

Collective shared value creation (CSV): An emergent strategy for cluster management organizations

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Abstract

Purpose: While cluster management organizations (CMOs) have been overwhelmingly targeted at the economic goal of increasing firm-level productivity, policymakers are starting to experiment with a broader use for cluster policies that seeks to also tackle social goals in approaches aligned with the concept of Creating Shared Value (CSV). However, there remains a gap in conceptual understanding around the specific roles that CMOs might play in overcoming the barriers faced by SMEs for CSV. Bridging this gap presents an opportunity for cluster practitioners and policy makers in a context in which environmental and social sustainability are at the top of policy agendas.

Approach: Based on analysis of literature around the concepts of CSV, transactions cost theory and emergent strategy, we define the contours of a new conceptual framework for the roles that CMOs can play in fostering 'collective CSV'. We illustrate how the different components of the framework are reflected in emerging cluster practice in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and a new wave of European cluster-based projects tackling CSV elements.

Findings: The resulting framework reconciles the concepts of clusters and CSV by explicitly positioning CMOs as intermediaries for facilitating the CSV strategies of SMEs. CMOs develop emergent strategies that target (tangible and intangible) collective CSV capabilities and address collective CSV challenges. Collective CSV can provide a theoretical anchor guiding future cluster policies to fully leverage the transformative potential of CMOs and the conceptual framework opens a promising empirical research agenda, particularly around evaluating the plurality of impacts of CMOs.

Originality: By stressing the social impact of CMOs alongside their well-understood economic impacts, and by enabling a categorization of functions that can support the monitoring of CMO activities towards collective CSV strategies, the framework provides a novel basis for understanding clusters as a demand-side policy and inspiring further empirical research into the evidencing of these roles.

Keywords

Collective CSV, cluster management organization, emergent strategy, collective reputation.