The involvement of multinational corporations in social innovation projects: A systematic review of the literature

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Abstract

While studies on social innovation have expanded significantly, our understanding of the role of MNCs in this social innovation arena is still in its infancy. By consolidating the state of academic research on social innovation through a systematic review of articles, we offer a review of what is known about MNCs' role in social innovation with the intention to build recommendations for further lines of inquiry on the topic. The review shows that there is a substantial lack of studies in the area. The overarching roles identified for MNCs in social innovation projects are transactional, bridging and transformative, and the motivation behind their involvement in social innovation projects are identified as normative, strategic and intrinsic. The tensions found from the review are mainly related to the cross-sector relationships constituting the actual social innovation projects such as competing institutional logics and value frames, and knowledge related tensions.

Keywords: Social innovation, MNC, innovation, CSR, cross-sector relationships

1. Introduction

The interest for social innovation is becoming apparent among multinational companies (MNCs), who are faced with an increased pressure from governments, customers, and stakeholders to leverage their extensive financial resources, management expertise and global supply chains to find innovative solutions to deep-rooted social issues (Varadarajan & Kaul, 2018). Practical evidence shows that large corporations are turning into developing social innovation strategies. Some MNCs, such as Danone or BASF, even have well-established social innovation teams (Nicholls, Simon & Gabriel, 2015). Still, there is scant research on social innovations in MNCs and we intend to contribute to the field by compiling the existing knowledge in the present paper.

Over the past two centuries, the concept of 'social innovation' has been met with skepticism and social innovation activities have developed from being mocked at, violently opposed to and increasingly accepted as being self-evident (Mulgan, 2007). The concept of social innovation has been contested and many times conceptually imprecise and inconsistently used (Ayob et al., 2016). For some, it is the study of non-profit organisations, for others it can encompass almost anything from new types of democracy to the design of products for poor consumers. At its simplest, social innovation can be seen as 'new ideas that address unmet social needs – and that work' (Mulgan, 2007). This implies that social innovation can take the form of everything from specific ideas, actions, frames, models, systems, processes, services, rules and regulations to new organizational forms (Nicholls et al, 2015), as long as these are "social in their means and ends" (Young Foundation, 2012).

Due to mainly practitioner-based evidence on how MNCs are increasingly engaging in social innovation activities, this knowledge seems disconnected from the academic research on social innovation (Mirvis et al., 2011). To fill this gap in the literature, this paper systematically reviews extant literature on the involvement of MNCs in social innovation by delivering an understanding on: the degree to which MNCs is covered in research, the role and main motives for MNCs' participation in social innovation activities, and tensions related to MNCs' participation in social innovation. Our intent with this systematic literature review is to consolidate the extant research of social innovations in MNCs, and to provide a focus on how the MNC has been approached in this field. The relevance of our literature review is twofold. First, given the increased attention to MNC engagement in social innovation activities, at least at policy levels (cf. European Union, 2010; United Nations, 2015), this review is one of the first to explicitly link the MNC to the concept of social innovation. We have selected only those articles that include both foci. Second, we believe this paper as a starting point for future research on social innovation that explicitly takes the MNC as the focal unit of analysis.

We begin this paper by a presentation and definition of social innovation and a brief synthesis of concepts that are closely related to that of social innovation. Next follows a presentation of the used review approach and research methodology. After that, we classify, synthesize and present the results of the review. The final section contains a concluding discussion, including a presentation of some implications for theory and management as well as the limitations of this review.

2. Social innovation – a floating lexicon

In accordance with previous research on social innovation (cf. Mumford, 2002; Mulgan, 2006; Mulgan, 2007; Phills et al., 2008; Ayob et al., 2016; Moulaert, 2016), the boundaries of "social innovation" as a concept are rather broad and fluid. This makes it difficult to elucidate a precise meaning of this concept across the literature. This is also evident in the literature review, as many of the authors have formulated their own definitions of social innovation.

Through a bibliometric analysis of the most influential articles on social innovation, Ayob et al. (2016) show that, over time, the concept has taken on meanings far away from its sociological roots. This evolution shows that the literature revolves around aspects such as the 'societal impact' of social innovation, and 'social relations' by virtue of bringing together people and actors. In scrutinizing the definitions of social innovation, we see that social innovation revolves around some common denominators such as the focus on purpose, content and outcome and/or processes (Dawson & Daniel, 2010; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010b). Many of the definitions emphasize the purpose of social innovation such as 'social goals', 'useful to society' and 'social justice' (Froud et al., 2010; Taşan- Kok, 2010; Bhatt & Altinay, 2013). Others focus on the content of the social innovation, which is often exemplified by the focus on the aspect of 'newness'- and 'novelty' aspects of social innovations (Mulgan, 2006; Lettice & Parekh, 2010; Bulut et al., 2013). Within this stream of research, an emphasis is also put on the outcome in terms of the co-evolution of novel social solutions with technical solutions (Menzel et al., 2007; Klein et al., 2010; Raven et al., 2010). Within the literature of social innovation, the collaborative- and co-creative nature of social innovation emerges as a strong focus. It has been argued that when it comes to social innovation, the traditional boundaries between different sectors become blurred and new models of cross-sector collaborations evolve (Sanzo et al., 2015) and social innovation is often referred to as some form of open source method of innovation (Sanzo et al., 2015).

Definitions that revolve around these issues can be shown by the definition of Phills et al. (2008, p. 39), who refer to social innovation as "*a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole, rather than to private individuals*". In a similar way, Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan (2010, p. 3) argue that social innovations are "*new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words, they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act.*" Pol and Ville (2009, p. 881) state that "*an* *innovation is termed a social innovation if the implied new idea has the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life*". A commonly referred definition originating from the Young Foundation (2012, p. 18) is that "*social innovations are new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes, etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and/or better use of assets and resources*".

