

Social Issues in Multinational Corporations Activities Including the Regional Dimension

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Abstract

Publications on the regional nature of multinational enterprises (MNEs) have started debates about the nature and measurement of regionalization. MNEs performance implications are starting to be addressed in scientific literature but the social dimension and its impact on the activities of multinational enterprises have received little attention so far. Social issues have exposed a need for local responsiveness on the part of MNEs. Likewise, international business research on these issues generally has not considered regionalization and its consequences. This paper examines what effect social issues have on MNEs activities when the regional dimension is included in analysis.

Keywords: regionalization, multinational corporations, social issues, corporate social responsibility, country-specific advantages, firm-specific advantages.

Introduction

Research problem and its relevance. As more and more multi-national companies expand their operations globally, their responsibilities extend beyond not only the economic motive of profitability but also other social and environmental factors (Ho et al., 2011). Systemic processes of rapid technological change, enhanced capital mobility and neo-liberally inspired inter-regional competition for investment have focused attention on a need for regional-level interventions among a broad community of academics and policymakers (Coe et al., 2004). There is not enough attention to differential impacts that globalization can have on regions belonging to the same country. For example, most of existing literature concentrates on those regions which were harmed by global forces and lost jobs to the emerging countries often because they specialized in some sectors (such as the European textile sector) where low-cost competition from emerging countries was so important that it significantly hit – if did not wipe out – the pre-existing strengths of regions specializing in traditional manufacturing activities (Affuso et al., 2011).

Most mechanisms of globalization are in principle spatially neutral, that is, they are not

specific to particular regions and are hence supposed not to affect differently regions belonging to the same country (World Bank, 2009). However, the channels through which globalization exerts its effects are managed by different regions through different abilities and endowments of production factors. Moreover, regional specialization is different and, since not all economic sectors are equally open, this brings differential effects which are difficult to counterbalance (Fratesi, 2012).

In the past decade debates about regionalization have started, initially by A. Rugman and R. Hodgetts (2001), who announced the “end” of the global strategy, calling it a “myth”. Presented as a specification of the integration-responsiveness framework, particularly to further explore the “high national responsiveness” dimension; it has evolved as a firm-level manifestation of semi-globalization, which alludes to the fact that markets show neither complete fragmentation nor perfect integration (Kolk, 2010). G. H. Li et al. (2010) emphasize that two main streams of global management can be identified. Multinational corporations (hereinafter MNEs) need to consider and balance two imperatives: global integration and local responsiveness as well as the key issue - when and how to globalize. This can be done by adopting regional strategies, which simultaneously enjoy the benefits of global integration and local responsiveness.

In the scientific literature (Rugman, Hodgetts, 2001; Rugman, Oh, 2010; Rugman, Verbeke, 2008; Banalieva et al., 2012; Li et al., 2010; Coe et al., 2010; Oh, Rugman, 2012) on the nature of MNEs regional and global factors which could influence the activities of MNEs are analyzed. However, social factors and their impact on the activities of multinational enterprises are almost dismissed. Social issues have exposed a need for local responsiveness on the part of MNEs (Kolk, 2010).

Research of Lithuanian scientists has not analyzed regionalization and its impact on MNEs activities so far. In the literature, only social issues and they influence on the business environment

were examined. V. Jušcius (2007, 2008) analyzed the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), A. Žėkienė, J. Ruževičius (2011) examined social responsible investment. Cultural aspects and social responsibility in management and organizational management were analyzed by R. Pučėnaitė (2009), L. Šimanskienė, J. Paužuolienė (2010a, 2010b, and 2010c), A. Astromskienė et al. (2010), R. Arlauskienė, V. Vanagienė (2011). R. Kovaliov et al. (2010, 2011a, 2011b), V. Gižienė et al. (2011), D. Štreimikienė, R. Pušėnaitė (2009) analyzed the role of the Lithuanian state and a social policy model in the process and development of social responsibility.

