<p style="text-align:center">**Institutional Work and (Ir)Responsible Management**</p>

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Introduction

Responsible management is an umbrella term for management practices embracing sustainability, ethics, and responsibility (Laasch & Conaway, 2015). Managers must be knowledgeable, competent, and skilled in these three areas to be deemed responsible (Laasch & Moosmayer, 2016). While this may sound relatively trivial, extant research has shown that the wider societal frameworks in which businesses and managers operate are, arguably, configured to induce *ir*responsibility (Ennals, 2014). An interesting question therefore arises in responsible management research (Verkerk et al., 2001): How might managers, activists, consumers, workers and others push firms to engage in responsible management despite these structural and cultural barriers?

One answer can be found in research on institutional work, the purposeful efforts of actors to create, maintain or disrupt institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Institution here means the set of widely taken-for-granted norms, assumptions, beliefs about a specific area of social life. The concept of institutional work (IW) has become popular within organizational theory as a means of explaining how actors can effect change in such seemingly unchallengeable institutions. Applied to responsible management, an IW perspective allows identification of how individuals may seek to: *create* new or *strengthen* existing institutions relating to responsibility, ethics and sustainability (e.g. new labour standards) (Schneider et al., 2010); *disrupt* irresponsible institutions and practices that may be damaging (e.g. gender discrimination at work) (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015); or *maintain* institutions and practices that are productive for responsible management (Hilliard, 2013).

In this chapter we explore such types of IW individuals perform towards responsible management practices, which we term 'responsibilization work'. Through exploring exemplary studies, we show how responsibilization work includes changing norms, creating new standards and creating new markets for responsible management practices. We demonstrate how a number of different people – not just corporate responsibility or

sustainability managers, but also other top or middle managers and other individuals, such as activists or consultants – are involved in this work. Vitally, we stress the importance of examining the consequences of responsibilization work, both the intended but also the unintended and side effects. Importantly, however, we also note that actors may engage in IW that seeks to *maintain* the status quo, to protect institutions and their practices which may be considered irresponsible, unsustainable and unethical, such as the burning of fossil fuels, corruption or exploiting tax loopholes. Crucially, there remains a pressing need to elucidate the difference between the symbolic and substantive adoption of responsible management practices, and the actual social and environmental impacts that IW achieves. Further, more attention needs to be paid to how local contexts shape, and are shaped by, responsibilization. Doing this requires a relational and interactionist account of power relations between broader networks of social actors than considered so far.

We first start by briefly providing our reading of the IW perspective. Second, we turn to the different studies on responsible management using this perspective and elaborate on the different types of work and according effects they describe. Third, we explore how these different types of responsibilization work may create desirable and undesirable side-effects, alongside their intended consequences. In concluding, we offer a number of suggestions for future research into responsibilization work.

The institutional work perspective

Institutional work is the term given to the purposive actions of actors (individuals, but also collections or communities of individuals, such as organizations or social movements) aimed at creating, maintaining or disrupting institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence et al., 2009). Let us examine in more detail the different terms in this definition, and then develop on their implications for ir/responsible management.

First, what do we mean by *institution*? An institution is a set of norms, values, and beliefs, socially constructed by individuals in society, that shape an area of social life, guiding and prescribing appropriate behaviour in that area. While institutions are socially constructed and symbolic constructs, they also have material manifestations and implications, in that they shape regulations (e.g. how governments allocate resources) or how individuals behave or are expected to behave (Scott, 2008). Consider marriage, a common example of an institution. Marriage was, and is still in many places reserved for heterosexual couples, and is therefore not available for all legally. Other regulatory restrictions apply as well (e.g. no marriage under 16 in the UK). The institution of marriage is socially constructed, and

therefore comes with specific norms and values, and according appropriate behaviour, that translates into actual conforming (or nonconforming behaviour in fewer instances), symbolic acts and thoughts, such as vows or fidelity, but also material manifestations, such as laws, rings, and ceremonies.