Further, while authors consistently acknowledge the amorphousness of this term and they cite various references as benchmark for their own research, some openly advocate for the broadening of the term rather than precision (Berzin et al., 2015). For corporations, social innovation may imply that they have to change in their "assumptions, expectations, behaviours and relationships that alter, or even transform, the original problem or opportunity" (Lee Marks, 2007; Berzin et al., 2015). In relation to this, some scholars have suggested that this type of innovation is usually more complex and more aggressive than conventional business innovation (Hall & Vredenburg, 2003; Lettice & Parekh, 2010). When looking at the MNC as the unit of study for social innovation, the distinction between social and business innovation needs attention. The term 'innovation' in the other half of the word social innovation, implies that social innovations are both social and *innovative* in nature. In both social and business innovation, the term innovation contains the idea of a *novel solution* (e.g. ideas, concepts, products/services, organizations, practices, frameworks and norms, etc.). Although the definition of innovation is broad, the concept of novelty is inherent in the definition of innovation (cf. Schumpeter, 1934; 1939; 1943). However, the difference between social and business innovation lies in its contribution to performance. Past studies have shown that novel business innovations are important success factors when it comes to a firm's market share, revenue and profit (e.g., Loch et al., 1996; Chan et al., 1998). Conversely, social innovations meet a social need and have a primary *social value added* which implies more or less ignoring the idea of private- and/or individual benefits (Holmström Lind et al., 2018). It has also been argued that social innovations are foremost non-material and that the immateriality of social innovation (Howaldt & Schwartz, 2010) relates to the fact that the "material outcomes" are more or less by-products of the social innovation process and an effect of the institutionalization of social practices (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Holmström Lind et al., 2018).

2.1 Disentangling related concepts

There are a variety of labels and concepts that relate closely to social innovation, such as social entrepreneurship, social enterprise, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and corporate social innovation. Social innovation, social entrepreneurship, and social enterprises are interrelated but not interchangeable concepts. A policy review for social innovation conducted by the European Commission states that "social innovation should be recognized as a particular mode of action and social change. It must be distinguished from other forms of action or similar notions such as social entrepreneurship or social economy" (European Commission, 2013). *Social entrepreneurship* refers to the activities of individuals and groups (social entrepreneurs) who identify gaps in the social system as an opportunity to serve groups who are marginalized and aim to address these needs in 'entrepreneurial' ways. The terms social entrepreneur and social entrepreneurship were first used 1953 in the literature by Bowen in his book "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman". Social entrepreneurship is not necessarily innovative, but it can be a means of innovation (Osburg & Schmidpeter, 2013).

The term s*ocial enterprise* (social business) came into use in the 1960s and refers to a business organization that exists to fulfil some goal or mission explicitly related to society and whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose or into a community. Hence, social entrepreneurship refers to the activities of individuals and groups (social entrepreneurs) who identify gaps in the social system as an opportunity to serve groups who are marginalized in different ways and aim to address those gaps in 'entrepreneurial' ways (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum & Shulman, 2009). Social enterprises refer to organizations that aim toward a social mission by means of commercial activities (which may be non-profit or for-profit). Hence, social innovation is about "the broader change in society to which the particular social enterprise or the social entrepreneur can contribute" (Weber, 2012, p. 411).

Another closely related concept is *corporate social responsibility* (CSR). According to the definition of EU (2010), CSR is "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society." CSR has a history of over half a century, and has long been revolved around business ethics in business practice. Over time, the concept has been broadened to incorporate a voluntary managerial approach to sustainable development. Although some scholars (Mulgan, 2006; Hanke & Stark, 2009; Harazin & Kosi; 2013) argue that firms, in the implementation of their strategic CSR, often develop innovations that fit the definition of social innovation as they entail the creation of "new market spaces, products and services or processes driven by social, environmental or sustainability issues" (Keeble et al., 2005). However, innovation has never been an integral part of CSR (Osburg & Schmidpeter, 2013) and more often refers to activities whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.

A very closely related concept is *corporate social innovation* (CSI) which is argued to constitute a bridge between business innovation and social innovation (Varadarajan & Kaul, 2018). CSI uses market-based solutions in the interest of creating possibilities for profitable business, while handling social demands and ecological constraints. CSI often refers to a kind of strategic tool (Kanter, 1999; Tham, 2010; Googins, 2013; Esen & Maden-Eiyusta, 2019) that corporations use to align economic goals with social benefits. Already in the early 1980s, Drucker (1984) emphasized the intention of corporations to engage in innovative practices to transform social problems into an economic opportunity. The concept of CSI can be traced to

Kanter (1999) who stressed the importance of firms to combine the exploitation of business opportunities with the need to create social change. Hence, when social innovation is integrated more directly in the business strategy of MNCs, it is referred to as corporate social innovation (cf. Herrera, 2015; 2016). This has been defined as a strategy that “combines the unique assets of the corporation with the assets of other sectors’ assets to co-create solutions to complex social, economic, and environmental issues” CSI (Mirvis & Googins, 2017, p. 2). According to Osburg (2013) CSI could be seen as the result of that corporations are under pressure to integrate social innovation into their innovation process and, thereby, into their core business operations (Osburg, 2013).

Some other terms that have been used in the literature emphasizing the idea of for-profit firms investing in innovation activities that benefit both the firm and the society, similarly to the concept of CSI are *innovations for shared valu*e (cf. Pfitzer, Bockstette, & Stamp, 2013; Porter & Kramer, 2011) and *doing well by doing good* (DWDG) innovations (Varadarajan & Kaul, 2018). Much of the recent research on CSI refers to the idea of “shared value creation” by Porter and Kramer (2001, p. 67), which they explain as the engagement of (large) corporations in “policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the social and economic conditions in the communities in which it operates.” Similarly to this, Varadarajan & Kaul (2018) argue that, while the benefit of a social innovation accrues primarily to the society, the aim with DWDG innovation is to yield benefits to both society and the for-profit firm. Here, the “*twin objective*s” of benefits (e.g. to both society and the firm) is what distinguishes both CSI and DWDG from social innovations (Varadarajan & Kaul, 2018).

With regard to other closely related innovation concepts such as responsible innovation, sustainable innovation, and inclusive innovation, to mention a few, it is revealed that the concept of *responsible innovation* refers to the notion that innovation has not been all that responsible and the negative impact of innovations on individuals, societies and eco-systems has been largely neglected in favour of economic growth and shareholder value. The idea of responsible innovation is that new products, processes and systems of production should not harm the health of consumers and the general public. The concept of responsible innovation is to be understood as an "approach" towards innovation in which social and ethical aspects are explicitly taken into account (European Commission, 2011) and contains elements of economic-, socio-cultural-, and environmental aspects (Blok & Lemmens, 2015). A key characteristics of responsible innovation is stakeholder engagement where it is expected that cross-sector partnerships with multiple stakeholders will lead to innovative and responsible innovation (Koops et al., 2015).

S*ustainability innovation* is about defining economic development as the creation of private and social wealth to ultimately eliminate harmful impacts on ecological systems, human health, and communities. At the organizational level, the term *sustainability innovation* applies to product/service and process design as well as company strategy. There is no real conceptual consensus regarding sustainable innovation (Boons & Lüdeke-Freund, 2013; Trifilova et al., 2013) and a myriad of terms have been used interchangeably and synonymously with the term "sustainable innovation" such as environmental innovation, green innovation, and eco-innovation (cf. Hansen et al., 2009; Schiederig et al., 2012). However, it has been argued that sustainable innovation goes beyond eco-innovation or green innovation as it also incorporates the social dimension (Boons et al., 2013; Schiederig et al., 2012), but in relation to social innovation social benefits are not the main priority in sustainable innovation rather is seen as an important bi-product of the innovation.