International and Lithuanian business research on social issues has generally not considered regionalization and its consequences. This paper examines how social issues can affect the activities of multinational corporations, including analysis of the regional dimension.

Research object: MNEs activities.

Research objective: to analyze what effects of social issues on MNEs activities are, including the regional dimension.

Research goals:

1. To analyze the concept of regionalization.
2. To identify social issues in multinational corporations activities.
3. To analyze what effects of social issues on MNEs activities are.

Research methods: comparative analysis of the scientific literature and generalization.

Regionalization

The new regional literature (Rugman, 2005; Rugman, Verbeke, 2004; Oh, Rugman, 2012; Rugman, Verbeke, 2008) demonstrates that the world's largest MNEs operate regionally rather than globally. Small and medium size MNEs, according to C. H. Oh and A. M. Rugman (2012), also show regional orientation. Some criticism of the regionalization thesis comes from misinterpretations of the perspective that MNEs are unlikely to be sourced through a global supply chain but rather through regional clusters. Firstly, research on the regional perspective examines the economic and spatial tendency of firms (in particular large MNEs) and should not be interpreted as a perspective of sociological or political behavior. Secondly, the regionalization hypothesis is a semi-globalization phenomenon (Rugman, Oh, 2010).

A. Kolk (2010) highlights that the emergence of regionalization can be placed in the context of earlier attention to local-global distinctions, which pointed the need for MNEs to combine local responsiveness and global or regional integration. In fact, regional integration, or the so-called new regionalism, has gone

beyond preferential tariff reduction toward deeper integration and liberalization of the world economy. Moreover, macroeconomic and institutional factors, according to C. H. Oh and A. M. Rugman (2012), provide favorable environments to MNEs that operate within their home region. A. M. Rugman and C. H. Oh (2010) underlined that related empirical literature on regionalization finds that regionalism increases international trade between member countries but does not harm non-member countries. The effects of trade agreements on the level of regionalization and trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) vary across the agreements.

Regionalization can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, regionalization can be the first best solution in a firm's internationalization process. Internationalization occurs as a result of a firm's drive to grow and maximize its benefits across diverse geographic locations. These locational factors can provide country-specific advantages (CSAs). These factors may include natural resource endowments (minerals, energy, forests), human capital, technological resources, institutional factors, demand, labor force, associated culture factors and other potential strategic assets (Rugman, Oh, 2010; Rugman, Li, 2007; Banalieva, Santoro, 2009). A firm enters foreign markets to exploit its non-location-bound firm-specific (resources) advantages (FSAs), subject to the constraint of the liability of foreignness, and it needs to learn how to offset the risk of foreign activity (learning how to exploit CSAs) against the benefits of FSAs. Therefore, an MNE's performance in the foreign market is the outcome of interaction between two types of factors, CSAs and FSAs (Rugman, Oh, 2010). These factors are illustrated in Figure 1. Regional expansion may maximize a firm's performance and would thus create an optimal level of internationalization.

Secondly, regionalization can be a process toward globalization. In this way it could be argued whether regionalization is an inter-temporal second-best solution to a firm's internationalization process. Most internationalization theories, according to A. M. Rugman and C. H. Oh (2010), support a gradual expansion of MNEs into foreign markets or regions. A fully internationalized MNE can make best use of its perfectly substitutable non-location bound of FSAs across geographic locations and will expand its geographic territories. Since a firm's internal resources (or FSAs) are not perfectly interchangeable but are capable of development, a firm can use a regional strategy in the early stage of internationalization. It gains FSAs, such as scale economies and expansion of its brand, by going to nearby geographic areas with which it has some familiarity. After it learns from such regional economic expansion, it can then go to

other regions. In this sense, regionalism is a learning process for the firm. G. H. Li et al. (2010) underline that there are barriers for a MNE to transfer its FSAs across regions and suggest that a multinational corporation should adopt different strategies based on

its position in each region. In one region it may play a leading role. In another region it may play the role of a follower. These different roles should be decided by MNEs after considering their location-bound and non-location bound FSAs (Rugman, Verbeke 2004).

