



Multinationals in their Communities

Book Review by Wayne Visser

Book details

Multinationals in their Communities: A Social Capital Approach to Corporate Citizenship Projects, *Ian W. Jones, Michael G. Pollitt and David Bek. Palgrave Macmillan. 359 pages. Hardback.*

At a time when it is fashionable to dismiss philanthropic approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR) as outmoded and to treat business involvement in development with scepticism or vitriol, this book is a lucid reminder of the importance of charitable projects in building the social capital of nations and communities, especially in developing countries.

Multinationals in the Community is based on a six-year research project at the University of Cambridge, the heart of which is an analysis of 13 corporate citizenship projects from four companies (Anglo American, Diageo, GlaxoSmithKline and Vodafone) across three countries (Mexico, Poland and South Africa). There are also useful overviews of community engagement by multinationals in these countries, as well as telling statistics and rankings of corporate philanthropy in the UK and US.

The book is largely academic in its style and appeal and CSR scholars will be particularly interested in the chapter on social capital theory and measurement, as well as the methodology and findings detailed in subsequent chapters.

CSR practitioners will be more likely to benefit from the concluding chapters on what makes good corporate citizenship projects/programmes and future directions for these. They should also be able to making useful comparisons with their own CSR initiatives as they dip into the featured projects.

The book's intentionally limited scope (in terms of geographic, corporate and subject coverage) is also its strength. The result is that it makes an important contribution to an increasingly neglected aspect of CSR theory and vital area of CSR practice. Furthermore, its laudable attempt to bridge the academic and corporate worlds (in which it very nearly succeeds) will reward the dedicated reader.

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