Another term that has been interchangeably and synonymously used with the term social innovation is *inclusive innovation*, which relates to the means by which new goods and services are developed for and/or by those who have been excluded from the development mainstream; particularly the billions living on lowest incomes. Inclusive innovation can lead to improved social outcomes but social innovation does not necessarily give rise to an inclusion of citizens of the margin. On a policy level, the EU has criticized social innovations for not putting an active social inclusion high on the agenda (cf. Solidar, 2012). The similarities and differences of these concepts are summarized and synthesized in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

3. Review approach and methodology

A systematic literature review process involves "systematic data collection procedures, descriptive and qualitative data analysis techniques and theoretically grounded synthesis" (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010, p. 1157). According to Crossan and Apaydin (2010, p. 1156) some of the methods include "employing a panel of experts to identify relevant articles; using knowledge of the existing literature to select articles; and searching various databases using keywords." This method was chosen to amalgamate a very fragmented research topic, where social innovation can involve various research areas such as microfinance, social enterprise, public and private sector. Another reason is to remove the subjectivity of data collection by using a predefined selection algorithm in databases.

3.1 Data collection

The initial method employed in this literature review is based on Tranfield et al., (2003) three-stage procedure: planning, execution and reporting. In the planning phase, we identified the key data sources. Our initial objective was rather broad, so the first stage of the literature review included searching the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) at the ISI Web of Science (WoS), to retrieve citation data and compile our database. According to Thomson Reuters (which publishes SSCI), “every journal included in Social Sciences Citation Index has met the high standards of an objective evaluation process” (van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016, p. 1925). This has the advantage that it filters out any bibliographic data from less reputable journals of which the impact on the scientific discourse is called into question, thus preserving data integrity. Despite the SSCI’s broad coverage of the literature, we found that the WoS did not include all the relevant journals in the field of social innovation. To check this, we performed an additional, identical query in Scopus, which is Elsevier’s abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature in the fields of science, technology, medicine, social sciences, and arts and humanities.

Our search was made using the keyword search algorithm ‘social innovation’ and its derivatives (i.e. TS=social innovation*) in title, abstract and keywords. We limited our sources to articles from peer-reviewed journals written in English, since they encompass validated knowledge and tend to have more impact on field’s development (Podsakoff et al., 2005; Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). Therefore, our data set does not cover works published in books, magazines, reports, working papers and other non-refereed sources nor conference proceedings. Hence, no “grey-literature” was included in the search. The search was conducted in December 2017 resulting in 607 hits from World of Science (WoS) and 909 hits from Scopus. After manually comparing these results, we confirmed that the 607 hits in WoS were also included in Scopus. From 909 Scopus articles, we found that the first article explicitly dealing with “social innovation(s)” was published in 1966. Hence, these articles were published during a time-span between 1966 and 2017. The timeline shows (see Table 2) that the research in “social innovation(s)” has enlarged over the last ten years and shows an upward trend from 2007. In fact, 78 % of the articles have been published within the last 10 years (see Table 3).

From the 909 articles, the search area were limited further to subject areas, that included "Social Science" "Business, Management & Accounting" "Economics, Econometrics & Finance" yielding a refined list of 724 articles.

Insert Table 2-3 about here

Since the objective of our research was to map out the literature covering MNCs' involvement in social innovation, the second stage of the selection included scanning for the following keywords: "business"; "enterprise(s)"; "corporation(s)" and/or "firm(s)" by manually reading the abstracts of the 724 articles. This process was carried out with the understanding that articles in social science that deal with "social innovation(s)" do not necessary include focus on business nor MNCs as main themes of the research - this was an important step to group the publication into articles that address business and its derivatives such as enterprise, firm and so on. The result of the abstract scanning was 144 articles. Out of the 144 articles, 131 peer-reviewed full text articles were accessible. Using these 131 articles, the final stage of compiling a set of publications for a final review was to do an in-depth reading of these 131 articles in order to find articles that are connected to multinational companies/multinational firms/ multinational enterprises/global firms. This was done manually in order to identify the articles where MNCs appeared, despite not being explicitly depicted as such in the text; i.e. among the cases studied. Out of these only 21 articles were found to have an explicit link to both large corporations/multinational corporations and social innovations.

3.2 Data analysis

An analytical review scheme is necessary for systematically evaluating the contribution of a given body of literature (Ginsberg & Venkatraman, 1985). Once the articles are selected, the data analysis may proceed in different ways depending on the objectives of the review. For example, a review aimed at consolidating the results of multiple empirical studies may rely on either qualitative or quantitative analysis of the results. The latter, in the form of meta-analysis, is considered to be superior to the former (Schmidt & Hunter, 2014). Our goal in this review is a comprehensive overview and a conceptual, rather than an empirical, consolidation. Thus, we are methodologically limited to descriptive method in our analysis of the results (cf. Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). After the paper selection procedure, we carefully read the full text of the 21 articles to identify and organize the data according to the three overarching themes mentioned above; e.g. "the role", "the motivations", and "dilemmas/tensions". A careful process was undertaken to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data collected as suggested by e.g. Nolan and Garavan (2016). Each co-author read the papers independently and codified the data manually in her/his database. After that, the coding was discussed and compared between the authors and organized and synthesized in one common database. Given the research questions, the three main themes formed the general platform for our further analyses, where in the next step, we followed Gioia et al's (2013) method of forming first- and second order coding categories. These were formed inductively from the data provided in the selected articles.

4. Results of the review

This section offers a descriptive analysis of the journal articles that aligned with our criteria through the digital search process and subsequent manual review. Given that very few articles that had the dual foci of MNCs and social innovation, we have not assigned any ranking or hierarchy based on citations. Rather, we grouped them thematically to investigate their alignment with the three main themes and to identify areas for further study.

Of the 21 articles in the consideration set, as much as 71 per cent are empirical papers based on qualitative case studies, narratives, or anecdotal case evidence. Among the empirical papers, only one article was quantitative. 29 per cent consisted of conceptual papers with a particular emphasis on theory building (see Table 4). The level of analysis of the articles were mostly organizational (76 per cent), 14 per cent were individual level and 10 per cent looked at both organizational and individual level.