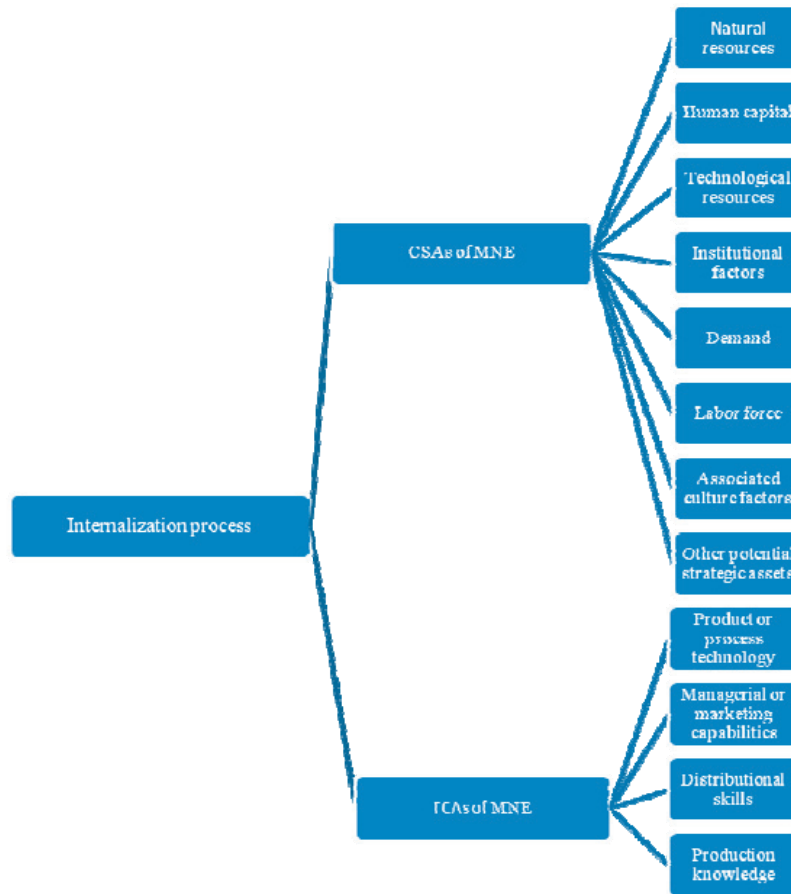


Fig. 1. Country-specific advantages and firm-specific advantages influenced by internalization process
Source: composed by author.

E. R. Banalieva et al. (2012) emphasize that multinational corporations would experience advantages from regionalization and, hence, greater technical efficiency from a high home region focus. In regions with high regional economic integration the countries tend to have high economic interdependence characterized by complementary factor endowments. This, in turn, expands the range of inputs available to MNEs and allows such producers to match more efficiently and effectively their inputs to newly-available technologies. On the other hand, C. H. Oh and A. M. Rugman (2012) suggest that firms should analyze not only opportunities in foreign countries but also the costs and risks that arise from operations in these countries. These costs and risks arise from four dimensions of distance: cultural, administrative/political, geographic and economic. However, in reality MNEs integrate their upstream and downstream operations in their home region due to regional economic integration and their region-bound FSAs.

To summarize, MNEs can experience advantages from regionalization but firms should analyze the costs and risks that arise from operations in other countries or regions. There is a need for multinational corporations to combine local responsiveness and regional integration. Moreover, MNEs must improve their regional responsiveness, so that most of their activities can stay within a foreign region (i.e., produce and sell in the same region).

