

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE SMART CITY CONCEPT

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**Purpose:** The aim of this article is to capture the relationship between the concept of corporate social responsibility and the idea of smart city. Both concepts share the idea of sustainable development.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The article analyzes selected, available literature on CSR, smart city, and sustainable development. Apart from literature review, the author uses the method of analysis and logical construction.

**Findings:** The article presents the issue of the relationship between corporate social responsibility and the smart city concept. Due to the fact that most of the world's population lives in cities and the migration process is still ongoing, it is important to make cities a place friendly to its inhabitants and the environment. The condition for this is building smart cities and running a business within them based on CSR principles.

**Research limitations/implications:** The text refers to a limited number of studies. Further research should be conducted to verify the real impact of CSR application on cities existing in specific socio-economic conditions.

**Originality/value:** The article refers to selected literature in the field of CSR and smart city. The most important issues related to sustainable development are discussed as an element connecting both title concepts. The value of this article is an indication of the relationship between the concepts of CSR and smart city, also perceived by many researchers, which consists in the fact that CSR is one of the factors of sustainable smart city. The article also emphasizes the axiological dimension of both title concepts.

**Keywords:** Corporate social responsibility, smart city, sustainable development.

**Category of the paper:** Conceptual paper.

### 1. Introduction

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been actively discussed for many years in scientific and business circles. The term "corporate social responsibility" was used for the first time by H.R. Bowen in his book published in 1953 entitled Social Responsibility of

Businessman. Despite the fact that the very idea of CSR is a product of the 20th century, it is worth remembering that the thought that business has a certain responsibility towards society has been around for centuries (Adi et al., 2015). According to Bowen (1953), entrepreneurs are obliged to be aware of the expectations, goals and values of the society. Since then, this concept has received many different theoretical approaches. Currently, there is no single definition of CSR. However, a certain evolution of this concept can be noticed, manifested in a gradual departure from its original meaning as philanthropic activity to its multidimensional understanding (Mosca, Civera, 2017). This evolution was caused by the social and economic changes taking place over the years.

Nowadays, the most common definition of corporate social responsibility is that included in the International Standard ISO 26000 Guidance on Social Responsibility of 2010. In the light of this definition, CSR is the responsibility of the organization for its decisions and actions on society and the natural environment. Its goal is the sustainable development of the organization's environment (ISO 26000, 2013). Therefore, the knowledge of the organization's environment becomes a *sine qua non* condition for the CSR effective implementation. Without thorough preparation and analysis of the environment in which the company operates, it is not possible effectively implement the concept of socially responsible business. It is worth remembering that it is not the company that sets the direction of its socially responsible strategy, but the needs of individual stakeholder groups determine the area in which socially responsible activities are expected.

The smart city concept is a multi-dimensional approach to urban development. This concept is based on various assumptions of ontological and epistemological nature regarding the nature of the world, the place of man in it, the model of the development of social reality, etc. The concept of smart city has evolved from the issues of spatial planning and transport associated with it, at the beginning, to an economy based on knowledge and innovations. The concept in its current meaning combines and allows for synergy between competitiveness and sustainable development in urban areas. Nowadays, the term covers six basic issues: economy, environment, people, mobility, quality of life and management. Smart city is the one that performs well now and in the future in these six areas, created by intelligently combining resources and decision-making, independent and committed citizens (Giffinger et al., 2007).

If we consider management to be one of the key elements of a smart city, then only the concept of management based on CSR fits into the model of a smart city implementing the postulate of its sustainable development. The latter concept is therefore crucial for understanding the eponymous concepts and is the element that combines them. One of the main factors of sustainable urban development are, on the one hand, the emphasis on business focused on urban development, and on the other hand, the view that social and environmental sustainability is an important element of smart city development (Caragliu et al., 2011). In recent years, the dynamic development of cities implementing the smart city idea has been achieved through various initiatives aimed at improving the urban infrastructure and services,

as well as improving people's living conditions and protecting the environment. The aim is also to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of cities (Jong et al., 2015). Some authors see the genesis of smart cities in the intelligent use of digital information in areas such as education, urban management, health and energy consumption (Deakin, Al Waer, 2012; Townsend, 2013).