Second, what do we mean by *purposive*? In its original conception (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006), the notion of IW emphasised the 'work' component: conscious and intentional action deployed by individuals – most often termed 'actors' to denote their purposeful activity. This emphasis on purpose and work arose from a history of institutional theory tending to theorise the 'iron cage': the top-down, structural barriers of institutions constraining and restricting individual behaviour (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In other words, people were not able to change institutions because they were living 'inside' them without 'seeing' them, unable to consider different ways of living or working.

On the other hand, a plethora of studies under the umbrella of institutional entrepreneurship began to see things differently, arguing that individuals sometimes can and do break out of totalizing structures in order to change institutions (DiMaggio, 1988). IW, argue its proponents, tries to capture both of these ways of thinking about institutions, offering a theory which positions individuals within institutions, but also able to think, feel and act towards them, with varying degrees of agency and reflexivity at different points in time. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe three different types of agency: a first under which actors habitually and unreflexively reproduce past norms; a second where actors projectively (and highly reflexively) imagine and strategize future possibilities; and a third 'practical-evaluative' type under which actors focus on dealing with the present situation as it arises, with limited reflexivity and focused on short-term solving of problems. IW builds on these three types of agency to discuss how actors can agentically and more or less reflexively change or maintain institutions (Battilana & D'Aunno, 2009).

Third, what do we mean by *action*? IW theory borrows from a sociology of practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 2001) to consider action as 'micro-practices': everyday interactions, talk, text, and performance. Institutions are socially constructed through these everyday practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Recent studies on IW have emphasized that antecedents to these everyday practices, or action, are not only cognitive (thoughts) but also emotional and affective (emotions, feelings) (Voronov & Vince, 2012; Zietsma & Toubiana, 2018). Relatedly, it is worth pointing out that 'purposive action' only needs to be *aimed at* change – it does not need to be successful, and very often produces unintended consequences for individuals and the contexts in which they are working

(Lawrence et al., 2009; Slager et al., 2012) – something we explore later in more detail in the context of responsible management.

Finally, whilst Lawrence et al. (2009) focus on individuals *in organizations*, the individual remains central to institutions and IW (see also Hallett & Ventresca, 2006), as the perspective focuses on practices at a micro-level. This means that although much of the IW documented in organization and management studies naturally include organizations, the level of analysis is often individual. Effects may be directed at the organizational and/or 'field' level (a broader set of rules and norms surrounding a particular industry, for example), but the purpose of such 'work' is largely the broader institution.

In sum, IW affords individuals (such as managers, workers and activists) different types of agency to try and change or maintain the institutions governing an important area of social life, and some of the norms, activities or policies associated with these institutions. We now explore how this perspective has been applied to the context of responsible management.

Responsibilization: Institutional work towards responsible management practices
In what ways have individuals worked to change incumbent institutions, towards more responsible management practices? There are a number of empirical studies which explore responsibilization through the concept of IW. This work can largely be classified into having three different intended effects: the creation of new responsible markets; new standards for responsible management, and new norms of responsible management practices. These are achieved through different forms of IW, performed by a host of different people and organizations. While often responsibilization work is undertaken by sustainability or corporate social responsibility (CSR) managers, it can also be performed by other managers, such as HR or supply chain managers, and other non-managers, such as consultants, workers or non-governmental organizations (NGO) representatives.

New norms of responsible management practice
Given the frustratingly enduring view of business as profit-maximising entities, coupled with supporting political narratives, the promotion of a different understanding of management practice (e.g. as responsible, ethical or sustainable) requires important IW. This involves challenging the underlying assumptions, beliefs, values and discourses supporting an institution. Yet, to do so, would-be institutional workers have first to become cognizant of the issues. McCarthy and Moon (2018) show how individuals seeking to disrupt entrenched gender inequality in organizations have to become conscious of inequalities and why they

exist, before they engage in disruptive IW. Indeed, the importance of actors perceiving an institutional contradiction (Seo & Creed, 2002), that is, inequality (McCarthy & Moon, 2018), injustice (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010), or a risk (Karam & Jamali, 2013), influence whether and how they engage in IW toward changing norms. Once cognizant of an underlying institutional issue, IW can usually occur both internally and externally to the organization.