Social issues in MNEs activities

Attention to social issues in relation to international business has increased in recent years (Galbreath, 2006; Hermann, 2004; Ho et al., 2011; Kolk, 2010; Williams, Aguilera, 2008; Jušcius, 2007, 2008; Orbie, Babarinde, 2008) although different terms have been used, including sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Regardless of a wide recognition of CSR in various fields of research (Jussila et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2012; Reimann et al.,

2012), academics have not come to an agreement on how to answer some of the fundamental questions, such as “What is social responsibility of an enterprise?” Traditionally, social responsibility has been about obeying the law. According to Zhao et al. (2012), CSR is the concept which encompasses corporate sustainability expression with business operations to foster ongoing development and has become a matter of interest for companies in various business sectors from the mid-1990s onwards. Commitment is required from corporations with relation to planning and implementing CSR with existing research showing that potential benefits of implementing CSR include enhancement of a brand image and improvement of financial performance.

MNEs have become more sensitive and responsive to the problems and needs of the local business environments and now take the initiative to lead broad-scale CSR efforts to bring about a positive change in the local workplaces and communities in the countries or regions in which they operate (Reimann et al., 2012). Crossing national borders often leads organizations to encounter customers, employees and suppliers who possess unfamiliar perceptions of right and wrong. Differing perspectives on bribery, intellectual property rights, negotiation techniques, personnel practices and a host of other issues may cause managerial and legal problems for organizations that operate in multiple cultures (Franke, Nadler, 2008). International operations of MNEs are influenced by two imperatives as indicated by the Integration-Responsiveness (I-R) Framework (Kolk, 2010). Each industry has its fitted strategy according to the industry’s cost factors, technological intensity, the degree of market concentration, channel concentration and the economies of scale, the standardization of market demand and so on (Li, et al., 2010). When MNEs develop their strategies and functional policies, they need to consider these industrial factors. If managers perceive industry pressures predominantly at the domestic level, locally responsive strategies will be emphasized; alternatively, there will be emphasized global integration strategies. MNEs might adopt a regional strategy when they perceive a pressure to balance global integration and local responsiveness. Once the social expectation is created, a number of other forces, including consumer demands, institutional investor demands, community demands, NGO demands, interact to create incentives for firms to meet the standards set out in them whether enforcement is a realistic threat or not (Williams, Aguilera, 2008). MNEs increasingly need to consider local values and social consequences of their activities. Such consideration is required for them to gain legitimacy

for their business activities expressing the notion that, among local stakeholders, the presence of the firm is desirable and deserves acceptance and support (Reimann et al., 2012).

A. Affuso et al. (2011) emphasize that regional economies, in fact, differ in terms of their ‘vulnerability’ to international trade integration. The most vulnerable regions are those that specialize in industries particularly exposed to international trade. Whereas J. Orbie and O. Babarinde (2008) underline that trade and development policies are the main vehicles that advance its social objective on the international scene. Thus, the main challenge is to incorporate social objectives into its trade and development instruments. So, through socially responsible business practices that, *inter alia*, treat labor humanely and according to the international standards, businesses could be agents of positive development. MNEs can be held responsible for the success or failure of social responsibility as part of sustainable development.

Environmental and social issues have exposed the need for local responsiveness on the part of MNEs and for balancing a range of stakeholder concerns in both, home and host, countries. However, even in the studies that consider multi-domestic, global and transnational strategies in relation to labor, environmental, community and ethical issues, according to A. Kolk (2010), the regional dimension has not been included, leaving the intermediate level between local and global and the implications for MNE strategy largely unexplored.

K. K. Herrmann (2004) suggests that CSR relates to continued economic growth without detriment to the environment and exploitation of human workforce through inadequate labor standards. F. N. Ho et al. (2011) underline that the principles of social responsibility accept the existence and importance of both economic and CSR of companies; in other words, rather than being mutually exclusive, economic responsibility is a component of social responsibility. Therefore, economic development becomes a relevant factor to test the effects of culture on ethics. There is a link between corporate social performance and national culture, geographic region and the level of economic development (Ho et al., 2011).

