

Business & Society

Special Issue Call for Papers

“Stakeholder Engagement:

Opening up Participation, Inclusion, and Democracy”

Guest Editors:

Matthias Wenzel, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany

Hannah Trittin-Ulbrich, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany

Laura Marie Edinger-Schons, University of Mannheim, Germany

Itziar Castelló, Surrey Business School, University of Surrey, UK

Frank de Bakker, IÉSEG School of Management, France

Stakeholder engagement remains an underrepresented and underdeveloped field in business and society research in particular, and management research more generally. Early in the 21st century, at a time when the corporate social responsibility agenda is being pressured by a devastating pandemic, increasing inequalities, and fake-news discourses, stakeholders such as employees, consumers, business partners, activists, and citizens are increasingly engaged in organizational activities such as strategy-making, product development, work coordination, and corporate social responsibility initiatives (e.g., Chesbrough, 2003; Edinger-Schons et al., 2020; Kornberger et al., 2019; Whittington, 2019). In addition, as prior work has shown, stakeholder engagement offers to produce desired outcomes such as creativity and innovation (Wohlgemuth et al., 2019), efficiency and efficacy (Scherer & Vögtlin, 2020), value creation (Harrison et al., 2010; Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Parmar et al., 2010), and a social license to operate (e.g.,

Scherer et al., 2014; Scherer et al., 2015). Yet, mainstream management research continues to reproduce a managerialist bias by implicitly foregrounding organizational elites as decision-makers who act in the best interest of all stakeholders, without challenging the limits of this taken-for-granted assumption (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). In the face of an ever-increasing plethora of tools for engaging stakeholders in organizational processes (Castelló et al., 2016; Trittin et al., 2019; Trittin-Ulbrich et al., 2020) and the need for engaging especially the powerless voices in business and society (Crane, 2013), we need a better understanding of how stakeholder engagement is performed and with what consequences.

Against the background of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1994), stakeholder engagement primarily refers to the process of symbolically or substantively involving stakeholders within organizational activities in which they are interested, or by which they are affected. As Greenwood (2007, p. 315) noted, it is a set of “practices the organization undertakes to involve stakeholders [...] in organizational activities.” In this view, organizations and their representatives open up opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to organizational activities. Conversely, stakeholders may engage themselves as individuals or representatives of societal actors such as nongovernmental organizations. Such forms of stakeholder engagement may be performed, among others, in democratic “governance processes that guide the policies and practices of the firm” (Dawkins, 2015, p. 1) or through activism and social movements (de Bakker et al., 2013; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007) which may affect economic or broader societal outcomes. Hence, in contrast to the more conventionally examined “management” of stakeholders, stakeholder engagement can be initiated, directed, performed, and contested by an organization’s managers, its stakeholders, or both. In this sense, stakeholder engagement can manifest on, and partly even spans individual, organizational, and societal levels of analysis.

Stakeholder engagement has emerged in organizations of various types, ranging from small organizations to large corporations, from private to state-owned organizations or collectives,

from social ventures to profit-oriented business firms, and from locally to globally operating organizations (Stjerne et al., forthcoming; Whittington, 2019). However, stakeholder engagement is far from universal. Its manifestation varies depending on organizational, societal, cultural, technological, and other conditions (Whittington et al., 2011). Importantly, as Whittington et al. (2011, pp. 532–534) highlighted, stakeholder engagement “originated in the liberal democracy of post-war USA; it may be much less relevant to new semi-capitalist economies such as China and Russia [and] vast state-owned enterprises as Gazprom and China Mobile could be powerful counterweights” to stakeholder engagement in the future. These developments demonstrate that stakeholder engagement is neither self-evident nor irreversible: Stakeholder engagement is a precarious accomplishment in response to the contextual specificities at hand (see also Spicer et al., 2004).

One way to unpack the complexity of stakeholder engagement is to focus attention on different dimensions of this process; namely, stakeholder participation, inclusion, and democracy (Matten & Crane, 2005; Quick & Feldman, 2011; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). *Stakeholder participation* relates to provision of input by stakeholders to an organization’s programs, policies, and strategies, e.g., through feedback-seeking, activism, and counter-hegemonic discourses (e.g., Castelló et al., 2016; Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Wohlgemuth et al., 2019). Given its manifold manifestations, stakeholder participation foregrounds “how” questions, such as: How do stakeholders participate and, thus, become engaged in organizational activities? *Stakeholder inclusion* refers to giving voice to stakeholders through the cocreation of an organization’s issues, priorities, and procedures, e.g., by fostering dialogues based on a shared sense of belonging (e.g., Dobusch et al., 2019; Fujimoto et al., 2019; Griffin et al., 2019). These dynamics primarily beg “who” questions, such as: Who is included in organizational activities, and who isn’t? *Stakeholder democracy*, finally, invokes “why” questions, such as: Why do stakeholders partly have the right to be handed some degree of formal decision-making power,

e.g., through direct, consensus, deliberative, or radical democracy (e.g., Crane et al., 2004; Dawkins, 2015; Edinger-Schons et al., 2020; Moriarty, 2014; Scherer & Vögtlin, 2020)?