The requirement of sustainable development of the city makes us aware of the need to use natural resources for various types of goods production processes in a way that allows economic, social, and environmental protection (Goonetilleke et al., 2014). Smart cities are the future of sustainable development.

## **2. Benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility**

As mentioned above, there are many definitions of CSR. One of the most frequently used is the one proposed by the European Commission, where we can read: "CSR is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (2010). In the most concise way, it can be said that CSR is a way of running a business that takes into account the benefits of the company's operations for its environment, or more generally, for society. Despite the various difficulties, attempts to define CSR are not pointless. There are various reasons for this, among others, it allows for the creation of a framework explaining the importance of this concept and justifying the expected behavior of the entities involved in its implementation (Sheehy, 2013). Among the latter there are companies themselves, but also scientists, managers, governments and NGO's.

There are also terms used as synonyms for CSR. One of the best known is the term "corporate sustainability". Sustainable corporate development is a concept that is based on achieving long-term shareholder value by incorporating its principles into nine areas: ethics, management, social commitment, transparency, business relations, financial return, product value, employment practices and environmental protection (Epstein, 2008). The concept of sustainable corporate development is therefore a concept based on similar principles as CSR, taking into account only a larger set of elements constituting it. In other words, it is a more detailed approach to the way of doing business that reflects the content of the CSR concept.

The benefits of running a socially responsible business can be various. One can indicate the improvement of the company's image, but also the reduction of costs, more effective implementation of innovations, or more broadly, more effective impact on the entire social and natural environment. A properly implemented concept of CSR will also determine the long term competitive position of an economic entity. Today, many companies see the need to integrate CSR with all their activities. It is caused by many factors, including pressure exerted by various

circles, such as NGOs, ethical committees, trade unions and media but also due to the demand of employees and customers (Khan et al., 2012).

An important element of CSR are activities related to the well-being and safety of employees. Worker well-being includes activities ranging from the provision of educational services to various forms of health support (Mio et al., 2020). Another important element of CSR is workplace safety. Many companies introduce rules regulating the creation of safe working conditions for employees. This also applies to the issue of diversity in the workplace. It is manifested mainly in such characteristics of employees as: "different sex, gender, ethnicity, race, age, political ideologies, religion, language, educational background, physical abilities or socio-economic status, life experiences, and cognitive approaches toward problem-solving" (Adu et al., p. 7). The essence of this approach is not only to employ people with different characteristics, but also to ensure equal working conditions for all employees.

A very important benefit of using CSR is care for the natural environment. It is also a postulate that implements the idea of sustainable development. There are possibly hundreds of definitions of sustainable development. Literally, the most essential feature of sustainable development is the fact that it relates to the maintenance of development over time (Rogers et al., 2012). The idea of sustainable development combines three pillars on which it is based: (1) economy, (2) environment, and (3) society. There are also suggestions in the literature on the subject that another pillar of sustainable development is needed, namely cultural diversity as the source of a more moral, spiritual, ethical, and sustainable lifestyle. All these spheres are joint vessels of a kind. Satisfying the needs of people, both living at present, and the next generations, can only be achieved through actions taking place within culture (Jansen, 2003).

Culture is an ambiguous term. In the most general sense, culture is understood as the entire set of traditional behaviors that have been created by the human race and are successively accepted by each generation. The various existing definitions of culture seem to coincide, however, with the notion that culture is learned, is peculiar to groups of people, and that its content covers a wide range of phenomena, including norms, values, language, worldview, shared meanings, and patterned ways of behaviors (Birukou et al., 2013). Culture is therefore what a man creates not entirely individually but in a community. If we take into account that business is also a part of culture then it becomes clear that cultural considerations make it possible to better understand social expectations towards companies. On the other hand, understanding the mechanisms governing cultural changes makes it possible to adapt the actions taken to the norms and behavior accepted in a given culture. From the point of view of the subject matter of this article, it should be noted that there is a recent trend that manifests itself in the implementation of culture-based development strategies also in urban areas (Lysgård, 2013).

