Corporate Citizenship and New Governance

The Political Role of Corporations
The contributions to this book document an international conference “Corporate Citizenship and New Governance – The Political Role of Corporative Actors in Societal Rule-Setting Processes” that took place in Wittenberg, Germany from November 26–28, 2009. The interdisciplinary meeting of experts was organized as the 12th Annual Conference of the Working Group for Business Ethics and Business Culture of the German Philosophical Association by the Working Group in cooperation with the Chair of Economic Ethics at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.

The contributions documented here address two challenges that are of major importance both for the theory and practice of business behavior.

The first challenge highlights the societal role and, in particular, the self-understanding of business firms within a market economy. In an increasingly dynamic business environment, especially multi-national companies are more and more expected to take on a higher degree of social responsibility for moral issues such as fighting corruption, protecting the environment, curbing climate change, establishing labor standards, coping with child labor and poverty or providing amenities for weak local communities. In business practice, such claims eventually translate into companies contributing to the improvement of the (global, national or local) social order. This is exactly what Corporate Citizenship is all about: the role of companies as political actors in societal rule-setting processes.

The second challenge brings attention to the various kinds of political commitments that corporate actors can make in order to contribute to local, national or even international governance processes. Companies address this challenge by working together with state actors and civil society organizations in order to create a “level playing field” for market competition. In such new forms of governance, business firms participate not only in processes of rule-setting but also in discourses of rule-finding deliberation. And this is what New Governance is all about: the participatory role of businesses in multisectoral alliances that aim at improving the rules of the game.

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