While these dimensions of stakeholder engagement differ in character, they all foster organizational polyphony: They represent a plurality of voices to which participants in organizational activities ought to devote attention (Castelló et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Trittin & Schoeneborn, 2017). Such polyphony turns stakeholder engagement into a process that is riddled with tensions, contradictions, and conflicts, one that actors performing organizational activities must cope with, or work through, so as to do justice to stakeholders' interests (de Bakker & den Hond, 2008; Freeman et al., 2020; Putnam et al., 2016; Wenzel et al., 2019; Zietsma & Winn, 2008). Furthermore, polyphony creates open-endedness concerning the outcomes that can be achieved through stakeholder engagement (Cooren, 2020; Schultz et al., 2013; Wenzel et al., 2020). That is, through stakeholder engagement, managers cannot be fully certain about realizing their intentions through organizational activities anymore, given that they give up control to varying degrees. These aspects reinforce the complexity of stakeholder engagement (Greenwood, 2007; Phillips et al., 2010), which raises questions about how actors in and around organizations perform stakeholder participation, inclusion, and democracy, and with what consequences.

This special issue seeks to provide answers to these questions. Some sample questions to guide submissions include, but are not limited to:

- What are the mechanisms, practices, tactics, strategies, and forms of organizing through which stakeholder participation, inclusion, and democracy are performed in and around organizations?
- How are different dimensions of stakeholder engagement interrelated?
- How is stakeholder engagement performed over time?

- How do actors cope with or work through the polyphony, tensions, and open-endedness that arise in stakeholder engagement?
- In light of the systematic exclusion of workers from organizational decision-making (Caruana et al., 2020), which stakeholders get engaged in organizational activities, who does not get engaged, and why?
- Which outcomes, both desirable and problematic, both expected and unexpected, both individual, organizational, and societal, does stakeholder engagement produce? Do these outcomes differ for symbolic vs. substantive forms of stakeholder engagement?
- How do national or regional contexts shape the emergence and outcomes of stakeholder engagement? How can multinational corporations harmonize potential conflicts?
- How does stakeholder engagement differ across different types of firms, such as small and medium-sized enterprises vs. multinational corporations or social ventures versus for-profit corporations? Why is this so?
- Which individual, organizational, or societal factors and conditions enable, constrain, or disable effective stakeholder engagement?
- How does stakeholder engagement relate to current topics such as social intrapreneurship, corporate social innovation, collective impact, participatory governance, new forms of organizing, and open strategy?

Types of Submission

The special issue welcomes submissions that unpack the enablers, dynamics, and outcomes of stakeholder engagement in its manifold manifestations and dimensions on any or even across multiple levels of analysis. Given the rather limited attempts to integrate stakeholder participation, inclusion, and democracy, we particularly encourage submissions that examine these concepts in concert. This fascinating area of research invites not only conceptual, but also

empirical work in all of its facets, including qualitative, quantitative, configurational, and experimental research designs, among others.

Submission Process

- The deadline for submissions is **January 31, 2022**. All manuscripts must be uploaded to ScholarOne Manuscripts (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/bas>) between January 1 and January 31, 2022.
- Be sure to specify in the cover letter that the manuscript is for the special issue on “stakeholder engagement”.
- The *Business & Society* author guidelines (<https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/BAS>) must be followed.
- All submissions will be double-blind peer-reviewed by multiple reviewers.
- For questions about the content of the special issue, please contact any of the guest editors.

About the Journal

Business & Society is one of the leading, peer-reviewed outlets for scholarly work dealing with the intersection of business and society. The journal publishes research that develops, tests, and refines theory, and it enhances our understanding of important societal issues and their relation to business. *Business & Society*'s current two-year impact factor is 4.074, ranked 41 out of 120 journals in the business category. For further details on the journal, see <http://bas.sagepub.com>.

About the Guest Editors

Matthias Wenzel is Professor of Organization Studies at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg. His research focuses on the practices of strategizing and organizing, as well as the societal

implications of these practices. His work has been published journals such as the *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *Long Range Planning*, *Organization Studies*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, *Strategic Management Journal*, and *Strategic Organization*, among others. In addition, Matthias serves as Coeditor for Media Innovations of the *Strategic Management Journal*, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, and *Global Strategy Journal*, and as member of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Business Research*, among others.

Hannah Trittin-Ulbrich is Assistant Professor for Business Ethics at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg. Her research focuses on communication in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), diversity management, and the use of digital technology in organizations. Her work has been published in journals such as *Corporate Communications*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, and *Journal of Management Inquiry*, among others. Furthermore, Hannah has coedited special issues in *Organization* and *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*.

