assets and financial resources for developmental issues, and b) give primacy to marginalized groups by integrating them into their sales channels as business partners. However, there is a risk of simplifying the role of business in 'development' by reducing it to a question of market inclusion or exclusion for various reasons. First, the women and disabled men who are integrated through these projects are necessarily literate enough to run their own PCOs and thus not representative of the vast majority of the population in Afghanistan who are illiterate Second, observations from the field show that not all of the women targeted by the project were allowed by their families to participate, since this would reduce the time available to them to fulfil their household duties and might decrease their economic dependency on their husbands. Third, the projects are sporadically implemented only in urban areas and neglect potential rural beneficiaries. Moreover, the accountability dimension of the integrative approach occurs within an asymmetric relationship in which the corporations act either as employers implementing the internal integration of CSR or as job-creators through the external integration of marginalized groups. The success or failure of such projects is thus measured on the basis of economic profitability rather than on a development-oriented evaluation of how the integration mode of engagement has led to increased empowerment or independency for the marginalized target groups. Similarly, internally-oriented standards and codes of conduct are structurally limited in their capacity to give primacy to the poorest since it is only the employees of the corporations who may benefit from such practices. Only a limited number of women and disabled men are thus targeted through these integrative projects, and even those measures that are integrated within corporate and market mechanisms are unable to address the full complexity of the social marginalization of women in Afghanistan. In conclusion, integrative engagements are found to be driven by a corporate logic that simplifies the complex development challenges facing marginalized groups in Afghanistan.

The innovative mode of engagement employs mobile technology to engage in various developmental issues, including health, education, community livelihood, and banking services. Corporate assets and resources are certainly used to initiate and implement such engagements, as can be seen, for example, in the way that the technological benefits of long-distance connectivity are used to provide expertise to remote areas that lack such capacities. However, as indicated above, innovative approaches are dependent on who pays and who benefits from such technologies, thereby casting doubt on whether the innovative mode of engagement genuinely gives primacy to the poor. Fee-based services are by nature marketed towards the specific needs of customers who pay for and consume the technology. The focus of such services is therefore inevitably limited to the developmental needs of certain customer segments that can afford to pay for such services.

These customer segments are not the poorest segments of the population, meaning that services such as m-banking, m-health, m-education and m-mufti can only address development challenges for a limited number of groups in society and are not tailored to the needs of the poorest segments and/or do not address considerations about affordability due to their service fees. In contrast, the innovative services co-financed by donor agencies and/or by national programmes of the Afghan state have the ability to address development issues that benefit the poorest groups since these services are free of charge. For instance, the financial co-support of donor agencies has facilitated the provision of video-conferencing and tele-medicine technologies to rural areas on order, ideally, to enable the poorest groups in Afghanistan to access expert health and education services in their own provinces instead of travelling to Kabul. Since these poorest groups cannot afford expensive fee-based services, the financial support of large donor agencies, NGOs and state institutions can ensure primacy to the poor by enabling the poorest groups to make use of mobile technology. Finally, the accountability dimension of innovative modes of engagement in development is troublesome because the success or failure of fee-based M-technologies is dependent on sales volume and predicted market value rather than on development-oriented accountability. Even in donor-financed projects there is a risk that donor-interests, which are not always identical with the interests of the poorest segments, may lead to the development of services tailored to target groups that are not necessarily the poorest segments. For instance, USAID has financially supported the four corporations in promoting mobile money in Afghanistan. The argument is that only 9% of Afghans have access to formal banking[8] and that mobile money enables secure and safe banking for Afghans[9] (according to the World Bank). However, this argument neglects the fact that the traditional Hawala system has worked as a money transfer system in Afghanistan for centuries and that mobile money technologies will only digitalize the Hawala processes. Observations from industry meetings in Kabul and from initial industry surveys about mobile money in Afghanistan reveal that customers do not trust the m-banking services and that the traditional Hawala system provides better access to cash than current mobile money solutions.[10] In conclusion, innovative projects may give primacy to the poor by allocating resources to address developmental challenges throughout the market, while corporate and donor interests rather than development-oriented accountability drive the innovative mode of engagement at the risk of excluding the needs and priorities of the poorest segments of the population.

Summary of findings

The findings show that all four corporations have actively undertaken philanthropic, integrative and

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[8] http://datatopics.worldbank.org/financialinclusion/country/Afghanistan

[9] http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/frontlines/youth-mobile-technology/apps-afghanistan

[10] http://www.altaiconsulting.com/application/views/images/media/pdf/Altai%20MR%20Mobile%20Money%20FINAL.pdf

innovative modes of engagement in development. While the corporations' philanthropic projects may target the poorest groups in Afghanistan, these interventions are random and short-term and driven by direct and indirect marketing and branding purposes. The corporations' integrative projects, meanwhile, are limited in terms of allocating resources and in targeting the poorest groups, since these projects largely amount to sporadic managerial attempts at simplifying developmental issues to a matter of including the poor in the job market. The corporations' innovative projects, whether fee-based or donor-led, may address developmental issues through mobile technology, but the commercial interests of the corporations and the interests of the donors also limit these projects. The findings thus show that the business case conditions the development case in each mode of engagement, albeit in some modes more than others, which thus constrains corporations from fulfilling the three ideal criteria for becoming development agents. Moreover, the findings highlight the lack of systematic reporting and measurement of impact, which gives immense space for the corporations to engage in CSR covering anything from insurance and training/capacity development offered to employees to the integration of marginalized groups into the core business operations. On the one hand, the abilities and specific interests of the four corporations determine the boundaries of what is considered to be CSR, while on the other hand the widespread lack of development in Afghanistan and the urgent need for development means that any corporate engagement in societal issues can be seen as social development.