In view of the existence of different cultures, one should agree with the statement that "when it comes to sustainable development not all cultures are equal, some cultures are more equal than others, depending on the political and historical context" (Rogers et al., p. 36).

The question is whether there are cultures in which the implementation of CSR is easier than in others? It seems that this question should be answered in the affirmative. Without going into detail, there is a general rule that the concept of CSR can be most effectively implemented in cultures based on moral principles, where individual rights are respected. For the above reasons, if culture is considered one of the pillars of sustainable development, it is the central one. Some researchers also point to the growing role of values and religion in the CSR strategy in the light of progressing globalization processes (Ramasamy et al., 2010; Xu, Ma, 2022).

The concept of CSR can also be seen from the perspective of the common good. This concept is based on the belief that the company is to serve the community. It should benefit people. To do so, it serves the community by generating high-quality products that focus on consumers' needs (Rumambi, 2016). CSR fits into the perspective that can be called "the humanistic idea of running a business". It consists in the fact that the company as one of the main goals of its activity assumes service for the common good, i.e. the good of all stakeholders. It should be remembered, however, that business does not determine the content of the common good, but is only obliged to act in such a way that the common good is promoted in the community in which it operates (Chamberlain, 2004). In the most general terms, the common good can be defined as "the overall conditions of life in society that allow the different groups and their members to achieve their own perfection more fully and more easily"(Second Vatican Council, 1965). The most important feature of the common good is that it is the good of the entire society as well as its members (Argandoña, 1998).

Summarizing this part of the considerations, the benefits of CSR can be divided into internal and external ones. The former are the benefits obtained as a result of activities undertaken for the benefit of internal stakeholders. The latter concern those that are achieved as a result of activities undertaken for the benefit of external stakeholders. Due to the nature of the benefits obtained they can, in turn, be divided into financial and non-financial ones. Among the latter, qualitative (increased commitment and motivation among employees, innovation, better relations with investors, new more effective models of services or processes), and quantitative (improving reputation, increasing employee productivity, increasing resource efficiency, increasing production efficiency) benefits can be distinguished.

### **3. Smart City as a Sustainable Model of its Development**

Smart city concept is the culmination of a long process of shaping urban space, mainly under the influence of dynamic technological changes. Its predecessors were the concepts of a digital city, an information city, and a sustainable city (Yigitcanlar, 2006). Despite the discussions that have been going on for years, it has still not been possible to work out a commonly accepted definition of a smart city (Hortz, 2016). However, there is agreement

among researchers that smart city is a concept whose elements are smart economy, smart technology, smart mobility, smart and sustainable environment and others (Lara et al., 2016).

The very concept of sustainability is ambiguous one and raises many methodological problems. There are many definitions of this concept and some researchers dealing with the issue of sustainability do not even define this concept (Ciegis et al., (2009). It seems that four basic meanings of this term can be distinguished (Salas-Zapata et al., 2019):

1. Sustainability as a set of guiding criteria for human action.
2. Sustainability as a goal of humankind.
3. Sustainability as an object.
4. Sustainability as an approach of study.

As shown above, the concepts of sustainability are highlighted complementary to each other. The use of a specific one depends on the discipline to which the considerations conducted by a given researcher belong. The term “sustainability” is therefore used with different but similar meanings depending on the scientific discipline in which the research is carried out. This is because research on a sustainable city is interdisciplinary one. Sustainability is one of the most important strategic goals of a smart city (Toli, Murtagh, 2020). An interesting attempt to study the degree of development of a smart city is the so-called CSR Maturity Model for Smart City Assessment (Suliman et al., 2021). It assumes that the key aspects of a smart city are: connectivity, sustainability and resiliency. The aforementioned model describes five levels of smart city development: initial, improved, sustainable, preventive, and proactive. It seems to be an interesting proposition in this regard.