Laura Marie Edinger-Schons is Professor of Sustainable Business at the University of Mannheim. Her research focuses on consumer and employee reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of companies, CSR management, CSR communication, as well as innovative pricing mechanisms and business models, among others. Her research has been published in journals such as *Business Ethics: A European Review*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *Marketing Letters*. Furthermore, Laura serves as Associate Editor of *Business & Society*.

Itziar Castelló is Senior Lecturer at Surrey Business School. Her research focuses on the communication and governance challenges and opportunities involved in entrepreneurs and business intrapreneurs' sensemaking and change initiatives toward more sustainable business

in the digital economy. Her work has been published in journals such as the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Business & Society*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Research Policy*. Furthermore, Itziar serves as Associate Editor of *Business & Society*.

Frank de Bakker is Professor of Corporate Social Responsibility at IESEG School of Management in Lille, France. In his research, he combines insights from institutional theory, social movement studies, and stakeholder theory to examine interactions between activist groups and business firms on issues of CSR and the role of CSR managers in firms. His research appeared in journals like *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Business & Society* and *Organization Studies*. Frank is one of the co-editors of *Business & Society* and sits on several editorial boards.

References

- Caruana, R., Crane, A., Gold, S., & LeBaron, G. (2020). Modern slavery in business: The sad and sorry state of a non-field. *Business and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.117/0007650320930417>
- Castelló, I., Etter, M., & Nielsen, F. A. (2016). Strategies of legitimacy through social media: The networked strategy. *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(3), 402–432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12145>
- Castelló, I., Morsing, M., & Schultz, F. (2013). Communicative dynamics and the polyphony of corporate social responsibility in the network society. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 118(4), 683–694. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1954-1>
- Chesbrough, H. W. (2003). *Open Innovation: The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology*. Harvard University Press.
- Cooren, F. (2020). A communicative constitutive perspective on corporate social responsibility: Ventriloquism, undecidability, and surprisability. *Business and Society*, 59(1), 157–197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650318791780>
- Crane, A. (2013). Modern slavery as a management practice: Exploring the conditions and capabilities for human exploitation. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(1), 49–69. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2011.0145>
- Crane, A., Matten, D., & Moon, J. (2004). Stakeholders as citizens? Rethinking rights, participation, and democracy. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 53(1-2), 107–122. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:BUSI.0000039403.96150.b6>
- Dawkins, C. (2015). Agonistic pluralism and stakeholder engagement. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 25(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1017/beq.2015.2>

- de Bakker, F. G. A., & den Hond, F. (2008). Introducing the politics of stakeholder influence: a review essay. *Business and Society*, 47(1), 8–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650307306637>
- de Bakker, F. G. A., den Hond, F., King, B., & Weber, K. (2013). Social movements, civil society and corporations: Taking stock and looking ahead. *Organization Studies*, 34(5-6), 573–593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840613479222>
- den Hond, F., & de Bakker, F. G. A. (2007). Ideologically motivated activism: How activist groups influence corporate social change activities. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(3), 901–924. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159341>
- Dobusch, L., Dobusch, L., & Müller-Seitz, G. (2019). Closing for the benefit of openness? The case of Wikimedia’s open strategy process. *Organization Studies*, 40(3), 343–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840617736930>
- Edinger-Schons, L. M., Lengler-Graiff, L., Scheidler, S., Mende, G., & Wieseke, J. (2020). Listen to the voice of the customer—First steps towards stakeholder democracy. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 29(3), 510–527. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12252>
- Freeman, R. E. (1994). A stakeholder theory of the modern corporation. In T. L. Beauchamp & N. E. Bowie (Eds.), *Ethical Theory and Business* (pp. 66–76). Prentice Hall.
- Freeman, R. E., Parmar, B. L., & Martin, K. (2020). *The Power of And: Responsible Business Without Tradeoffs*. Columbia University Press.
- Fujimoto, Y., Azmat, F., & Subramaniam, N. (2019). Creating community-inclusive organizations: Managerial accountability framework. *Business and Society*, 58(4), 712–748. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650316680060>
- Greenwood, M. (2007). Stakeholder engagement: Beyond the myth of corporate responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74(4), 315–327. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-007-9509-y>
- Griffin, J. J., Youm, Y. N., & Vivari, B. (2019). Stakeholder engagement strategies after an exogenous shock: How Philip Morris and R. J. Reynolds adapted differently to the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement. *Business and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650319870818>
- Harrison, J. S., Bosse, D. A., & Phillips, R. A. (2010). Managing for stakeholders, stakeholder utility functions, and competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 31(1), 58–74. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.801>
- Harrison, J. S., & Wicks, A. C. (2013). Stakeholder theory, value, and firm performance. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 23(1), 97–124. <https://doi.org/10.5840/beq20132314>
- Kornberger, M., Leixnering, S., & Meyer, R. E. (2019). The logic of tact: How decisions happen in situations of crisis. *Organization Studies*, 40(2), 239–266.
- Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2008). On the problem of participation in strategy: A critical discursive perspective [Article]. *Organization Science*, 19(2), 341–358.
- Matten, D., & Crane, A. (2005). What is stakeholder democracy? Perspectives and issues. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 14(1), 6–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8608.2005.00382.x>
- Moriarty, J. (2014). The connection between stakeholder theory and stakeholder democracy: An excavation and defense. *Business and Society*, 53(6), 820–852. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650312439296>
- Parmar, B. L., Freeman, R. E., Harrison, J. S., Wicks, A. C., Purnell, L., & de Colle, S. (2010). Stakeholder theory: The state of the art. *Academy of Management Annals*, 4(1), 403–445. <https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520.2010.495581>
- Phillips, R. A., Berman, S. L., Elms, H., & Johnson-Cramer, M. (2010). Strategy, stakeholders and managerial discretion. *Strategic Organization*, 8(2), 176–183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127010365721>