Table 4 to be inserted here

The main finding has no doubt been the fact that there is a lack of studies covering the role of MNC in social innovation projects. Despite the subsequent search, we were only able to gather a small set of articles of which none were from top-tier journals. Furthermore, we became aware that social innovation was rather covered as peripheral subject matter and not explicitly studied for its own innovation process. In the final set of articles, the MNCs were mostly used as empirical cases without any explicit in-depth analysis of the MNC and its behavior, with some exceptions (Kanter, 1999; Varadarajan, 2014; Herrera, 2015; 2016; Salim et al., 2015; Maak et al., 2016; Mirvis et al., 2016) (See Table 5).

Table 5 to be inserted

In the following section, the findings from the literature review of the 21 articles are discussed to systematize and to draw some recommendations and implications for future research. The findings of the paper is presented according to the main three issues; *the role* of MNCs in social innovation, *the motivation* for MNC involvement in social innovations, and specific *tensions* with regard to MNC involvement in social innovation.

4.1 The role of MNCs in social innovation

From the literature review, the role of MNCs in these projects and processes can be broadly categorized as being of a '*transactional*', *"bridging"* or '*transformational*' nature. This relates to the categorization of different types of social innovations mentioned in the literature, where, according to Austin (2000), the 'issue orientation' of social innovation projects can be viewed in terms of whether they are characterized as being short-term- and self-interest oriented, or longer term- and open-ended oriented.

4.1.1 *Transactional role*

A transactional role implies that the MNC is seen as a kind of vendor and the role of the MNC is merely of transactional character (Selsky & Parker, 2010). What characterizes this role is the focus on resource exchange related to specific activities (Raufflet, 2009; Ber & Branzei, 2010; Manning & Roessler, 2014) which can be for example connecting experts and knowledge; and providing resources for scaling up activities. Similar to the study of Austin (2000), this role can be referred to as commercial, in the sense that it is dominated by money-value-resource transactions such as within a buyer-seller relationship or bilateral resource-exchange relationships and the involvement of the MNC takes place within a rather specific targeted activity frame. Here the MNC is viewed as a stakeholder-among-others and are referred to as a resource provider, financial supporter or funder (Kanter, 1999; Chen & Karwan, 2008; Herrera, 2016; Mirvis et al., 2016). It is however evident that of the MNCs discussed and presented in these articles, only a few of them display a purely transactional role.

4.1.2 *Bridging role*

From the review, it is revealed that the role and participation of MNCs can also be described by their ability to mobilize knowledge and competencies as well as people and actors (e.g.

stakeholders). This implies a ‘bridging role’ focused on linking competencies and actors together. This can be viewed in relation to the concept of bridging (Brown, 1991) and strategic bridging (Westley & Vredenburg, 1991) from which the role of an MNC can be viewed as a bridge between different stakeholders and cross-sector actors. From the reasoning of Brown (1991), bridging organizations are agencies that “span the gaps among diverse constituencies to work on development problems”. This role has been primarily ascribed to non-governmental voluntary organizations and Brown (1991) does not envisage the possibility of a private firm spanning these constituencies as a bridge.

Strategic bridging differs from other forms of collaboration (Westley & Vredenburg, 1991) and can be viewed as a solution to a problem where other parties to the collaboration are unable to negotiate directly due to tradition, logistical problems or an imbalance of resources and expertise of the collaborators (Gray, 1989). From a practitioners view (e.g. corporations) this may imply an active stakeholder engagement where MNCs proactively engage in connecting different stakeholders and initiate a variety of stakeholder-specific programs (Hererra, 2015), cross-sector partnering arrangements (Ber & Branzei, 2010; Hererra, 2016) and bringing together diverse constituencies (Kanter, 1999). According to Selsky and Parker (2010) social innovations can be viewed as meta-problems, which require a complex set of skills, competencies and resources. MNCs adopting a bridging role are often viewed as important (cross-sector) partner with the ability to ‘mobilize’ knowledge, competences and bringing actors together, during specific social innovation projects when necessary (Raufflet, 2009; Altuna et al., 2015). A bridging role is based on the MNCs core competencies- and capabilities as well as their strategic resources, in particular their embeddedness in a diverse set of relationships and networks (e.g. Gulati et al, 2000). In comparison to a transactional role, a bridging role implies a more active participation where the MNC connects actors, resources and competencies rather than just provide them when necessary.

4.1.3 Transformational role

From the way the MNCs were presented in these selected articles, we could also distinguish MNCs adopting a 'transformational role' in the projects (Kanter, 1999). What becomes evident is the strong social value orientation (Salim Saji & Ellingstad, 2016), a commitment to change (Kanter, 1999) and a community-based issue orientation (Kanter, 1999; Manning & Roessler, 2014). MNCs characterized as having a transformational role are referred to as lead actors (catalytic leaders, collaborative leaders) or change agents. Hence, this role implies a high degree of pro-activeness where the MNCs rather than being a passive provider or interconnector, rather often takes on a role as initiative-taker to a certain social innovation project with a high degree of involvement.

It can be noted that the role of MNCs in social innovation projects seems closely related to the nature of their relationships with the identified main actors of the project (e.g. governments, NGOs or others) and also the stage of the project is, e.g. early- or later phase. It is also evident that these roles are not mutually exclusive, rather the MNCs often carry more than one of these roles and the roles are shifting. From the literature review, we identified that role calibrations (see also Austin, 2000) take place continuously during these projects and a special feature of MNCs' participation in social innovation is thus the occurrence of "*shifting roles*" in the projects (see Le Ber & Branzei, 2010a). Le Ber and Branzei (2010a) show that the partners in a social innovation project learn to take on new roles in response to the need to the counterparts. The authors state that role (re)calibrations are seen as drivers of success (e.g. of the social innovation project). Hence from a relational perspective, the role of large corporations in specific social innovation projects can be characterized as flexible and dynamic and involve an active engagement and relational and emotional attachment (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010a).

Insert Table 6 about here

4.2 The motivations for MNC involvement in social innovation

Through this review, we found that the motivations behind large corporations' (e.g. MNCs) involvement in social innovation projects could be represented in three categories: *normative*, *intrinsic* and *strategic*. Further, several examples presented through the reviewed articles help to illustrate these categories.