Within organizations, in order to make business practices more responsible, ethical or sustainable, institutional workers have to change how themselves and others see business as usual. This involves altering often deeply-ingrained norms of doing business, by sensemaking (Sharma & Good, 2013) and rationalizing new practices that may run counter to extant norms. For example, Dahlmann and Grosvold (2017) show how environmental managers have great difficulty reconciling competing 'logics' of market competition and environmental protection. In that case, successful forms of IW by these managers included relying on and emphasizing a sense of pride and morality, but also fear of reputational damage should the firm be seen to be breaking with certain environmental standards. Similarly, Carrington et al. (2018) studied CSR professionals' 'covert and overt' activist strategies for change, surmising that appropriating CSR standards for reputational benefit, as well as pushing a moral imperative for better practice, were key successful forms of IW. Unsurprisingly, 'strategifying' CSR for profit-based gains has also been found to be a key form of IW to change business practice towards more responsible management (Gond et al., 2018).

Externally to firms, in a similar way, institutional workers need to perform different types of work in order to change norms – although it requires a wider array of clout, given the diverse nature of the 'audiences' of the work. In particular, and while emotions are highly relevant to organizations as well, IW performed outside organizations must tread a particularly fine line between emotions and rationality. For instance, 'emotionology work' performed by CSR professionals is an important form of IW to translate narratives around climate change between 'rational' corporations and 'emotional' consumers (Wright & Nyberg, 2012). Maguire and Hardy (2009) describe the 'defensive' and emotional IW performed by activists through discourse (in text and talk), to challenge norms around the use of DDT, a previously widely used but environmentally damaging pesticide. Conversely, however, Karam and Jamali (2013) detail the strategically unemotional IW performed by managers in the MENA region to promote more gender inclusive norms. For example, by "sponsoring opportunities and forums for businesswomen to build networks with other businesspersons as well as industry leaders" and engaging in advertising campaigns outlining

the business case for gender equality, managers engaged in 'rational' disruptive IW that was aimed at changing the norms around gender (Karam & Jamali, 2013: 52). Such change of norms from outside businesses are particularly prevalent through periods of intense social change, such as in the period after the Arab Spring, and during identity rights upheaval. For instance, building on contemporary discourses around LGBT rights and particularly marriage, Creed et al. (2010) detail how gay and lesbian Christian ministers engage in identity work in order to shift perceptions around homosexuality in US protestant churches.

Across these studies, it is shown that changing 'hearts and minds', in the form of norms, values and beliefs, is often even more difficult to achieve across cultural and geographic boundaries. This is partly because whilst markets are often considered economic arenas first, Reinecke et al. (2018) remind us that these spaces are also always *social*. In describing intermediaries' 'brokering' work required to challenge norms on sustainable supply chain practices, they demonstrate that whilst the intended effects of responsibilization are most often a change in business practice, the route to this is first through changing widely held norms.

New standards for responsible management practice
Labour and environmental standards, codes of conduct, reporting guidelines, investment criteria and multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) represent a booming realm of the responsible management industry. It is not surprising then, that many studies of responsibilization explore these, and how they come to be accepted and used within organizations.

One strength of standards and MSIs tends to be their polyphonic quality- they are often the result of many kinds of organizational input (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). For example, trade unions, international and local NGOs, businesses and governments are involved in the formulation of International Labor Organization (ILO) frameworks. Helfen and Sydow (2013: 1090) identify 'negotiation work' across these groups of actors as a key form of IW toward standard-setting: "the creation of a new institution – in our case International Framework Agreements … is more likely if negotiations allow for continuous joint problem-solving". Such 'standardization' work (Slager et al., 2012) is thus common across geographical boundaries, and include a wide number of actors. Standardization, therefore, allows to some extent to bridge the gap we identified above, regarding changing institutional norms across borders. For example, Buchanan and Marques (2018) describe how national Canadian mining industry associations worked through their membership to influence international CSR standards. The importance of insider and outsider organizational actors is

also of note (Kaine & Josserand, 2018). Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) describe how 'boundary insiders' (forest companies and Ministry of Forests) and 'institutional challengers' (environmentalists, First Nations groups, and allies) engaged in recursive IW to change environmental practices in Canada, in the process creating a new standard for less environmentally damaging logging. In fact, taking a more micro and discursive perspective, studies show how it is most often not radically new discourses that lead to the emergence of standards, but rather the blending of existing discourses (e.g. Maguire & Hardy, 2006). Analogy and narrative are also important to standardization (e.g. Etzion & Ferraro, 2010), in order to move the organization from surface adoption of a policy to embedded operationalization of standards.