MNEs are thought to make a positive contribution to the development of underdeveloped countries through their investments, products, services, strategies and policies. More specifically, MNEs contribute to the development of less-developed countries by providing access to technological and management expertise, investment and employment, and training for all levels of the

employment hierarchy. CSR policies will vary among industries and among companies within those industries but three main areas, that CSR policies will influence, can be identified:

- CSR requires the implementation of socially responsible core business activities that minimize negative impacts and optimize positive impacts.
- Companies should institute poverty-focused social investment and philanthropy programs such that their contributions to host communities and social causes become integral to the company's strategy.
- CSR requires corporations to become engaged in public policy dialogues and institution-building with the goal of fostering an environment that is conducive to both profitable business and sustainable development (Herrmann, 2004).

It should be noted that social issues and their impact on the activities of MNEs are different, depending on the industry. Between social and, generally, sustainability issues A. Kolk (2010) has mentioned:

- green issues, such as climate change, pollution and resource depletion;
- the potential impact on people (inside and outside the MNE, mostly communities and workers);
- and societal repercussions: those aspects that may lead to responses on the part of regulators and other stakeholders and that MNEs face in their activities across borders in particular.

F. Reimann et al. (2012) indicates that issues that frequently fall under the rubric of CSR include:

- people-oriented aspects, such as human rights, philanthropy and safety;
- environmentally-oriented aspects, such as resource efficiency and end-of-pipe emission reduction;
- and ethical aspects, such as refraining from deceitful business practices.

The term 'working conditions' refers to social aspects of employment inside the walls of the firm, such as provision of healthcare, retirement security and adequate rest hours. Meanwhile community development considers social activities beyond the

boundaries of the firm. It includes engagement by the firm with charitable causes or active improvement of the local infrastructure, such as education and healthcare systems.

A. Kolk (2010) claims that issues can be local, regional and/or global, and this also applies to the policy of responses (which can take place at one or more levels). There are clearly global issues, such as climate change, but even in such a case some parts of the world are more directly harmed than others and in policy terms it is subject to local and regional solutions in view of very divergent regulatory, societal, economic and natural circumstances. Other issues are more regional or (sub) national in nature or occur in specific parts of populations across countries. Examples with varying characteristics include (cross-boundary) water and air pollution, soil degradation, biodiversity loss, child labor, poverty, human rights.

What matters in particular is the extent to which MNEs perceive an issue to be global, regional or local, and thus whether they judge that it should be handled at the level of corporate headquarters, regional centers or local subsidiaries. When operating abroad, MNEs are supposed to be locally responsive and are often asked to do more than local firms and they face a liability of foreignness. Still, human rights violations, divergent perceptions of child labor, product safety issues and environmental spills and pollution causing widespread societal concerns occur more often in high distance host regions than in home regions, with concomitant reputational risks and other costs as a result of a greater need for linking investments. Thus, according to A. Kolk (2010), societal and sustainability considerations may offer for them (additional) reasons for preferring intra-regional instead of inter-regional internationalization.

The main implications (particularly firm-specific and country-specific advantages) related to regionalization and issue-specific factors (i.e. social issues) are summarized in Table 1. This table could help to understand how MNEs may need to deal with variety, interconnectedness and complexity.

Table 1

Factors/lenses to study regionalization/globalization and social dimensions

Factors	Components
1) Firm-specific factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geographic scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Predominantly local, remainder mostly ROR – Predominantly local, remainder mostly ROW – Regional – Global • Upstream / downstream • Corporate / Subsidiaries/Business Units

2) Country-specific factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home / Host • Large / Small • Developed/Emerging / Least-developed
3) Industry-specific factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing / Services: More detailed subsectors • Globally integrated / Multi-domestic • Degree of salience of an issue for an industry
4) Issue-specific factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on specific countries / sectors • Local/Regional / Global • Vulnerability (Liability)/Strategic Opportunities (FSA development)

Source: Kolk, 2010.

In the first few rows of Table 1, the main implications related to the regionalization literature (Rugman, Oh, 2010; Rugman, Li, 2007; Banalieva, Santoro, 2009; Rugman, Verbeke, 2004; Li et al., 2010) are summarized that have been discussed in the first part of the paper, looking particularly at firm-specific, country-specific and, to some extent, industry-specific factors. It should be noted that several of components can be placed against one another, for example, geographic scope versus upstream/downstream or MNE structure; this has already been done to some extent by A. Rugman and A. Verbeke (2008). In the fourth row of Table 1, issue-specific, related to the firm, country or industry factors are summarized. This might be seen as exemplary of the uncertainties that require experimentation and thus can help shed light on how MNEs may need to deal with variety, interconnectedness and complexity (Kolk, 2010).

