GT2 : Stratégie des entreprises, relations avec les parties prenantes et finance durable

Compte rendu de la réunion thématique

"La responsabilité des entreprises : perception et application à l'innovation et au BOP"

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Jean-François Laslier examines the interplay between poverty perception and inequality. A first dimension consists of examining the links between responsibility and effort and more generally the so-called "responsibility cut." Being responsible means being able to respond and, following the tradition in Economics, we restrict attention to people responses to a variation in well-being. In our societies, the question of well-being is essentially the question of poverty, considered as an abnormal and frightening situation. In turn, when is one "responsible" of such losses? People should be compensated for what they cannot be held responsible for but responsibility of what?

The presentation focuses on different streams of research that have scrutinized the empirical answers people provide to the philosophical question of the responsibility cut. This empirical research makes use of four different methodologies: social surveys, questionnaires, laboratory experiments and field experiments. All lead to essentially the same conclusion: the cut is on effort.

Focusing on innovation and CSR, Shyama Ramani explores the motivations for a firm to exhibit social responsibility through two case studies: Monsanto (Agbiotech, USA) and Cipla (Pharma, India).

It is widely acknowledged that firms have a social responsibility to ensure that they contribute to long term sustainable development as the principal agents of innovation creation and diffusion in an economy. However, firms will pursue R&D and innovation strategies that are socially responsible, only if such actions have an impact on the firm's market and financial performance. The presentation highlights that when it comes to innovation strategies, social responsibility may or may not influence the appropriation of innovation rents, depending on the extent of the potential externalities generated by the innovation. A firm must distinguish between several layers of stake holders and it is the stake holders who are least connected to the firm who must be most brought into public dialogue in order to ensure successful commercialization of the innovation.

Starting with the seminal works of Prahalad, C.-K., and Hart, S., there is a now an extensive literature on how companies can penetrate the bottom of the income pyramid or BOP markets. Francois Perrot's presentation reviews the literature and some case studies of BOP strategies. After a brief definition the BOP concept and its implementation by multinational corporations, the analysis focuses on the novelty of such strategies targeted towards low-income populations and on the interplay between BOP and the wider concept of Corporate Social Responsibility.

In a second step, using the 'value chain analysis' methodology, three case studies are examined : Unilever Indonesia, Hindustan Lever's shakti project and Danone Grameen in Bengladesh.

The impact of such BOP strategies on the value chain are analysed through four main dimensions: Input in the value chain, Corporate Value chain, Output of the value chain and Outcome for the company.

This study allows highlighting two major types of BOP projects :
- projects based on profit maximization , weakly innovating, easily replicable
- projects promoting social entrepreneurship, seeking innovation, hardly diffused