Standards may be formulated through disruptive and creative IW, but it requires maintaining IW to conserve their utility. Mena and Suddaby (2016) identify 'theorization work' – the abstraction and justification of practices and roles – as important in this regard. Exploring how actors in the Fair Labor Association (a standard-setting initiative for working conditions in the textile industry) engaged in theorization work around codes of conduct in factories, they find that whilst the practices around the codes stayed more or less constant, the roles of different actors – and how these were considered – changed. The FLA moved from a role of auditor to facilitator, whilst member companies' roles were imagined less as rule-followers, than as co-creators. The authors highlight that it is this shift in IW that actually sustained the standards for responsible working conditions. While this maintaining work is very much discursive, more material maintaining work is described by Kaine and Jousserand (2018). They highlight the important 'brokering' role played by grassroots activists Viet Labor, who through documenting, whistle-blowing, collective action, as well as supporting, were able to hold businesses to account against labour standards in Vietnam.

In sum, while responsibilization can be the result of IW geared at changing informal norms and beliefs about responsibility, it can also be the result of the institutionalization of more formalized rules and standards for responsibility. While both of these effects aim at changing incumbent behaviour, a third type of IW is geared toward creating (rather than changing) an entirely new set of practices and norms, by creating new, supposedly responsible, markets.

New markets for responsible management practice
Extant studies on responsibilization have covered the emergence of new markets. These include socially responsible investment funds, base of the pyramid-type businesses launching

in the global South, carbon-trading, and new food movements (e.g. organic, slow food). Key research questions here revolve around how new markets can be conceived, how they can be founded, and grown (especially in terms of cultivating new norms – see above).

With regard to the former, a number of studies have specifically concentrated on the creation of new financial markets that value responsibility, more so than existing markets focused solely on financial performance (Slager et al., 2012). Examining the creation of a market for responsible investment in France and Québec, Gond and Boxenbaum (2013) highlight the 'contextualisation work', which consists of filtering, translating and coupling, necessary to found such new markets. Akin to standardization, contextualisation work entailed both symbolic (i.e. narrative and discourse) and material (i.e. regulatory frameworks) dimensions.

New market creation can respond to a consumer desire for a more responsible business practice (e.g. sweatshop-free fashion). Yet, demand may be particularly niche or inexistent, and IW needs to create such demand for more responsible products or services. For instance, Weber et al. (2008) analyse the semiotics underlying the creation of the grass-fed meat and dairy industry in the US. Embedding discourses of sustainability, naturalness and authenticity into how the new market was communicated helped to build more responsible practices.

Creating demand also speaks to growing these new markets, with the aim of overtaking less responsible, competing markets. For instance, two studies focus on NGOs' efforts to grow inclusive new markets in Bangladesh. Mair et al. (2012) depict how NGO actors engaged in 'redefining' markets' architecture (e.g. by creating spaces for interaction), and 'legitimating' new actors by redefining norms and assumptions around their roles as crucial to building and growing new markets. In an emerging dairy industry, CARE Bangladesh also worked on the material aspects of market creation, supplemented by increasing interaction and knowledge exchange between different parts of the production network (McKague et al., 2015). Importantly, the role of 'beneficiaries' (e.g. smallholders) themselves as institutional workers is highlighted (see also McCarthy & Moon, 2018).

These examples highlight that IW is not necessarily always all-encompassing and focused on the creation ex nihilo of new markets. Some IW is geared towards facilitating the creation and growth of these markets. Take for instance the B-Corp market. B-Corps are a new kind of "business model that attempts to align profit and societal impact and prioritises positive social and environmental outcomes" (Stubbs, 2017: 299). In the context of Australia, Stubbs (2017) shows that B-Corp professionals engaged in advocacy, education, lobbying

and awareness-building as responsibilization work to grow the B-Corp market. Beunza and Ferraro (2018) combine theories of performativity (how a theory can become self-fulfilling) with IW, to show how a large financial data company's CSR team engaged in assembling 'normative and regulatory networks'. In this case, such efforts led to the foundation of a socially responsible investment (SRI) measuring tool. Such tools facilitate greatly the expansion of responsible markets.