7. Discussion of the findings

How businesses engage matters in business-development relations

The emphasis in this paper on modes of engagement contributes conceptually to the debate on the role of businesses as development agents by addressing the inadequacy of the current emphasis on innovative solutions in BoP markets (Blowfield and Dolan 2014) to fully cover business-development relations in BoP markets. As indicated by the findings, the philanthropic, integrative and innovative modes of engagement address different developmental challenges and are therefore relevant for assessing the role of business in development. Empirically, the findings shed light on the industry-specific engagements of the mobile telecommunications industry. These findings suggest a predominantly wider-society focus, with both industry-specific technologies and resources utilized through integrative and innovative modes of engagement, as well as non-specific industry philanthropic engagements. Such findings stand in contrast to other findings about BoP markets that focus solely on strategic CSR (Carroll and Shabana 2010; Kurucz et al. 2008) and innovative products and solutions (Casado Juan and Hart 2015; George et al. 2012), particularly in relation to the use of ICT and mobile technology for development (Avgerou 2010; Donner 2008; Heeks 2010; Kandachar and Halme 2008b). The findings further indicate that philanthropic engagements can have strategic purposes (Jain and Jamali 2015), unlike early studies that decoupled philanthropic practices from strategy in developing countries (Jamali and Mirshak 2006;

Visser 2008). More importantly, the findings indicate that the philanthropic mode of engagement, being less strategic than the other modes of engagement, has great potential to enable corporations to perform the role of development agents (Blowfield and Dolan 2014).

The improbability of business as 'development agents'

The second contribution of this paper relates to the (re)-integration of the relationship between profit and development as conditions for assessing the role of businesses as development agents. Based on the findings, the paper advances the current debate by pointing to three barriers that illustrate how the business case subordinates the development case. These barriers are not adequately dealt with in the current debate about the developmental role of business in BoP markets and require further studies.

First, the findings recall that the managerial mind-set constrains the abilities of corporations to use their resources and technological assets to address developmental issues. This has been raised before in the CSR literature, where the ability of corporate managers to address and understand complex social development challenges is questioned (Blowfield 2005; Frynas 2005; Kuhn and Deetz 2008). While the allocation of knowledge, know-how and resources to address business-development challenges is set as a criteria for the role of development agent (Blowfield and Dolan 2014), the findings underline the contradictory effects of such allocation criteria. The case study indicates that while the urgent developmental needs of Afghanistan, as an area of limited statehood, enable abundant space for corporations to engage sincerely and have an impact as development agents, not all projects are necessarily targeted at the poorest groups as their main beneficiaries. The paper argues that this is partly due to the managerial logic of identifying a simple, manageable and strategically relevant business case as a precondition for understanding the development case. Managerial logic in this way not only influences development topics and priorities but can even reinvent the meaning of development as an instrumental and managerial problem (Blowfield 2005). This is particularly evident when looking at how corporations account for the impact of their projects, since the poor are seen as receivers of aid in philanthropic modes of engagement, whereas integrative and innovative modes uncritically equate financial purpose with developmental impact when assessing the success or failure of a project. The managerial mind-set constrains corporations when engaging the poor in processes of prioritization, resource allocation and accounting for development impact, but offers the poor the ability to engage in market mechanisms where, as customers or producers, they can choose to buy or to work or to boycott the projects. Hence this paper points out that claims made in the literature about 'win-win' solutions are actually based on corporate managers' understanding of both the business and the societal 'win' rather than enabling the complex and heterogeneous interests of beneficiaries to form the latter 'win' (Banerjee 2008).

Second, the findings highlight the challenges of scaling up and ensuring the sustainability of

corporate engagements, which in Afghanistan are either too limited to enable impact beyond sporadic and random interventions, or too generic to encompass the needs of the poorest segments of the population. This is seen in the philanthropic practices that address important urgent needs, especially the needs of victims of natural disasters, but which lack the necessary long-term allocation of resources to move beyond relief towards substantial and sustainable development projects. Similarly, the integrative mode of engagement towards marginalized groups is limited in scale, since only a minority of literate and urban beneficiaries are targeted for short-term projects in random locations. Innovative projects, by contrast, are broader in scale because mobile technologies are available for all consumers on the market, though such projects do not pay attention to the particular needs of the poorest groups who cannot afford fee-based services. The challenges of scalability and sustainability thus act as constraints on the ability of corporations to act as development agents unless donor and other development actors cooperate with corporations to develop particular M-services needed by the poor. This paper thus problematizes claims about the role of business as a sole actor in the provision of public goods without the state in BoP markets (Hart 2005; Prahalad 2010; Prahalad and Hammond 2002), and suggests instead that the state, donor agencies and NGOs are necessary to ensure the sustainability of corporate engagements (McKague et al. 2015). Despite decades of neo-liberal policies, states still play important roles in development interventions and need to be re-integrated into corporate interventions because national plans and policies for development can provide important guidance for corporate engagements in development (Jeppesen and Azizi 2015). Particularly in contexts with limited statehood, such as Afghanistan, a lack of coherence between state policies and corporate engagements in development can further lead to a donor- and corporate-led agenda for business-society relations without the participation of local voices (Azizi and Jamali 2016).