Caragliu et al., (2011) mention the following elements constituting a smart city: (1) emphasis on business focused on city development; (2) emphasis on the development of the creative high-tech industry as essential for the city's development, and (3) social and environmental sustainability. The most important feature of a smart city is the subordination of all elements that make up the urban area to the overarching goal of making the technology environmentally and people-friendly (Jong et al., 2015). A city arranged in such a way creates a social environment that is friendly to residents, safe and sustainable (Lazaroiu, Roscia, 2012). Pichlak (2018) Pichlak (2018), in turn, points to innovation as one of the most important dimensions of a smart city in its various areas.

An interesting approach is presented by Nam and Pardo (2011) who reduce the smart city to three dimensions: population, technology and institutions. Sustainable development and the quality of life of residents are achieved through investments in the development of technology, education of residents, building a civil society, promotion of responsible management of natural resources and ensuring that institutions provide better services for citizens. Vázquez et al. (2018) also point to the quality of life as one of the objectives of urban planning and key dimensions of a smart city.

One can ask about the characteristics of sustainable urban development. The very concept of a sustainable city was popularized in the 90s (Roy, 2009). Since then, there has been a discussion on the concept of a smart city, which resulted in its various models being developed. In its original meaning, the term sustainable city meant a city in which there is a relationship between economy, community and environment. The degree of balance of these elements can be tested using certain indicators ((Ahvenniemi et al., 2017). As in any empirical project, the method of measuring the achieved results is important. When it comes to smart city, an interesting method is called smartainability (Girardi, and Temporelli, 2017). It is based on measuring the benefits of implementing technologies or specific solutions. Despite the recent dominant tendency, expressed in referring to the three distinguished aspects, different scientists put research accents in various ways.

In the light of the above-mentioned discussions, it is interesting to consider sustainable urban development as a state of balance between urban development and environmental protection, also taking into account such issues as social justice, equal opportunities, employment, access to basic services, etc. (Hiremath et al., 2013). The increased interest in a smart city is caused by factors of various nature. These are the already mentioned factors related to technological development, urban population growth, environmental pollution and climate change, globalization and increasing competitiveness. It seems reasonable to ascribe four basic attributes to a sustainable city: (1) Sustainability; (b) Quality of life; (c) Urban aspects, and (d) Intelligence. They can be attributed to four areas of a sustainable city: (1) Society; (2) Environment (3) Economy; and (4) Governance (Carrillo et al., 2014; Yigitcanlar, Lönnqvist, 2013).

Lipińska (2018) rightly points out that cities should be especially socially responsible structures because they are places where substances dangerous to the natural environment are introduced. One should also remember about the potential risk that may arise when implementing the smart city concept. These are primarily: risk of unfavorable change of climate, and risk of increase in cost of living (Morozova, Yatsechko, 2022). These and other risks can be prevented by applying the principles of sustainable city management, taking into account the sphere of values.

Another extremely important issue when it comes to a smart city and its sustainable development is the issue of values. The concept of smart city discussed here, understood in the 21st century as the idea of sustainable urban development, is a model of a new perspective for the development of civilization. One of the most important foundations of any culture is the value system underlying it. There is no single axiology of sustainable development founding the smart city concept. The development of a smart city that focuses solely on its technological aspects may result in the neglect of human factors (Mullagh et al., 2014; Allam, Newman, 2018). Smart city, sometimes equated with technical infrastructure, is more than just any technology or set of technologies (Sadowski, Bendor, 2019). One should be agreed with the view according to which a smart city is not so much a ready-made project, but a continuous

process of implementing smartness understood as a set of ideas, beliefs and visions regarding the way of organizing urban space ((Jasanoff, Kim, 2015). Values are a necessary element of a city understood this way.

A smart city is a place where many, among others, political, economic and technological decisions are made. They must be undertaken if the smart city goal is to be achieved, from an ethical perspective. It seems interesting to propose an "anthropocentric axiom" understood as a perspective in which man is at the center of the social structure and all actions taking place within it (Bianchini, Avila, 2014). Adoption of such an axiom also assumes respect for other living beings. The authors propose as fundamental values: human dignity, freedom, true altruism, and justice. Decisions would be made taking into account the hierarchy of values, where each value is subordinated to a higher one. Unfortunately, the authors do not justify the adopted hierarchy of values. However, the thesis that sees values as the basic factor determining human behavior, including the satisfaction of their basic mental, biological and social needs, seems to be right (Blazy et al., 2021).