4.2.1 *Normative motivation*

In the neo-classical decision-making model, the importance of information-processing means- and schemes are emphasized. Individuals (as well as organizations) are assumed to have goals and thus set out to collect and interpret information about alternative means to serve these goals. On the contrary, from a normative perspective choices involve no or very little information processing, but are largely drawn on affective involvement and normative commitments (Etzioni, 1988). Regarding social innovation projects, it is evident that the rhetoric behind MNCs participation is of a normative orientation, where the companies 'ought to be' involved (Selsky & Parker, 2010; Varadarajan, 2014; Maak et al., 2016). This *normative motivation* often stems from managers becoming more "alert to relevant issues by external, institutional-field pressures from interest groups and public opinion" (Selsky & Parker, 2010, p. 27). This is addressed by the literature on the drivers of CSR (cf. Dummet, 2006; Ditlev-Simonsen & Midttun, 2011) and corporate sustainability strategies (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). In much of the CSR literature, this normative orientation is a 'reactive behavior' to expectations and pressures and studies have shown that CSR is often motivated by moral (towards stakeholders) and obligatory (e.g. regulatory and legal drivers) factors in addition to foreseen economic benefits. Raufflet (2009) gives an example of the education system in South Africa which during the time period was highly volatile, unequal and of low quality. Foreign corporations in that country were at that time forced to employ certain proportions of groups, which often held very low levels of education. The business sector reportedly recognized the issues but were not willing to enhance the public education system due to the inherent lack of structure. Instead, some firms came across a grass-root initiative by the Community Individual Development Association (CIDA) for educating underprivileged populations in rural areas. The involvement of a number of large organisations and the accompanying resource allocation and support, aided the development of these higher education programs, while the corporations simultaneously gained accreditation as supporters in the development of the lives of the students and their communities, as well as the business world and South Africa. According to Selsky and Parker (2010, p. 22) very often this normative rhetoric unfortunately only results in short-term ‘‘do-good’’ ameliorations of symptoms that for the most part do not challenge, let alone change, prevailing institutional and governance arrangements that signify the unequal societal distribution of power”.

4.2.2. Intrinsic motivation

We find that the involvement of large corporations (e.g. MNCs) in social innovation can be closely related to *intrinsic motivation*. Intrinsic motivation is commonly defined as the driving forces of behaviour that individuals deem inherent to the activities undertaken – namely, the activities themselves being interesting, enjoyable, and meaningful. This contrasts to non-intrinsic forces in terms of incentives or pressures (e.g., rewards or deadlines) external to the activities. Intrinsic motivation is based in people’s inherent tendency to be proactive, to interact with the world in an attempt to have an effect and to feel a sense of accomplishment. In Maak et al. (2016) and Hanke and Stark (2009) the *value orientation* of corporate leaders rather than the leadership style as such is emphasized. Maak et al. (2016) suggest that leaders having an 'other-orientation' (e.g., alleviate others' suffering) are better suited to engage in social innovation initiatives. This follows from the position that CEOs are influential actors in firms, and that firms are influential in societies and thus CEOs view their own moral obligations to society. The way a CEO behaves may be influenced by their own value system, but it is likely influenced by other stakeholders (i.e. shareholders, partner-organisations, etc.) and the context of the company's business. Jiang and Thagard (2014) emphasize internal emotional curiosity as one feature driving (corporate) social innovation. While the social entrepreneur may be motivated by "fulfilment, compassion, and achievement", organisations have been been studied for their social engagement from the perspective of "innovation, sustainability and financial survival" (Berzin, et al., 2015).

In Salim Saji and Ellingstad (2016), this value orientation is approached in terms of the occurrence and importance of social intrapreneurship in corporations. Bouchard and Basso (2011) define social intrapreneurship as an entrepreneurial behaviour exhibited by employees within an organization. In 1985, Pinchot coined the term intrapreneur as an employee that does for corporation innovation what an entrepreneur does for his/her start-up. Many leaders see an "inextricable link" between innovations and business, not least, that responding to social needs has opened new ways of thinking and responding to market demand, which can help a firm develop new or increase revenue streams (Berzin et al., 2015). Others see the potential of reusing profits in achieving social goals or impact, and they took cue from corporations, who were already working in that same arena. Thus, community driven relationships, specifically a desire to remain relevant and involved in their respective surroundings ("close relationships") and through that desire firms see their own capacity to satisfy social needs.

4.2.3 *Strategic motivation*

In the literature review, it is revealed that a *strategic motivation* lies behind many of the efforts to engage in social innovation projects for large-scale companies (Kanter, 1999; Ber & Branzei, 2010; Herrera, 2015; 2016; Mirvis et al., 2016; Salim Saji & Ellingstad, 2016). Strategic intent is to be viewed as more or less a prerequisite for many large companies to involve themselves in social innovation (cf. Kanter. 1999; Herrera, 2015; Mirvis et al., 2016). However, from the review it is revealed that the strategic alignment can be either competence-based, relationship-based or opportunity based, or a combination of these. This implies that the involvement of corporations in these non-profit activities are based on their ability to; explore and exploit core competencies and capabilities, use their existing strategic networks and relationships in the process, or as a source for opportunity seeking and exploitation.

Mirvis et al. (2016), highlight more overtly the challenges of MNCs: "First, the past three decades have produced little significant organic growth and firms have focused on cost cutting, outsourcing, and industry consolidation mergers to meet profit targets. Second, many MNCs face increased public and stakeholder expectations to take a larger role in addressing troubling social, economic, and environmental issues (Mirvis et al., 2016, p. 5014)". Innovation thus becomes a problem solving strategy where MNCs to respond to their own growth needs. While much of the "addressing" remains in the universe of philanthropy, firms that attempt to develop CSI as a form of innovating structure through new models of supply chain, marketing and even customer profile (e.g. BOP). In other words, some companies, in the pursuit of solving their own problems, get interested by society's problems. Such programs, unlike corporate CSR, aim to permeate a firm's R&D and span their full range of developmental assets (Mirvis et al., 2016).

Although based on rather anecdotal evidence, Herrera (2015) argue that embedding and integrating the social innovation in the corporate strategy. i.e. a strategic alignment with regard to the general strategic consideration of the corporation, can ensure not only a purpose of social responsibility but also and identification of business opportunities. She shows that significant (corporate) social innovations can result from integrating environmental and social issues into their corporate strategy. e.g. a strategic intent (Herrera 2015, p. 1472). Similarly, Salim Saji and Ellingstad (2016), investigating the MNC Hewlett Packard's aim to build a social innovation model, hold that a social cause may serve as the trigger for a social innovation project, but strongly emphasize the strategic dialogues and actions taken by those involved. Following a process with the trigger point of social innovation as a public call on a certain social issue seeking attention from the business sector, they continue to the second step where actors enter partnerships which result in a social innovation outcome. One of their main points concerns the importance of *"the requirement of a strategic orientation among the partners, sharing a clear mission, facts about the social issue, identifying the social problem and its dynamics clearly, identifying the strengths of each partner and leveraging partner core competencies related to their business in solving the social problem"* (Salim, Saji & Ellingstad, 2016, p. 264). They conclude that the need for strategic dialogue is essential for MNCs involvement in social innovation, where important factors appear to be e.g. collaboration, enthusiasm, strategic fit, exploring for the fit, analysing the existing strengths of the organization in terms of fit.