Finally, the business and development case relations clearly highlight the barrier of commodification that emerges when corporations provide innovative solutions to developmental challenges. Here 'commodification' involves the capitalist process whereby social actors, relations and challenges are converted into market value and monetized (Adler 2011). While debates about ICT4D in BoP markets have revealed great potential for developmental interventions driven by commercial interest in digitalizing social relations and developmental issues into innovative solutions for market purchase, the barrier of commodification involved in ICT4D has received much less attention in the debates (Avgerou 2010; Donner 2008; Heeks 2010; Unwin 2010). The findings indicate how innovative modes of engagement allocate resources and give primacy to developmental challenges that can be converted into products and services for the market. However, such focus neglects social challenges that cannot be commoditised through ICT and/or is a consequences of usage of mobile phones, as particularly female users fear bullying and sexual harassments through mobile phones in Afghanistan (USAID 2013), and the reestablishment of patriarchal power relations seen in other studies (Wallis 2011). Hence, businesses are limited to engage as development agents, since commodification implies that the "very notions of the poor,

poverty, beneficiary, and development worthiness are being constructed around what is material, instrumental and comprehensible to business" (Blowfield and Dolan 2014, p. 35). However, the examples of donor-financed M-services for the poorest populations show the potentials for how corporations can prioritize and allocate resources for the poorest segments in Afghan society. Such engagements can thus support counterarguments against a major critical claim made in the CSR literature that the poor have no stake and are per se excluded from any market transactions (Jenkins 2005). While the examples of M-money technologies that aim to digitalize existing the old-fashioned and traditional 'Hawala' system are presented by donors and state agencies as success stories, future studies are needed to understand how the commodification of ICT4D is highly value-laden (Avgerou 2010; Donner 2008; Kandachar and Halme 2008b). Particular attention to the way the commodification process aims to formalize the 'informal' within a neo-liberal ideology and thereby creating a specific discourse for development (Ferguson 1990, 2007) is needed in order to fully understand how businesses as providers of solutions for development (Blowfield 2012) are constrained by the process of commodification in their ability to act as development agents (Blowfield and Dolan 2014).

8. Conclusion

This paper has addressed the pressing question of whether and how businesses can become development agents in developing countries. While three criteria have been put forward in the debate as means of assessing whether businesses ideally act as 'development agents' (Blowfield and Dolan 2014), this paper argues that the conditions for assessing the potential and improbability of businesses achieving such an ideal role are conceptually and empirically vague. The paper therefore aims to study how businesses are enabled or constrained in attempting to fulfil such ideal criteria of development agents. The paper contributes with a framework that modifies the conditions regarding how businesses are enabled/constrained to become development agents, and highlights that *how* corporations assess the business and development case conditions corporations engage in developmental issues, and thereby enable/disable their ability to become development agents.

The national context of Afghanistan, as an example of a country ranked as least developed by the UN HDI, offers relevant insights to the debate due to its urgent need for social development. The findings show that the four corporations operating in the mobile telecommunications industry in Afghanistan engage in philanthropic, integrative and innovative modes of engagement and have addressed several urgent social needs in Afghanistan through such engagements. However, the findings also suggest that that none of the three engagement modes enable businesses to fulfil all the criteria for becoming development agents. The findings highlight that tensions and contradictions occur when private and for-profit corporations engage in providing solutions for complex developmental issues. Based on the case study from Afghanistan, the paper discusses how the business case imposes managerialism, lack of scalability/sustainability and commodification as barriers preventing corporations from fully exploiting the developmental potential available in a least-developed area of limited statehood with urgent developmental issues.

The debate about the role of corporations as development agents should thus critically reflect upon the realities of profit-logic and governance models embedded in for-profit and private-owned large MNCs (Banerjee 2008; Fleming and Jones 2013). Future studies need to acknowledge the structural limitations of for-profit corporations when addressing development issues in order to provide a more realistic account of what corporations can actually contribute to complex development issues in developing countries. It is certain that least-developed countries offer corporation abundant room for manoeuvre; but it is too naïve, and structurally improbable, to posit that for-profit corporations act as 'development agents' without first critically questioning what conditions enable or constrain the engagement of corporations in development. Without such reflection, the notion of corporations as developmental agents remain a utopian ideal within academia, while in practice corporations continue business as usual by prioritizing profit over other societal interests. The paper stresses that potentials are seen when donors and states are involved in innovative solutions, but further studies are needed to investigate the potentials of such corporate engagements and partnerships.

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