

La diffusion de la RSE par la relation fournisseurs

Injonctions paradoxales ou partenariat de progrès ?

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ABSTRACT

Key international agreements and general references require large companies to support the core social and environmental values within their sphere of influence. According to this "messianic" approach to their responsibility, they are supposed to spread responsible practices within their supply chain, especially among their SME suppliers. From a managerial perspective, they have adopted so called codes of conduct to bind suppliers and to protect themselves from risks link to suppliers' practices which do not comply with socially acceptable values. In any case, large companies sustainable supply chain management is considered as a major actor contributing to influence SMEs social and environmental practices. Drawing from five case studies of supply management chain within large and pro-active industrial companies, and from a survey among French SMEs, this paper aims at analysing the role large firms sustainable supply chain management plays on the SME suppliers' CSR strategies. It addresses the following question: to what extent are the SMEs influenced by their buyers' CSR requirements? In a developed country such as France, large firms, even those proactive in CSR, have little influence on SMEs' CSR strategies. We highlight the determinants of this influence: the degree of formalization and above all the monitoring of the implementation of the requirements, the degree of conflicting objectives such as the lowest possible price and the strict compliance with standards and codes of conduct. The influence depends also on

the nature of the buyer-seller relationships, power and economic dependence that leads to a strict compliance oriented approach, or a more personal and trustful relation in a win-win perspective that leads to a partnering approach. We find that so called responsible large companies hardly encourage sustainable management in SMEs because of all these factors which have a low even negative impact; their CSR strategy is still effectively implemented into the procurement services only for a small number of suppliers-partners. The entrepreneur's commitment in CSR is the key for SME to adopt sustainable strategies and go beyond the attitude of strict compliance to the codes of conduct, turning buyers' requirements constraints into opportunities. From our research, we identify eight types of SMEs' CSR strategic responses to their large firms buyers' requirements.