Another example (Altuna et al., 2015) is that of a leading Italian bank's involvement in social innovation through a corporate initiative called the "Bank and Society Laboratory". Through this, several projects were developed and the author highlights the Laboratory's 'flat' hierarchy and informality with regard to decision-making, which are in strong opposition to the highly structured processes in a traditional regulated banking environment. While the Laboratory's projects typically addressed unaddressed niche clients such as new citizens, students, non-profits, and so on, several evolved into the formal activities of other departments in that bank. In sum, many of these social innovations resemble ‘catalytic innovations’ (Christensen et al., 2006) as they surpass the status quo by providing good enough solutions to inadequately addressed social problems. The case provided by Altuna et al., (2015) provides evidence that there is a sacrifice of an immediate outspoken profit for the creation of social value and, above all, for the testing of new products for unknown customer segments. Thus, social innovations are a way for firms to break from some conventions and constraints to investigate and experiment with ways to capture new revenue streams.

4.3 Tensions linked to MNC involvement in social innovation

It is evident from the review that collaborations across the different sectors of society play a central role when MNCs engage in social innovation endeavours. The basic logic behind the cross-sector collaborations in social innovations can be described in terms of the different sets of resources held by the divergent organizations. While for instance MNCs hold technological knowledge and vast resources, organizations in the public and civil society sectors have strong abilities in societal needs and alike, that MNCs in turn lack. Despite the need and importance of collaborations in the process of developing social innovations, the same collaborations inherently carry an internal tension given the large differences between the organizations in question. The issue of high partner dissimilarity is an issue that is often mentioned in the articles in the consideration set and the occurring tensions are to a large extent linked to the formation and content of the specific cross-sector relationships and networks surrounding the projects. These tensions are discussed from different angles in the reviewed articles, of which we can identify some common denominators regarding the sources and plausible handling of these tensions. Below follows, a presentation of the most common issues distilled from the review.

4.3.1 Competing institutional logics

Manning and Roessler (2014) argue that cross-sector collaborations are faced with a higher level of institutional complexity in comparison to traditional business-to-business relationships. They describe how cultural and institutional distances between collaborators from different sectors – with different value systems - can act as a hurdle in their capability of recognizing opportunities for collaborations. The tension related to MNCs and their collaborators from different sectors has also been described as the problem of competing institutional logics by Le Ber & Branzei (2010). This idea stems from e.g. Thornton (2004, p. 70), who describes institutional logics as "social prescriptions that enable actors to make sense of their situation by providing assumptions and values, usually implicit, about how to interpret organizational reality, what constitutes appropriate behaviour, and how to succeed". In a similar vein, Kanter (1999) argues how the institutional infrastructure of the social sector can be seen as "undeveloped" by business firms, for instance, public schools and inner cities can be interpreted as similar to how firms view and handle emerging markets. The tensions in cross-sector collaborations when interpreted as conflicting institutional logics is thereby based on the idea that due to the highly diverse logics surrounding and applied by the organizations from different sectors, it becomes a challenge to collaborate and find mutual understandings (Altuna et al., 2015; Chen & Karwan, 2008).

4.3.2 Different goals- and value frames

Already in 1999, Kanter states that different from business firms, government and nonprofit organizations are driven by other goals than profitability (Kanter, 1999). Another set of related differences are listed by Le Ber & Branzei (2010b) including organizational identities, missions, structure, and patterns of activity which they state are part of the institutional complexity in cross-sector relations. These differences are connected to the issue of common value creation, central in the social innovation. Le Ber and Branzei (2010b) underscore the differing sets of values being either profit or non-profit seeking in relation to different expectations and different basic identities. They explain the value creation differences of the involved firms, non-profit organisations, and public actors as being "embedded in distinct value logics". Le Ber and Branzei (2010b) emphasize the fact that for-profit and non-profit partners often have opposed and (in their own context) deeply embedded value frames. This may cause what the authors refer to as the "mis-es" of cross-partner collaborations; misunderstanding, misallocation, mismatch of power and mistrust. The authors assume that great differences in expectations and/or identities between for-profit (e.g. large multinationals) and non-profit partners can generate distrust and subsequent failure in cross-sector partnerships engagement in social value creation. Furthermore, a negative attitude towards for-profit firms' motivation from organizations in socially focused sectors, are highlighted by Kanter (1999) as a source for distrust of MNCs involved in social innovation endeavours. In line with this reasoning, Manning and Roessler (2014) also underscore that due to different value systems it is common with a low level of initial trust in these cross-sector collaborations.

4.3.3 Knowledge related tensions

Another set of tensions in cross-sector collaborations related to social innovations in MNCs, identified in this review, concerns knowledge. Firstly, differences in knowledge *about the subject*, i.e. MNCs' lack of expertise in social issues are underlined by Manning and Roessler (2014). In a similar way Mirvis et al. (2016) argue that knowledge about where the main (social) problem resides and the local conditions surrounding the specific issue of concern can create problems for MNCs involvement in social innovation. Here they refer to the lack of the "know-what" in social innovations. Given MNCs' traditional focus on business related issues, their expertise in missions related to societal development is not a natural part of their skillset.

Secondly, another tension that can occur concerns knowledge that is related to the involved organizations' knowledge *about each other*, what Mirvis et al. (2016) refer to the importance of social ties and "know-who". The lack of "cross-sector collaboration experience" is argued as one important source of tension between actors involved in social innovation projects (Manning & Roesssler, 2014). Manning and Roessler (2014) relate their reasoning to the institutional and cultural complexity creating the differences and lack of knowledge about partners from other sectors, leading to high uncertainty in the formation of these types of relationships. Hence, according to Herrera (2015) and Mirvis et al. (2016), companies, especially MNCs need to develop an understanding and a capability of how to develop and implement social innovation in a context and culture, which is rather unfamiliar and how to work with cross-partner relationships.

According to Manning & Roessler (2014) the difficulties in developing these knowledge sets could be related to, for instance, time and space. Tensions connected to *time* refers to the nature of the social innovation ventures, i.e. the non-routine character and project-like nature of these projects. This is a hurdle in the building of familiarity and for the development of collaborative capacity, which often takes time. Differences in *space* is instead related to the multinational nature of the MNC and the need for collaboration with specific local entities (e.g. social communities) in social innovation endeavours, increasing the complexity further (Manning & Roessler, 2014). In sum, both the "know-what" and "know-who" are described as sources for tensions in cross-sector collaborations in social innovation endeavours involving MNCs and organizations from other sectors in society.

