

Pies, Ingo; Lange, Thomas

Working Paper

Beyond moral education: Enabling managers to take order responsibility

Diskussionspapier, No. 2025-12

Provided in Cooperation with:

Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, Chair of Economic Ethics

Suggested Citation: Pies, Ingo; Lange, Thomas (2025) : Beyond moral education: Enabling managers to take order responsibility, Diskussionspapier, No. 2025-12, ISBN 978-3-96670-273-7, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftsethik, Halle (Saale)

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/327132>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.

If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



Ingo Pies and Thomas Lange

Beyond Moral Education: Enabling Managers to Take Order Responsibility

Discussion Paper Nr. 2025-12

Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftsethik
an der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg,
hrsg. von Ingo Pies,
Halle 2025

Haftungsausschluss

Diese Diskussionspapiere schaffen eine Plattform, um Diskurse und Lernen zu fördern. Der Herausgeber teilt daher nicht notwendigerweise die in diesen Diskussionspapieren geäußerten Ideen und Ansichten. Die Autoren selbst sind und bleiben verantwortlich für ihre Aussagen.

ISBN 978-3-96670-272-0 (gedruckte Form)
ISBN 978-3-96670-273-7 (elektronische Form)
ISSN 1861-3594 (Printausgabe)
ISSN 1861-3608 (Internetausgabe)

Autoranschrift

Prof. Dr. Ingo Pies
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
Juristische und Wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Fakultät
Wirtschaftswissenschaftlicher Bereich
Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftsethik
Große Steinstraße 73
D-06108 Halle
Tel.: +49 (0) 345 55-23420
Fax: +49 (0) 345 55 27385
Email: ingo.pies@wiwi.uni-halle.de

Dr. Thomas Lange
Managing Director
Achleitner Ventures

Korrespondenzanschrift

Prof. Dr. Ingo Pies
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg
Juristische und Wirtschaftswissenschaftliche Fakultät
Wirtschaftswissenschaftlicher Bereich
Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftsethik
Große Steinstraße 73
D-06108 Halle
Tel.: +49 (0) 345 55-23420
Fax: +49 (0) 345 55 27385
Email: ingo.pies@wiwi.uni-halle.de

Abstract

Managers do not need moral (re-)education but the competencies to assume order responsibility: Companies serve a societal purpose in market economies through efficiency, innovation, and welfare diffusion. Their “license to operate” depends not only on legality but also on legitimacy. As the traditional division between politics as rule-setter and business as rule-follower erodes, managers must move beyond operational decision-making to actively engage in governance and public discourse. This requires new competencies: steering competence for institutional design and enlightenment competence for clarifying debates and building trust in the legitimacy of the market economy.

Keywords: Optimization, Governance, Discourse, Order Responsibility, Steering Responsibility, Enlightenment Responsibility, Leadership, New Management, CSR

Kurzfassung

Manager müssen nicht moralisch (um-)erzogen, sondern zur Übernahme von Ordnungsverantwortung befähigt werden: Unternehmen erfüllen in der Marktwirtschaft eine gesellschaftliche Funktion durch Effizienz, Innovation und Wohlfahrtsdiffusion. Dafür benötigen sie eine gesellschaftliche „license to operate“, die sich nicht allein aus Legalität, sondern auch aus Legitimität speist. Da die alte Arbeitsteilung zwischen Politik Wirtschaft erodiert, wonach der Staat als Regelgeber und das Unternehmen als Regelnehmer fungiert, kommt es darauf an, dass Manager nicht nur operative Entscheidungen treffen, sondern auch aktiv an Governance und Diskurs teilnehmen. Erforderlich sind neue Kompetenzen: Steuerungskompetenz zur Gestaltung von Institutionen und Aufklärungskompetenz zur Vermittlung im öffentlichen Diskurs.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Optimierung, Governance, Diskurs, Ordnungsverantwortung, Steuerungsverantwortung, Aufklärungsverantwortung, Leadership, New Management, CSR

Beyond Moral Education: Enabling Managers to Take Order Responsibility

Ingo Pies and Thomas Lange*

What role do companies play in society—and what are the implications for the responsibilities of managers? These questions are gaining public attention as companies are increasingly expected to contribute to solving the great societal challenges of our time—be it sustainability and climate protection, the responsible use of new technologies, or the safeguarding of democracy.