Consequences of responsibilization

We have discussed specific types of IW and the individuals and groups undertaking such work. While we have elaborated on the intended effects (e.g. new norms) that these actors were seeking, here we highlight the broader consequences of responsibilization. We first underline that responsibilization work can have numerous positive and negative side effects, or unintended consequences. Second, we examine instances where IW is actually geared towards irresponsible behaviour and practice, rather than responsible management. And finally, we examine how eventually IW may bring responsible change, but how these changes can sometimes be superficial rather than substantial.

Unintended consequences of responsibilization

Most of the literature on responsibilization implicitly takes for granted the fact that IW will either largely succeed or fail to generate its intended effects (e.g. changing (or not) existing norms and according behaviours and practices). Yet, more often than not IW, much like any other type of social action, will have consequences that go beyond the intention of, and that were unforeseen by, those undertaking the work (Fine, 2006; Merton, 1936).

For instance, Vigneau et al. (2015) show the managerial and firm-level consequences of standardization work. The authors show how the implementation of Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards (for reporting on sustainability performance) led to unintended consequences within firms. In particular, they highlight how managers' conception of the meaning of CSR and standard compliance differed substantially from the GRI's own conception. These findings underline how IW aimed at creating standards for responsible management can lead to differing effects, but also how such consequences were not foreseen by the actors pushing for the adoption of the GRI standards in the first place.

Another example is found in Slager et al. (2012), who detail the valorizing, calculative framing and engaging IW that actors at FTSE4GOOD used to develop their responsible investment fund. Interestingly, when unintended consequences arose as a result

of such work (such as the fact that the investment tool was pushing firms to disclose more on their Environmental, Social, and good Governance [ESG] performance), the regulating actors used this to raise the bar for inclusion in the index. Hence, unintended effects can sometimes be 'recaptured' to ratchet up standards of responsible management.

Yet, unintended consequences are not always recaptured. Some other examples point to IW gone wrong (Khan et al., 2007; Mena, 2017). Indeed, responsibilization, for all of its good will, can create indirect *negative* side-effects. Famously, Khan et al. (2007) show how IW directed at eradicating child labour in soccer ball stitching in Pakistan ended up fostering poverty because of the lack of income that children were previously bringing to their households. Hence, changing norms, but also creating new markets or standards, for responsible management practices can have negative side-effects that may not be foreseen and intentional.

Oftentimes, the unforeseen and unintended effects of IW will have repercussions for actors that are not the intentional targets of the work, such as people in surrounding communities where the work takes place. For instance, one of us has shown how the implementation of a sustainability program by a Western multinational meant to provide access to clean water to cocoa farmers in rural Côte d'Ivoire actually sustained gender inequality, by reinforcing the power of the men over their wives but also children, as these men were the recipients of that programme (Mena, 2017).

Irresponsible institutional work
While responsibilization can have negative unforeseen and unintended side effects, it can also have primary and direct irresponsible effects. It is important to note the existence of *irresponsible* IW, varying in its intent and its effects. As we discuss in our concluding section, however, there is much less empirical work that captures irresponsible IW.

For instance, Dahlmann and Grosvold (2017) look at the IW of environmental managers of UK firms when they respond to conflicting demands from their stakeholders. The authors describe how these managers sometimes manage these tensions by reactively maintaining the status quo, without pushing the environmental performance of their firms further. Managers "simply noted compliance with laws and regulations" (Dahlmann & Grosvold, 2017: 280). Hence, while not extreme on the irresponsibility side of the continuum, such IW is perpetuating the status quo that others have found to be leading us towards environmental destruction (Slawinski et al., 2017). However, it is not just firms who are

guilty of ambivalence or inaction. In the context of the 2008 financial crisis onwards, Motherway et al. (2018) note that regulators' refusal to use sanctions or threats to punish bad lending behaviour facilitated the downturn. Similarly, the European Union, during a period when France was attempting to set up a nationwide labelling system for environmental food standards, unintentionally blocked progress by launching a rival system (François-Lecompte et al., 2017).