An overall assessment of the impact of social dimensions on the firm strategy and operations has proven to be difficult. Such an approach helps to differentiate between dimensions and topics that become important to firms or not, and account can also be taken of the lifecycle of issues. Studying social issues and regionalization, we can rely on some examples. According to A. Kolk (2010), incidents are less likely to happen in the home region because control over production and sourcing is higher and regulations and societal expectations converge more towards those in the home country than in the case when comparing host regions to the domestic situation. A distinction should be made between developed, emerging and least-developed economies, as these three types of setting differ and so do risks and possibilities for FSA development. However, even within a developed country, lower-distance context, there are considerable differences, e.g. between the US, Europe and Japan. The example of Walmart in China may serve as a brief illustration studying regionalization and social dimensions. According to A. Kolk (2010), Walmart suffered from a bad reputation domestically in the social realm but remarkably opposite was the case in China (there it

ranked amongst the most popular MNEs and was awarded the best employer in the country). This appears to be an interesting case of “being good while being bad”, although in a different way in lower-standard countries. Regionalization and social issues can be studied, for example, by analyzing what impacts are of social issue on specific sectors in developed, emerging or least-developed countries, etc.

J. Galbreath (2006) claims that firms must address the issue of whether to adapt to the socially responsible norms of a national or regional culture (relativism approach) or to impose an international standard of CSR (universalism approach) regardless of the cultural norms of a specific country or region of operation. According to Z. Y. Zhao et al. (2012), that a corporate culture incorporating strong commitment to certain social values can attract and maintain the best employees, increase productivity and avoid legal infractions; thus, lowering the costs associated with them in short, to obtain better results in financial terms. Many consumers prefer to purchase products from companies that care for the environment and maintain good citizenship behavior; this is also the case with investors preferring to invest in the same types of organizations for the same typical reasons. Z. Y. Zhao et al. (2012) emphasize that there are large and growing markets for the products and services of companies that are perceived to be socially responsible. According to F. Reimann et al. (2012), CSR allows MNEs to demonstrate that they are not just exploiting the local resource base, but that the host region benefits from their presence both in terms of the residents’ quality of life and of economic progress. Z. Y. Zhao et al. (2012) emphasize that there is a clear relationship between high corporate social performance and high financial performance with industry set as boundary condition. Another motivation of adopting CSR practise is a potential change of reputation and social image. MNE, which is considered socially responsible, can benefit both by its enhanced reputation within the public as well as its reputation within the business community and at the same time increase its ability to attract capital and trading partners.

It must be emphasized that organizations may encounter ethical conflicts when operating in the areas that differ from their home country in uncertainty avoidance, power distance, economic development or other cultural dimensions. Finding partners with compatible principles promotes trust and long-term business success (Franke, Nadler, 2008). Resolving conflicts may require sensitivity to competing aims and attitudes. Preparing to recognize and deal with differences in ethical perceptions across countries is a challenging but necessary aspect of organizations' participation in the global marketplace.

To summarize, social issues are likely to differ in salience per industry and they may be global, regional and local, but what matters in particular is how MNEs perceive the predominant level and thus decide to handle it at respectively corporate headquarters, regional centers or local subsidiaries.

Conclusions

Regionalization can be interpreted in two ways: the first best solution of a firm's internationalization process; regionalization can be a process toward globalization. It also can be analyzed as a learning process to a firm.

Social issues are: green issues, environment-oriented aspects, societal repercussions and ethical aspects. Social issues and their impact on the activities of MNEs are different, depending on the industry. Moreover, issues can be local, regional and/or global.

