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Abstract Lecture:
Rethinking Responsibility –
CSR and its role for business, society and politics

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Corporate Social Responsibility is a complex issue!

In its purest sense, CSR is a mere business approach. Business in the concept of CSR plays a leading role, focusing on those three pillars: a) to be accountable to its stakeholders b) to manage its core business in a sustainable and responsible manner and c) to act as a corporate citizen. But CSR can be more than just "doing good business" or "doing business good".
From a more global aspect CSR can also involve business and societal actors in the solution of complex problems. By that CSR is a tool to rethink and sharpen the balance between those institutions that are leading actors in a society.
Definitely, CSR is only beginning to reveal its potential as a cross-disciplinary subject.

With its CSR-program, the Bertelsmann Foundation aims to encourage businesses to address their corporate social responsibilities. The program focuses on the companies' role to develop solutions for urgent societal questions on a local, regional and international level. Also, our CSR program strengthens the capabilities of politics and civil society to contribute to problem solving by cooperating with business actors.

Our CSR program at Bertelsmann has three pillars: local, regional and international.

One example for the role of CSR for business and non profit organizations on a local level is an innovative tool called "Market place". That idea helps establishing partnerships between both private and civil organizations.
"Companies for the region" supports regional activities of various companies in the field of CSR by promoting business-partnerships that help to address pressing problems in the community (e.g. lack of qualified labor).
On the international level, the study "The CSR-Navigator" has been released in October last year. That CSR study – the first of its kind - explores how governments can shape a fair and balanced process of globalization. Here is one key finding of that CSR navigator:
Incorporating CSR into national policies can be seen as a first important step towards a new, shared governance approach. The aim of our study is to help rethinking the balance between business, society and politics.

The lecture *Rethinking Responsibility – CSR and its role for business, society and politics* will mainly focus on presenting the key findings and learnings of the above mentioned activities.

"CSR in essence addresses the reconfiguration of the balance between institutions that together make up society."
André Habisch and Jan Jonker in "CSR – A subject with substance? (2005)