While these examples point to varying degrees of intentionality and reflexivity in how firms perceive tensions and respond to external demands, others have shown much more intentional irresponsible IW. Palmer et al. (2015) highlight how managers from a buying firm used (and abused) their power to maintain their market dominance and the power they have over suppliers. Conversely, Soundararajan et al. (2018) uncover how knitwear factory owners in India intentionally 'evaded' responsibilization from buyers, for example by disassociating from the consequences of their actions, and accumulating political strength in their local contexts.

These examples highlight how maintenance work by managers can lead to varying irresponsible management practices by perpetuating the unequal status quo. This is what Carrington et al. (2018) point as 'abdication' by managers in their day-to-day practices, which is highly influenced by broader organizational barriers contra responsibilization. The profit-driven motives of organizations that we touched upon earlier can be a strong deterrent to responsibilization, even when individual actors may wish to promote more ethical practice (Gluch & Bosch-Sijtsema, 2016).

Yet, other instances of IW by managers can be much more active and not only maintain the irresponsible status quo, but actively try to shape the responsibility of their firm, profession or industry. For instance, Mena et al. (2016) highlight how managers can engage in forgetting IW, following a scandal associated with their firm, where traces of memory of the scandal can be purposefully erased or downplayed. Riaz et al. (2016) demonstrate how elite bankers, faced with the financial crisis and resulting scandals, gave up attempting to maintain institutional practices, instead performing defensive IW to maintain their own status, authority and power. In yet another telling example, Hamann and Bertels (2017) provide an important reminder that labour exploitation does not 'just happen', but is often the intentional work of managers and firms. At its most extreme, organizations can induce individuals to do terrible things to other human beings, for example by 'categorising' groups on the basis of religion, ethnicity, and gender – as Martí and Fernández (2013) memorably demonstrate in their study of IW during the Holocaust.

Symbolic and substantive changes

In addition to the resulting negative or irresponsible consequences of managers' and other actors' IW, IW can lead to ceremonial changes that have little impact on practice and on-the-ground situations. Usually, the institutional literature discusses such changes as ceremonial or symbolic (MacLean & Behnam, 2010), as opposed to substantive. The institutional literature, and that specific to responsible management, is ripe on examples of such instances of 'decoupling' (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008), or the apparent adoption of a practice or structure without actual changes.

Oftentimes, responsibilization can lead to such symbolic changes. The example above by Dahlmann and Grosvold (2017) highlights this: environmental changes in firms are often a result of a tick-box exercise that do not bring substantial environmental betterment, or at least reduce the environmental footprint of the firm. Clark and Newell (2013) explore how professional service raters were originally founded to provide integrity to investment information. Over time, even though the objectivity and reliability of ratings has been called into question, the data is still used in a process of 'complicit decoupling'. Yet, there are numerous managerial positions that have to deal with such exercises – whilst symbolic in impact, they remain substantive in day-to-day effort.

Crilly et al. (2012) show differing managerial responses depending on several internal and external factors that need to be considered when talking about symbolic versus more substantive change in managerial practice. When stakeholders have low information (e.g. because the firm is not transparent), then managers are likely to 'fake it' intentionally and decouple. However, when relationships with external actors are more balanced, there is a process of 'muddling through' and sensemaking by managers, that leads to a slow appreciation of responsible practices. Similarly, Bartley and Egels-Zandén (2015) show how Indonesian unions leveraged big apparel brands' CSR commitments to bring changes in the supply chain. They conclude that "CSR has been a platform for some modest gains…, but it has not allowed robust, transformative changes" (Bartley & Egels-Zandén, 2015: 231).

On the other hand, as highlighted above, while the literature sometimes points to incremental responsibilization, other studies show the contrary swing of the pendulum: towards irresponsible incremental changes. In particular, over time, the memory about the responsibility of a firm or an industry for accidents, scandals, and other tragic incidents, is more likely to be forgotten, and gently erased rather than put at the forefront (Mena et al., 2016). While we may remember exceptional events, such as Volkswagen's rigging of

engines, or Enron's downfall, more regular, less mediatized events are likely to be forgotten by society, but also by the industry (Madsen, 2009). Due to different cultural and structural barriers, irresponsible management can also be perpetuated when whistleblowing is discouraged and sometimes actively silenced (Lamm & Lips-Wiersma, 2018).