The implementation of social issues in MNEs activities can help to: attract and maintain the best employees, increase productivity and avoid legal infractions, obtain better results in financial terms, attract capital and trading partners, can change reputation and social image.

Social issues and their impact on the activities of MNEs are different, depending on the industry, country and region. MNEs are often asked to be more locally responsive than local firms when operating abroad; thus, it can be a reason for such firms to prefer intra-regional instead of inter-regional internationalization.

An overall assessment of the impact of social issues on the operation of the firm is difficult to prove because of different regulatory, social, economic and political circumstances.

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Socialinių veiksmų poveikis tarptautinių įmonių veiklai regionalizavimo aspektu

Santrauka

Tarptautinėms kompanijoms plečiant veiklą visame pasaulyje, didėja jų atsakomybė siekti ne tik ekonominio motyvo – pelningumo, bet ir prisidėti prie socialinių problemų sprendimo (Ho et al., 2011). Sisteminiai ir spartūs technologiniai pokyčiai, didesnis kapitalo mobilumas lėmė tarpregioninę konkurenciją ir susidomėjimą regioninio lygmens intervencijų poveikiu. Be to, regionai tampa pagrindiniai ekonominiai vienetai globaliu mastu. Yra skatinama regioninė konkurencija ir bendradarbiavimas regiono viduje, siekiant pagerinti konkurencinę poziciją. Mokslinėje literatūroje (Affuso et al., 2011) mažai dėmesio skiriama tiriant globalizacijos poveikį valstybių regionų išsivystymui. Daugiausia dėmesio skiriama tik tiems regionams, kurie nukentėjo nuo globalių jėgų pasikeitimo ir specializa-

cijos tik tam tikruose sektoriuose (pvz., Europos tekstilės sektorius).

Dauguma globalizacijos mechanizmų iš esmės yra neutralūs, t. y. nėra būdingi konkreitiems regionams ar šalims, todėl buvo manoma, kad jie neturėtų skirtingai paveikti regionų, priklausančių tai pačiai valstybei. Kiekvienam regionui būdingi saviti gebėjimai ir gamybos veiksniai. Be to, skiriasi ir regioninė specializacija. Būtina pažymėti, kad ne visi regionai yra vienodai atviri, o tai turi įtakos skirtingiems globalizacijos efektams, kuriuos sunku subalansuoti (Fratesi, 2012).

Straipsnyje teigiama, kad praėjusį dešimtmetį prisidėjo diskusijos apie regionalizacijos sampratą, kai Rugman ir Hodgetts (2001) paskelbė, kad globali strategija yra

mitas, nes rinkoms nebūdingas nei visiškas susiskaidymas, nei tobula integracija. Tarptautinės kompanijos turi suderinti dvi būtinybes: globalią integraciją ir vietinę atsakomybę bei pasirinkti, kada ir kaip plėtoti globalią strategiją. Šio tikslo galima pasiekti tik naudojant regionines strategijas, kurios gali suteikti privalumų tiek iš globalizacijos proceso, tiek iš vietinės atsakomybės. Tai paskatino tarptautinių kompanijų regioninės prigimties ir regionalizacijos matavimo tyrimus. Mokslinėje literatūroje (Rugman, Hodgetts, 2001; Rugman, Oh, 2010; Rugman, Verbeke, 2008; Banalieva et al., 2012; Li et al., 2010; Coe et al., 2010; Oh, Rugman, 2012) buvo pradėtas analizuoti tarptautinių įmonių įsitraukimas į regionalizacijos procesą, tačiau socialiniai klausimai ir jų poveikis tokių įmonių veiklai nesusilaukė deramo dėmesio. Be to, tyrimuose tarptautinio verslo klausimais nebuvo nagrinėta, kaip regionalizacija gali paveikti socialinius veiksmus.

Tyrimo *tikslas* – išanalizuoti, kaip socialiniai klausimai gali veikti tarptautinių kompanijų veiklą, ir analizę įtraukiant regionalizavimo aspektą.