Managers are increasingly under pressure to ‘take a stand’ and speak out on social issues. Ultimately, this also shapes the legitimacy society accords to the economy as a whole and to specific companies in particular.

But how can managers move sure-footedly in an environment where societal expectations are conveyed above all through moral appeals?

Our position is clear: managers should not respond by intensifying moral posturing, but by helping to design the systems of rules—by taking responsibility for the institutional order. This entails speaking publicly and adding their voice to the socio-political conversation.

If managers fail to meet this intellectual challenge, they may in the long run undermine their companies’ societal ‘license to operate’—and the public’s trust in the market economy as a whole.

The Societal Role of Companies

Before we take a closer look at the responsibility of managers, let us first take a step back and consider the social role and responsibility of companies in a market economy.

They are by no means an end in themselves. Rather, in generating value, businesses serve a social purpose—one realized through three functions of market-based systems:

1. **Production efficiency:** Competition forces companies to align with customer needs.
2. **Innovation dynamics:** Rivalry creates incentives for continuous quality improvements and new developments.
3. **Welfare diffusion:** Competition compels companies to pass on part of the value they create to customers (through lower prices and higher quality) and to employees (through more attractive wages and working conditions).

Competition is the mechanism through which corporate behavior is channeled toward the common good; profit is the incentive for companies to join the game. All of this, however, relies on trust in the system—a societal ‘license to operate’.

* Prof. Dr. Ingo Pies is Professor of Economic Ethics at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. Dr. Thomas Lange is an economist and Managing Director of Achleitner Ventures.

One of the fathers of Germany's social market economy, Franz Böhm, referred in this context to the 'societal remit' of companies, while Ludwig von Mises spoke of their 'societal mandate'. We extend this perspective and distinguish three levels of responsibility.

The Three Levels of Responsibility of Companies and Managers

The social function of enterprises entails managerial responsibility, which unfolds on three levels (see Figure 1):



Figure 1: The Three Levels of Responsibility

1. **Decision-Making (Level 1):** The first level concerns day-to-day business decisions. Here, managers are engaged in optimizing value creation within existing rules and balancing trade-offs.
2. **Governance (Level 2):** At this meta-level, managers are involved in shaping the framework of rules (laws, internal governance, contracts). Unlike Level 1, this is not about optimizing individual business moves, but about negotiating the design of the rules of the game. This is where the incentives for decisions at Level 1 are set.
3. **Discourse (Level 3):** At a further meta-level, managers participate in discourses on rules. Managers must correctly understand situational challenges and identify shared rule interests among different stakeholder groups. This is where the arguments are developed with which managers position themselves in the public arena and enter level 2 activities.

'Order responsibility' is our umbrella term for 'steering responsibility' (through governance, Level 2) and 'enlightenment responsibility' (in discourses, Level 3).

The Growing Importance of Order Responsibility – and the Skills Required to Meet It

Levels 2 and 3 of our schema, which encompass steering and enlightenment responsibilities, are becoming increasingly important. This is not only because the question of societal responsibility of companies and managers has recently been debated more intensively in the bright spotlight of (social) media. There are also two structural reasons for this:

1. **Dynamic competitive contexts:** These necessitate continuous organizational adaptation and innovation, encompassing firms, industries, and sectors, as

well as politics and society at large. The prerequisites for this are created mainly on the two meta-levels of governance and discourse.

2. **Erosion of the traditional division of labor between politics and business:** The once-clear arrangement—politics as the rule-setter, business as the rule-follower—has weakened, as legality no longer suffices to confer legitimacy.

Under these conditions, societal acceptance becomes a scarce resource that requires proactive management. Companies must increasingly take it upon themselves to secure their ‘license to operate’. This entails a shift from passive compliance with rules to active entrepreneurship in rule-setting. It also requires the capacity to deploy moral commitments as a production factor and to defend them in public discourse.

Accordingly, beyond technical optimization skills, managers also need:

- **Steering competence:** At the governance meta-level, managers are required to translate jointly developed insights into collective negotiation outcomes by implementing institutional arrangements (or constructively participating in their implementation), thereby improving the incentive structures for operational decision-making.
- **Enlightenment competence:** At the discourse meta-level, managers must be capable of providing clarity on substantive matters, reframing discursive clashes as interest-based rather than value-based conflicts, dispelling misunderstandings, engaging with counter-arguments, and convincing differing stakeholders with compelling reasons.