4.3.3 Handling the tensions

Several of the articles discuss possible paths for handling the tensions described above. For instance, Le Ber and Branzei (2010a) propose that by an explicit calibration of the roles of the collaborating organizations, success would be enhanced and in turn motivate the participants to further recalibrate their roles. Adding social value creation to the mix, they hold that it may affect the momentum of success, which can enhance social value creation while reducing risk - and propel the crossover from failure to success. Partner complacency is attached to weakening the loop of prior success and role calibration as well as partner disillusionment. The authors state that the higher the participating organizations perceive the value of the social innovation endeavour at hand relative the relational risk in the cross-sector collaborations, the stronger they find the collaborators' motivation for getting involved in the project (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010a). They also discuss how the diverse integrands of the partnerships can handle their frame fusion through coordination on various levels (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010b).

Manning and Roessler (2014, p. 542) instead point to "the importance of intermediaries in enacting collaborative opportunities within ambiguous environmental contexts" when discussing how to handle the tensions arising from the inherent differences of the collaborating organizations from different sectors. These change agents are expected to translate the differences present in the cross-sector collaborations into opportunities. They differentiate between internal and external change agents. The internal agents are expected to create novel agendas for social innovation, while the external ones are described as to enhance the chances of reaching *beyond* singular projects and create more long-term collaborations. Kanter (1999) also discusses possible paths to overcome the inherent differences causing tensions: clear business agendas, partners committed to change, investment from both sides, strong connection to the user community, connections to other community organizations, and long-term engagement in order to sustain and reproduce the results. Salim Saji and Ellingstad (2016) on the other hand conclude that the need for strategic dialogue is central in successful social innovation projects when highlighting the importance of collaboration. Explicit role calibrations, multi-level coordination, intermediaries as change agents, clarity, long-term commitment, goal alignment, dialogue are hereby some of the key tools identified in the considered articles for handling the tensions in the cross-sector collaborations.

Hence, in sum, in the present review we find that there are large differences causing tensions between the organizations involved in the necessary cross-sector collaborations, but also several tools are presented as basis for relational coordination mechanisms.

5. Discussion

This systematic literature review's main contribution has undoubtedly been revealing the lack of studies concerning social innovations in MNCs. In other words, with the few articles found in this systematic review, we identify a huge absence of studies that explicitly link the MNC to social innovation. Further, the few empirical articles that we found were qualitative in method or anecdotal in example of case study – no substantial quantitative studies were found.

At the same time, it is an area of increasing importance in the global society where MNCs are expected to be part of solving global issues, such as those outlined by the UN's Social Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). One reason that scholars may have avoided this topic relates to the complexity to find consensus of the definition of "social innovation". Another reason could simply be the reluctance of MNC scholars to deviate from traditional research logics and theories. Nevertheless, unmistakably MNCs have been pinpointed as champions in innovations since long. However, there are certain specifics when it comes to social innovations that logically need to be taken into account to create and understand those processes, the motives behind them and the challenges faced by firms engaging in them. As such, we cannot rely merely on our traditional understanding of business innovation processes in MNCs. Likewise, there are also specifics concerning MNCs as an organizational form, which are very divergent from, for instance, discussions of social entrepreneurship that are highly present in the studies on social innovations. For instance, issues in terms of the existing business context that MNCs are part of and those, which may be hard to diverge from, or the incrementalism of the innovations in MNCs as opposed to perhaps the more radical, “first of their kind” expected nature of social innovations. Hence, our existing knowledge on innovation processes in MNCs tells us there are several issues to consider when studying MNCs' participation in social innovations. However, few of these are brought up in this literature review. With this is mind we have attempted to bring together, a very limited yet rather heterogeneous body of literature to establish its status, main themes and areas of focus to date.

5.1 Implications and limitations

As such, we found that the role of MNCs in social innovations could be classified into a transactional-, a bridging- and a transformational role. These roles implies some differences concerning the degree of involvement of the MNCs such as being a more passive resource provider, a bridging partner, or a proactive initiative-taker and change-maker, respectively. In addition, what is notable is that these roles are not static, rather they are calibrated as the social innovation projects evolve. The occurrence of ‘switching roles’ is evident as role re-definitions seem to be a continuous activity taking place in these projects. With regard to what motivates and drives the MNCs, we find that the MNCs' involvement in social innovation projects is closely linked to a strategic intent. This does not refer to any outspoken profit-or performance benefits, but rather the strategic fit- or closeness to, for instance, core competencies and activities. Regarding tensions and challenges of MNCs in social innovation projects, it can be concluded that the identified tensions and challenges for MNCs with regard to their involvement in social innovation projects revolves to a large extent around the cross-sector collaborations typical for these projects. These tensions can be traced to, for instance, a high level of institutional complexity as these projects are often carried out with actors defined by rather different institutional logics and path dependencies.

It is also evident that the extent to which the actors in the project are embedded in their own value logics, e.g. the claimed value or outcome of the project, can give rise to tensions and conflicts amongst the actors in these projects. One theme that emerges from this review is the issue of 'multiple logics'. Competing institutional logics has been extensively discussed in the literature (e.g. Thornton and Ocasio, 2018) but more in the light of individual organisations rather than across multiple organisations and collaborative partnerships. A social innovation project blurs the boundaries between private- public and non-profit sector organisations and can therefore be seen as a hybrid organisational form that involves multiple logics creating both tensions and opportunities. From this review, it becomes evident that although social innovation at its core is based on an aim to generate primarily social value, over time the social innovation projects which MNCs are involved in can be characterized as a collaborative effort between actors from different sectors. Thus becoming more alike and aligned with the idea of "hybrid organizations" which has been broadly described as "heterogeneous arrangements, characterized by mixtures of pure and incongruous origins, (ideal)types, cultures, coordination mechanisms, rationalities, or action logics" (Brandsen, van de Donk, & Putters, 2005, p. 750). This implies an organisation that is neither public nor private, but public and private; that is neither non-profit, nor for-profit, but can be both; and that can be both formal and informal in nature (cf. Schmitz & Glänzel, 2016). This cross-sector combination of logics, values and rationalities implies that an engagement in social innovation is accompanied with a need to and a capability of handling these differences and the underlying value- and identity orientations (cf. Wickert, Vaccario & Cornelissen, 2017).