This poses the question of *what* managers are actually able to change when engaging in IW, but also whether they *want* to make their firms more responsible. We come back to these important points in our discussion section that outlines crucial avenues for future research in this regard.

Discussion and future research

Based on our outline of IW and responsible management, we now discuss the main findings of this stream of the literature and devise what we think are important directions or re-directions for research in this area. In short, we advance that future research on IW should: (1) address substantive social change, (2) not only focus on prominent institutional workers such as managers, but take a more encompassing interactionist perspective, and (3) take an explicit normative stance on whether IW is beneficial or detrimental, chiefly by surfacing context-specific power relations.

First, as outlined in the previous section, our review of IW and (ir)responsible management highlights that most research tends to focus on the adoption of supposedly responsible practices, ideas, standards, or structures in a relatively symbolic way. By that we mean, instead of empirically exploring the actual impact of such adoption in the day-to-day lives of different actors, including institutional workers, research focuses on the (relatively superficial) organizational adoption of these practices, ideas, standards, or structures (Verkerk et al., 2001). This is partly due to the fact that adoption in this sense is much easier to capture, measure and operationalize in data collection and analysis, than fuzzier, often less visible and measurable, impact on the ground (e.g. change in norms) (Colantonio, 2009). Responsibilization work which seeks to create new markets, set new standards, and change norms, arguably aims to make real-life improvements to our environment and societies, for example by 'making trade fair'. Yet many studies explore the launch of the standard, or the creation of a market, as evidence of successful IW per se. If we count the amendment of 'just' a management practice as responsibilization, rather than evidence that this contributes to the social and environmental good, are we even studying the correct phenomena? We argue that future research should first attempt at studying actual, substantive social and

environmental impact, rather than mostly symbolic adoption of new responsible management fashions.

Another way to deal with this issue of symbolic versus substantive impact is the explicit acknowledgement and recognition that while IW can lead to symbolic adoption of various practices or structures, it *does* also substantively impact managers' and employees' day-to-day work in organizations. For instance, while responsible reporting may be symbolic for the organization and at best manage its relationships with some stakeholders (e.g. investors), it will necessarily have substantive effects on the managers responsible for the reporting. Further, responsibilization work can have substantive but difficult to identify effects on surrounding communities. For example, while adopting an explicit policy for purchasing can be a symbolic way to show responsibility for supply chains, it can create real impact for people working at suppliers – both positive and negative. Overall, we argue that future research on IW should apply itself to study such actual and substantive impacts of responsibilization work. This means often going beyond the measurement of adoption. This connects to calls in responsible management research to address reflexivity on the part of managers (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015), that need to go beyond immediate effects of managerial action and engage more broadly with the context of the decision and the people that may be affected by it through ripple effects.

Second, this also points towards moving away from focusing on managerial and corporate actions. Whilst the responsible management literature has highlighted that a range of workers within businesses (beyond CSR and sustainability professionals) enact responsible behaviours (Hilliard, 2013; Laasch & Conaway, 2015), we push this finding further. The effects of responsibilization work we raised above are constructed and unfold in interactions between a wide variety of actors, such as activists, consumers, workers, governments, associations and investors. In order to capture and understand these effects, future research needs to consider not just unilateral managerial work but also how the context of the work affects and is affected by work. Again, this connects with responsible management research looking at the cultural and structural conditions affecting day-to-day work by employees and how it can be made more responsible (Verkerk et al., 2001). By context, we mean actors in the wider, networked environment, including 'the system of institutions' in which IW occurs (Dover & Lawrence, 2010: 311). This entails going beyond the intended 'beneficiaries' of new markets, for example, to include how related communities, families of workers and non-human actors (for example) co-construct both the IW that occurs, and its impact. As Hampel et al. (2017) point out, the interactions between different networks of actors and how these

create institutional effects has been relatively downplayed up to now. This matters in particular for responsible management, as practices will be defined, accepted, contested or changed according to negotiations between different networks of actors accordingly (see Nonet et al., 2016 for how responsible management is defined by different stakeholders in the education sector). Managers are key actors in the process (Laasch & Conaway, 2015), but their counterparts, such as suppliers, local actors in communities, employees, and so on, also greatly co-construct and shape the outcomes of managers' work.