Conclusion

Classical business ethics, with its focus on the virtues and morals of individual actors, falls short. A modern, institution-based perspective recognizes the co-responsibility of companies for the quality of the institutional framework in which they operate. Order responsibility is not only a success factor for effective value creation and entrepreneurial vitality; the future of the market economy also depends on how well managers are prepared to assume order responsibility on behalf of their companies.

This brings categorically different types of management competencies into focus: optimization works with trade-offs; governance, by contrast, overcomes trade-offs and realizes win-win potentials—which, however, must first be identified and made intelligible through discourse. In this sense, the three levels of responsibility and their associated competencies are systematically interconnected.

The task of management training is therefore not to turn managers into better people, but rather to turn people into better managers. The three-level framework we have presented can help in this, as it systematically distinguishes and links three competencies that enable managers to align their companies consistently—through optimization, steering, and enlightenment—towards productive value creation and the justification of institutional trust. With this concept, managers can be equipped to competently fulfil their essential system functions on which the legitimacy of the market economy rests.

Diskussionspapiere¹

Nr. 2025-12	Ingo Pies und Thomas Lange Beyond Moral Education: Enabling Managers to Take Order Responsibility
Nr. 2025-11	Ingo Pies und Thomas Lange Manager müssen nicht moralisch erzogen, sondern zur Ordnungsverantwortung befähigt werden
Nr. 2025-10	Ingo Pies How does Kant think? – An interpretive proposal from an ordonomic perspective
Nr. 2025-09	Ingo Pies Kant-Interpretation aus ordonomischer Sicht
Nr. 2025-08	Ingo Pies Designing Incentives, Designing Ideas: A Historical Arc from Order Economics through Order Ethics to Ordonomics
Nr. 2025-07	Stefan Hielscher, Felix Carl Schultz, Vladislav Valentinov und Ingo Pies A Governance perspective on moral character development
Nr. 2025-06	Ingo Pies Ordnungsökonomik, Ordnungsethik, Ordonomik – Eine deutsche Traditionslinie methodologischer Theoriebildung
Nr. 2025-05	Stefan Hielscher, Sebastian Everding und Ingo Pies Do Not Miss this Ordonomic Reply to Our Critics – Why Social Contract Theory Favors Commercial over Cooperative Platforms in the Sharing Economy
Nr. 2025-04	Ingo Pies Die Moralisierung politischer Diskurse ist Gift für die Demokratie
Nr. 2025-03	Felix Carl Schultz und Ingo Pies Kreislaufwirtschaft und Wachstum Eine kritische Perspektive auf Post-Wachstums- und Pro-Wachstums-Ansätze zur Circular Economy
Nr. 2025-02	Kilian de Ridder, Felix Carl Schultz und Ingo Pies Prozedurale Klima-Gerechtigkeit: Polyzentrismus als Lösung für ein globales Problem
Nr. 2025-01	Stefan Hielscher und Hussein Mamorry How can MNEs stabilize rent-sharing games in (fragile) limited access orders? An ordonomic perspective
Nr. 2024-07	Stefan Hielscher Intentional and Institutional Self-Corrections: An outline for building ordonomic competencies in schools
Nr. 2024-06	Ingo Pies Schwierigkeiten (mit) einer Tugendethik des Marktes – Theoriestrategische Überlegungen aus ordonomischer Sicht
Nr. 2024-05	Ingo Pies Die ökonomischen Nobelpreisträger 2024: Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson und James A. Robinson

¹ Als kostenloser Download unter <http://ethik.wiwi.uni-halle.de/forschung>. Hier finden sich auch die Diskussionspapiere der Jahrgänge 2003-2016.