From a theoretical point of view, this literature review puts attention to the importance of moving beyond the traditional view of the MNC as an economic or political actor (for an overview see Forsgren, 2017) towards a view of the MNC as a social institution where it is not only concerned with generating profits but is highly interested in the creation of social value (cf. Sinkovics, Sinkovics, and Yamin, 2014). In his book “Theories of the multinational firm” Forsgren (2017) points out that traditional economic theories nor the more recent behavioural based theories of the MNC, offers any explanation to the role of MNC in society. Hence, future empirical research into social innovation from an MNC perspective warrants greater investigation given the need to develop new insights into the growth of MNCs into a new breed of firms that pursue social objectives other than those included in the firms’ CSR program and philantrophic efforts (cf. Zanfei, 2012). In addition, through the application of a rigorous and transparent review method followed by a synthesis, we have been able to identify a number of key dimensions and aspects that will increase our understanding of the MNCs involvement in social innovation activities. However, due to the rather anecdotal examples of MNCs involvement in social innovation present in much of the literature in general and in this consideration set in particular, we believe that there is a need to conduct large-scale studies taking the MNC as the unit of analysis.

Like most research, this review is not free of limitations. Its limitations reside first of all in the very few number of articles found for the final review. Most research and definitions of social innovation have been introduced by people who try to solve social problems. Consequently much of the publications on this topic have been mostly practice-oriented (Choi & Majumdar, 2014). Despite this, in this systematic review we decided not to include the vast amount of existing “grey literature”, that is research published outside the more traditional academic publishing channels including non-peer reviewed articles, conference proceedings newspapers and policy documents, to mention a few. We are aware of that by including research published in, for example, the Stanford Social Innovation Review would probably have added a number of studies to the review. However, the academic quality of these articles can be questionable.

Second, due to the blurriness of the concept of social innovation and the fact that the use of the concept in the articles in our consideration set differ slightly, a more fine-grained analysis could perhaps have been done by distinguishing between the different types of social innovations in terms of whether they imply a slight-, significant-, or radical/transformative change. One article in our consideration set (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010a) put forward the importance of distinguishing between e.g. sustaining and catalytic social innovation (cf. Christensen et al., 2006) where the goal of catalytic innovation is systemic social change whereas sustaining innovations provide better quality or additional functionality. These types of (social) innovations can be incremental or radical innovations (cf. Tushman & Smith, 2004). However, based on the rather poor descriptions of the social innovation projects in the articles, we were not able to perform such task.

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Tables and Figures to be inserted:

Table 1. Conceptual differentiation

Concepts	Social value	Business value	Innovation	Collective process (actor involvement)
Business innovation	no	yes	yes	no
Social innovation	yes	no	yes	yes
Social entrepreneurship	yes	not primarily but most likely	rather means of innovation	most likely but not necessarily
Corporate social innovation	yes	yes	not necessarily	yes
Corporate social responsibility	yes	yes	not necessarily	not necessarily
Responsible innovation	Not primarily. focus on solving 'grand challenges'	yes	technological innovations primary focus	Shareholder engagement in focus
Sustainable innovation	yes, but not primary focus	yes, strong focus	yes	not necessarily
Inclusive innovation	socio-economic inclusion in focus	yes	Mainly incremental innovation	most likely

Table 2. 909 articles with search words “social innovation” & “social innovations” in title, abstract & key words limited to 1966-2017, Article & English

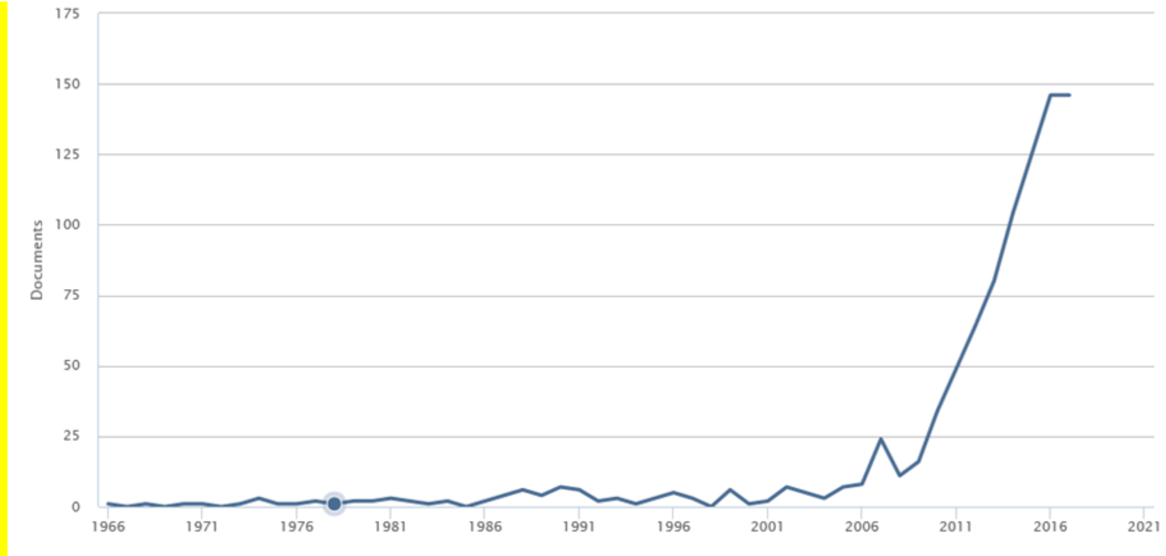

Table 3. Number of articles per year from 2007-2017

Year	Number of Articles
2017	146
2016	146
2015	125
2014	104
2013	80
2012	64
2011	49
2010	34
2009	16
2008	11
2007	24

Table 4. Identified articles

Name of Journal	**Number of articles located (n=21)**
Journal of Business Ethics	5
Journal of Business Research	4
Technological Forecasting and Social Change	2
Business and Society	1
Sustainable Development	1
Technovation	1
Journal of Management Studies	1
Voluntas	1
Creativity Research Journal	1
Leadership and Organisational Development Journal	1
Journal of International Marketing	1
International Journal of Productivity and Performance	1
Harvard Business Review	1

Table 5. MNC level of presence in the article contents

MNC part of the main argument	8
MNC as main case, but not theoretically in focus (not discussed in terms of being an MNC)	9
MNC among the cases	4

Table 6. Identified roles of MNCs in social innovation projects

	Transactional role	**Bridging role**	**Transformational role**
Role characteristics	Provider -resource provider -supporter/sponsor -funder	Mobilizer, connector - of knowledge exchange - of actors and stakeholders	Problem solver innovator Initiative-taker
View of the MNC	Stakeholder among others	Bridging partner	Change agent
Corporate orientation	Activity-based	Competence-based	Systemic-change based