This also questions the often implicit assumption of universalism in research on IW and responsible management. Research tends to assume that responsibilization processes, while different from each other to some extent, will mostly unfold in similar ways across contexts. We argue that future research on IW should consider and theorize in more detail the importance of local institutional contexts, along with their specific norms and beliefs, and how this shapes the effects of IW and resulting responsible management practices. In accordance with our interactionist call for future research in this area, these interactions, we argue, will often be idiosyncratic to specific contexts and may not necessarily always be replicable throughout the world, organizations, or individuals.

Third, in line with our two previous points we also argue that future research should be more explicit about the normative assumptions of the academic research, but also of the different actors studied. Oftentimes, the moral character or effects (whether it is good or bad) of the IW studied is downplayed, or assumed. For example, we urge researchers to question whether implementing a responsible management standard is really a goal in itself and ultimately whether it enhances social good. As advocated by Margolis and Walsh (2003), responsible management research needs explicit normative grounding. Responsible management research emphasizes such an explicit normative stance, which is also about denouncing immoral behaviour and not simply researching 'positive' responsible actions (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015).

Not only should the researcher be more explicit about the morality of the work studied, but the moral stances of the actors studied should be made explicit as well (e.g. Anteby, 2013). This ties back to our discussion of the side-effects of IW, some of them being negative. If morals of different actors are made explicit and recognized, the recognition of unintended consequences and their valence are more easily tackled. Responsible management research highlights different competencies, skills, and characteristics that may help identify the morals of managers and other individuals engaging in responsibilization work (Hesselbarth & Schaltegger, 2014; Laasch & Moosmayer, 2016). This is in line as well with

our call to study substantive social change as a result of IW. For example, if studying the IW involved in launching women's empowerment programmes in Ghanaian supply chains (e.g. McCarthy, 2017), we might ask: who benefits here, and who loses out? Why might different actors be involved, and how might their involvement challenge, or support, existing systems of oppression? Asking these kinds of questions during the research enables a more holistic, and realistic, view of responsible management practices. By being more explicit about the underlying morals of the research, responsible management research taking an IW perspective could move from descriptive or instrumental to a more critical research that matters, not just for business managers, but for society as well (Willmott, 2015).

Finally, while a large part of research in responsible management has tackled relatively symbolic and supposedly beneficial practices, relatively less research has looked at irresponsible management and resulting negative effects (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015; Lange & Washburn, 2012). The "agency of exploitation" (Hamann & Bertels, 2017: 398) prompts us to call for more research into the intentional, purposeful and damaging irresponsible IW that actors perform. What is more, when it comes to responsible management, the status quo is often ambivalent towards responsible practices, which can lead to irresponsibility. Think of climate change, for instance. If business managers do not take a proactive and quite drastic stance in dealing with climate effects of their businesses, it might simply be too late (Slawinski et al., 2017). Hence, maintaining the status quo, even unintentionally, is often irresponsible. Future research should therefore focus on how individuals can be pushed beyond their comfort zone, and how we can increase their (and our) moral reflexive practice or consciousness (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015; Schneider et al., 2010) in order to perform creating or disrupting work towards actual responsible management.

Conclusion

Through exploring exemplary studies into IW and responsible management, in this chapter we have shown how responsibilization work includes changing norms, creating new standards and creating new markets for responsible management practices. We have pointed out that various individuals in different organizations – not just CSR or sustainability managers – are involved in this work. Research has surfaced the consequences of responsibilization work, both intended and unintended effects. We have also highlight studies showing how individuals may engage in IW that seeks to *maintain* the status quo, that is, to protect institutions and associated practices which may be considered irresponsible, unsustainable and unethical. Our call for future research argues that responsible management

research taking an IW perspective needs to expose the difference between the symbolic and substantive adoption of responsible practices, and the actual social and environmental impacts that they achieve. This can be aided by developing understanding into how local contexts shape, and are shaped by, responsibilization work, and of the power relations between broader networks of social actors than considered thus far.

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