Straipsnyje analizuojama naujoji regioninė literatūra (Rugman, 2005; Rugman, Verbeke, 2004; Oh, Rugman, 2012; Rugman Verbeke, 2008), kurioje teigiama, kad didžiausios pasaulio tarptautinės kompanijos veikia regioniniu, o ne globaliu mastu. Mažoms ir vidutinėms korporacijoms taip pat būdinga regioninė orientacija. Kolk (2010) pabrėžia, kad regionalizacijos sąvokos atsiradimas gali būti nagrinėjamas ir vietinių–globalių skirtumų kontekste, todėl tarptautinės korporacijos turi derinti vietinę atsakomybę su globalia ar regionine integracija. Tiesą sakant, regioninė integracija, arba vadinamasis naujasis regionalizmas, peržengė lengvatinių muitų tarifų mažinimo ribas, ir yra kelias gilesnės integracijos ir pasaulio ekonomikos liberalizavimo link. Be to, makroekonominiai ir instituciniai veiksniai, remiantis Oh ir Rugman (2012), sudarė palankias sąlygas tarptautinėms kompanijoms, veikiančioms gimtajame regione.

Nagrinėjant socialinių klausimų galimą įtaką tarptautinių kompanijų veiklai, kai ir analizę įtraukiama regioninė dimensija, buvo suformuluotos šios pagrindinės išvados:

- Regionalizacija gali būti interpretuojama dvejopai. Pirmą, regionalizacija – pirmasis geriausias sprendimas įmonės internacionalizacijos procese. Regioninė plėtra gali maksimizuoti įmonės veiklą ir sukurti optimalų internacionalizacijos lygį. Antra, regionalizacija gali būti interpretuojama kaip procesas globalizacijos link. Būtina pažymėti, kad tai gali būti suprantama kaip antusias geriausias sprendimas įmonės internacionalizacijos procese. Rugman ir Oh (2010) teigimu, dauguma internacionalizacijos teorijų palaiko laipsnišką įmonių plėtrą į užsienio rinkas ar regionus.
- Socialiniai klausimai ir jų poveikis tarptautinių įmonių veiklai skiriasi – tai priklauso nuo pramonės šakos, regiono, šalies. Tarp socialinių klausimų paminėtini šie: „žalieji“ klausimai (pvz., klimato kaita, tarša, gamtinių išteklių išekvojimas), galimas poveikis žmonėms (tarptautinių kompanijų viduje ir išorėje, pagrinde bendruomenėms ir darbuotojams) ir socialiniai padariniai, t. y. tie aspektai, su kuriais tarptautinės kompanijos susiduria tarpvalstybiniu lygmeniu (Kolk, 2010, Reimann et al., 2012; Franke, Nadler, 2008). Be to, tokie veiksniai gali būti skirstomi į vietinius, regioninius ir / ar globalius, atsižvelgiant į kiekvienos valstybės politiką ir suinteresuotų grupių spaudimą. Iš tarptautinių kompanijų neretai reikalaujama būti atsakingesnėmis už vietines įmones. Socialinių klausimų įtraukimas į tarptautinių kompanijų veiklą gali jas paskatinti veikti tik regiono ar vienos šalies ribose, o ne globaliai.
- Socialinių klausimų įtraukimas į tarptautinių kompanijų veiklos regionines strategijas gali padėti joms pritraukti ir išlaikyti geriausius darbuotojus; padidinti produktyvumą; išvengti teisinių pažeidimų; sumažinti sąnaudas, dėl to, būtų pasiekti geresni finansiniai rezultatai; išplėsti užimamą rinkos dalį ar pradėti veiklą naujose rinkose; pasiekti regioninius išteklius; pagerinti reputaciją ir įmonės įvaizdį; sustiprinti prekės ženklą; pritraukti kapitalą ir prekybos partnerius; gauti „veiklos licenciją“ regionuose, kuriuose korporacijos vykdo savo veiklą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: regionalizacija, tarptautinės organizacijos, socialinės problemos, įmonių socialinė atsakomybė.

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