It seems that most of the concepts of smart city found in literature place too much emphasis on technology (Govada et al., 2017). Relatively few works deal with the issue of axiology in a smart city. In the context of the issues discussed in this article, it is worth mentioning that all of the above-mentioned smart city areas also have an axiological dimension. The two basic features of a smart city: smartness and sustainability are achievable only if the city's structure is based on values, but also the city itself must become a factor creating values for citizens (Grossi, Trunova, 2021). Creating smart city economic, social, and environmental sustainability can only be achieved by referring to values (Lim et al., 2021). The choice of a value depends on many factors, including culture, geography or religion. However, there is a set of universal values that should become the axiological basis of actions undertaken within CSR and the smart city structure. These values include good, truth, freedom, and justice.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Both the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and the idea of smart city are concepts that are actively discussed in the scientific literature. The basic idea that combines the concepts of CSR and smart city is the idea of sustainable development. The problem of urban development has become particularly relevant in the 21st century as more than half of the world's population now lives in cities. The present century is also seen as the "age of climate change" that threatens not only the quality of life of people but even the survival of humanity. This situation imposes an obligation to make fundamental changes in all spheres of human activity in order to protect the natural environment and provide the living conditions also for future generations.

The main causes of the climate crisis (environmental externalities of the Anthropocene) are the rapid increase in industrialization combined with a rapid growth of population and an irrational use of natural resources. It is accompanied by globalization, urbanization, agricultural intensification, and excessive consumption-driven lifestyles. CSR is a way in which an organization expresses and develops its corporate culture and social awareness. The basis of CSR is the conviction that business is a part of society. This concept has a significant impact on all elements considered important also for a smart city, such as: environmental protection, knowledge transfer, employment creation and labor practices, education and human development.

An important element of smart city is the concept of sustainability. The term sustainable city, according to most researchers, means the balancing of its three dimensions: economy, community and the environment. There are various methods of measuring the degree of balance of these elements. Some scientists emphasize the importance of indicators such as environmental pollution, water and energy consumption, while others point to social and economic factors such as social justice and quality of life. The biggest problem in research on urban sustainability is the ambiguity of this term. The existence of many, sometimes contradictory definitions, makes it difficult to choose the correct understanding of this term and constitutes a significant methodological difficulty. These problems force researchers to avoid defining the concept of sustainability or to analyze it indirectly by studying social and ecological variables.

It turns out that achieving a balance of any of the factors constituting a smart city is not possible without such activities of organizations operating in its area, which we define as corporate social responsibility. Business is an important element of the structure of a smart city and the way it is run determines the implementation of the smart city concept itself.

It is estimated that 60% of the world's population will live in cities by 2030. In view of this fact, we are threatened by their unsustainable development. Sustainable development should be analyzed from a multidisciplinary perspective, taking into account all factors at stake (Escamilla Solano et al., 2017). A very important factor in this sustainability is the involvement of all operating companies in the CSR project.

A very important aspect of both CSR and smart city is the value system that founds them. Including values in the creation of smart cities is necessary because otherwise they will not become a place friendly to residents and the environment. Researching the axiological foundations of smart cities development seems to be one of the main tasks facing scientists dealing with this issue. These analyzes should also take into account the cultural context in which this development takes place.

The aim of this paper was to indicate the connections between two recently discussed concepts: Corporate Social Responsibility and the smart city. The article is of a conceptual nature and as such is just the first step in the emerging further research. These should be interdisciplinary analyzes of the actual development of cities in which business is developed in

the spirit of CSR. Research should take into account the following aspects: environmental, social, sustainable development, and fundamental freedoms and rights. The latter can be ensured in sustainable urban areas only on the condition that the basic values will determine all actions undertaken in the sphere of politics and management.

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