- Putnam, L. L., Fairhurst, G. T., & Banghart, S. (2016). Contradictions, dialectics, and paradoxes in organizations: A constitutive approach. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 65–171.
- Quick, K. S., & Feldman, M. S. (2011). Distinguishing participation and inclusion. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 31(3), 272–290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X11410979>
- Scherer, A. G., & Palazzo, G. (2007). Toward a political conception of corporate responsibility: Business and society seen from a political perspective. *Journal of Management Studies*, 32(4), 1096–1120. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20159358>
- Scherer, A. G., Palazzo, G., & Matten, D. (2014). The business firm as a political actor: A new theory of the firm for a globalized world. *Business and Society*, 53(2), 143–156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650313511778>
- Scherer, A. G., Palazzo, G., & Trittin, H. (2015). The changing role of business in global society: Implications for governance, democracy, and the theory of the firm. In S. Lundan (Ed.), *Transnational corporations and transnational governance* (pp. 355–387). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scherer, A. G., & Vögtlin, C. (2020). Corporate governance for responsible innovation: Approaches to corporate governance and their implications for sustainable development. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 34(2), 182–208. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2017.0175>
- Schoeneborn, D., & Trittin, H. (2013). Transcending transmission: Towards a constitutive perspective on CSR communication. *Corporate Communications*, 18(2), 193–211. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281311319481>
- Schultz, F., Castelló, I., & Morsing, M. (2013). The construction of corporate social responsibility in network societies: A communication view. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 115(4), 681–692. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1826-8>
- Spicer, A., Dunfee, T. W., & Bailey, W. J. (2004). Does national context matter in ethical decision making? An empirical test of integrative social contracts theory. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(4), 610–620. <https://doi.org/10.5465/20159605>
- Stjerne, I. S., Wenzel, M., & Svejnova, S. (forthcoming). Commitment to grand challenges in fluid forms of organizing: The role of narratives' temporality. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*.
- Trittin, H., Fieseler, C., & Maltseva, K. (2019). The serious and the mundane: Reflections on gamified CSR communication. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 28(2), 141–144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492618790920>
- Trittin, H., & Schoeneborn, D. (2017). Diversity as polyphony: Reconceptualizing diversity management from a communication-centered perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 144(2), 305–322. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2825-8>
- Trittin-Ulbrich, H., Scherer, A. G., Munro, I., & Whelan, G. (2020). Exploring the dark and unexpected sides of digitalization: Toward a critical agenda. *Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508420968184>
- Wenzel, M., Koch, J., Cornelissen, J. P., Rothmann, W., & Senf, N. N. (2019). How organizational actors live out paradoxical tensions through power relations: The case of a youth prison. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 155, 55–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2019.03.001>
- Wenzel, M., Krämer, H., Koch, J., & Reckwitz, A. (2020). Future and organization studies: On the rediscovery of a problematic temporal category in organizations. *Organization Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840620912977>
- Whittington, R. (2019). *Opening Strategy: Professional Strategists and Practice Change, 1960 to Today*. Oxford University Press.

- Whittington, R., Cailluet, L., & Yakis-Douglas, B. (2011). Opening strategy: Evolution of a precarious profession. *British Journal of Management*, 22(3), 531–544.
- Wohlgemuth, V., Wenzel, M., Berger, E. S. C., & Eisend, M. (2019). Dynamic capabilities and employee participation: The role of trust and informal control. *European Journal of Management*, 37(6), 760–771. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2019.02.005>
- Zietsma, C., & Winn, M. I. (2008). Building chains and directing flows: Strategies and tactics of mutual influence in stakeholder conflicts. *Business and Society*, 47(1), 68–101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650307306641>