Nr. 2024-04	Ingo Pies Wie ist Schumpeter zu interpretieren?
Nr. 2024-03	Ingo Pies Preiswucher versus Lohnwucher: Neue Erkenntnisse empirischer Moralforschung und ihre politischen Implikationen
Nr. 2024-02	Ingo Pies Laudationes zum Max-Weber-Preis 2024 für Geneviève Marie Chaumont, Max Kumpf und Lena Sofie Störk
Nr. 2024-01	Ingo Pies und Felix Carl Schultz Klimaschutz durch Degrowth? – Ordonomische Anfragen an die Position radikaler Wachstumskritik
Nr. 2023-14	Marc C. Hübscher ,Übergewinne‘ und Erklärungen des Gewinns im Kapitalismus Ökonomie im Resonanzraum I
Nr. 2023-13	Ingo Pies Folk Economics and Folk Ethics as Problems of Moral Reasoning – Ordonomic Inspirations for Business Ethics
Nr. 2023-12	Ingo Pies Folk Economics und Folk Ethics als moralisches Problem – Ordonomische Anregungen zur Business Ethics
Nr. 2023-11	Ingo Pies Freydenker 9 Fragen
Nr. 2023-10	Ingo Pies und Marc C. Hübscher ,Value added‘ für Theorie und Praxis – Systematische Anregungen zur Wirtschaftsphilosophie
Nr. 2023-09	Ingo Pies Anregungen für die Wirtschaftsphilosophie
Nr. 2023-08	Ingo Pies IPCC
Nr. 2023-07	Ingo Pies Politische Indoktrination oder wissenschaftliche Aufklärung? – Ein Briefwechsel mitsamt Vorlesungsunterlagen
Nr. 2023-06	Ingo Pies Ethik des Kapitalismus
Nr. 2023-05	Ingo Pies Diskursversagen im Ukraine-Konflikt – Rückblick und Ausblick
Nr. 2023-04	Ingo Pies Öffentlicher Vernunftgebrauch in Zeiten des Krieges – Über die Rechte und Pflichten von Intellektuellen
Nr. 2023-03	Ingo Pies Diskursversagen im Ukraine-Konflikt? – Ein ordonomisches Follow-Up
Nr. 2023-02	Ingo Pies Kriegspropaganda im Ukraine-Konflikt – Eine ordonomische Diskursanalyse

- Nr. 2023-01 **Ingo Pies**
 Laudatio Max-Weber-Preis für Tim-Philipp Bruns

Wirtschaftsethik-Studien²

- Nr. 2022-2 **Kilian de Ridder**
 Procedural Climate Justice – Conceptualizing a polycentric to a global problem
- Nr. 2022-1 **Ingo Pies und Klaus M. Leisinger**
 Unternehmensethik und Integrität – Ein Briefwechsel zwischen Theorie und Praxis
- Nr. 2020-1 **Ingo Pies und Michael Schramm**
 „Ordonomik“ und „Business Metaphysics“ im Dialog
- Nr. 2013-1 **Ingo Pies**
 Chancengerechtigkeit durch Ernährungssicherung – Zur Solidaritätsfunktion der Marktwirtschaft bei der Bekämpfung des weltweiten Hungers
- Nr. 2010-1 **Ingo Pies, Alexandra von Winning, Markus Sardison, Katrin Girlich**
 Sustainability in the Petroleum Industry: Theory and Practice of Voluntary Self-Commitments
- Nr. 2009-1 **Ingo Pies, Alexandra von Winning, Markus Sardison, Katrin Girlich**
 Nachhaltigkeit in der Mineralölindustrie: Theorie und Praxis freiwilliger Selbstverpflichtungen
- Nr. 2007-1 **Markus Beckmann**
 Corporate Social Responsibility und Corporate Citizenship
- Nr. 2005-3 **Ingo Pies, Peter Sass, Roland Frank**
 Anforderungen an eine Politik der Nachhaltigkeit – eine wirtschaftsethische Studie zur europäischen Abfallpolitik
- Nr. 2005-2 **Ingo Pies, Peter Sass, Henry Meyer zu Schwabedissen**
 Prävention von Wirtschaftskriminalität: Zur Theorie und Praxis der Korruptionsbekämpfung
- Nr. 2005-1 **Valerie Schuster**
 Corporate Citizenship und die UN Millennium Development Goals: Ein unternehmerischer Lernprozess am Beispiel Brasiliens
- Nr. 2004-1 **Johanna Brinkmann**
 Corporate Citizenship und Public-Private Partnerships: Zum Potential der Kooperation zwischen Privatwirtschaft, Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Zivilgesellschaft

² Als kostenloser Download unter <http://ethik.wiwi.uni-halle.de/forschung>.

Autoren:

Prof. Dr. Ingo Pies

Lehrstuhl für Wirtschaftsethik

Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Dr. Thomas Lange

Managing Director

Achleitner Ventures

ISBN 978-3-96670-272-0
ISBN 978-3-96670-273-7