



# How do Russian National Systems of Institutional Absences Shape Insensitive Corporate Environmental Violence of a Russian Extractive Multinational Corporation?

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## Abstract

Aiming to develop normative recommendations for preventing corporate irresponsibility (CiR), business and society scholars have adopted strategic approaches—exploring the causal links between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and profitability—and moral approaches—exploring the moral principles of CSR that guide managers. However, some business ethics scholars have recently argued that these studies are too simplistic as they disregard the systemic logics of broader institutional environments that generate ‘bad apples’ firms and managers. Drawing on literature that sheds light on the systemic origin of CiR (i.e. the comparative institutionalist perspective and the critical management perspective), we conduct an in-depth case study on how Russian systems of institutional absences shape insensitive corporate environmental violence of a Russian extractive multinational corporation. In doing so, we develop a novel cultural approach to the analysis of CiR that advances knowledge about the systemic origin of CiR in two ways. First, this approach allows for identifying how the sources of CiR are located within firms’ home national systems of institutional absences, which shape systemic logics of CiR that make corporate violence less traceable by firms and broader society. Second, this approach allows for identifying how governments can sustain and perpetuate insensitive corporate violence through the deliberate and systemic absenting of national institutions that could pressure firms to be more socially and environmentally responsible, thus making negative consequences of corporate violence invisible to firms and broader society. We propose future research directions and suggest policy changes in Russia and other countries with similar systems of institutional absences.

**Keywords** Corporate environmental irresponsibility · National institutional absences · Insensitive corporate violence · Russia

## Introduction

Despite the growing stakeholder pressure on firms to behave responsibly, corporate irresponsibility (CiR)—or firms’ actions that cause harm to different groups of individuals or natural environment (Mena et al., 2016)—still recurs all around the world. For instance, in May 2020, Russian-based Nor Nickel—the world’s largest nickel and palladium firm—contaminated two rivers and an entire lake near the

Arctic city of Norilsk, spilling more than 20,000 tons of diesel fuel into the water. This accident, resulting in 180,000 square metres of polluted water and land within the Arctic Circle, has added to the list of the most notorious cases of corporate environmental irresponsibility in the global mining and extractive industry, along with the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989, the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, and BHP Billiton’s deadly iron ore dam burst in Brazil in 2015.

To develop normative recommendations for preventing such recurring cases of CiR, business and society scholars, who explicitly “aspire to grander aims, namely, to make a difference to society”, have taken two broad approaches: *strategic* and *moral* (Wry, 2009, p. 151). The strategic approach examines causal links between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and firms’ profitability to develop normative recommendations for firms on how being

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strategically responsible can increase or secure firms' profits in the long term (Orlitzky et al., 2003; Waddock & Graves, 1997). The moral approach draws on various normative ethical theories (e.g. Rawlsian principles of justice or Kantian principles of deontology) to develop normative recommendations for firms on how various ethical principles of CSR should guide managers regardless of whether such behaviour is profitable.

Wry (2009, p. 151–152) has argued that “while these approaches have catalysed the attention and efforts of business and society scholars”, they are too simplistic in their tacit ethical assumption that a detailed investigation “into good and bad acts and firm-level decision-making” of rational and opportunistic firms is a suitable site to make a difference to society. Wry (2009, p. 157) further posited that by relying on financial or ethical levers only, these approaches tend to offer blanket arguments that “are bereft of context in ways that obscure their implications for practical implementation”. While recognising that firm-level behaviour is not unimportant to investigate, Wry (2009) suggested that in pursuing their normative aims, business and society scholars should increasingly adopt cultural approaches (e.g. critical realism and institutional theory), which explicitly recognise the more complex roots of firms' behaviour, to provide tools for its critical investigation within broader institutional contexts.

More recently, Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros (2020) echoed Wry's (2009) critique, stating that focusing only on individual or firm-level responsibilities of ‘bad apples’, while disregarding the systemic logics of broader institutional environments that generate these ‘bad apples’ in the first place, is not enough to avoid recurring cases of CiR. Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros (2020) argue that it is important to examine macro-level institutional structures that embed firms and shape their irresponsible behaviour by uncovering how these structures subjugate and suppress life. However, despite Wry's (2009) and Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros' (2020) call for examining the more complex, cultural roots of CiR by looking at the effects of systemic logics of broader institutional environments on CiR, little empirical research has been devoted to this scholarly inquiry.

In this study, we respond to the calls of Wry's (2009) and Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros (2020) by engaging with the two cultural perspectives that have shed some light on the systemic origin of CiR. The comparative institutionalist perspective argues that CiR takes a form of absent or non-effective CSR and tends to recur in developing countries, as these countries lack national institutions that could pressure firms to behave responsibly (Bansal & Kistruck, 2006; Matten & Moon, 2008; Tashman et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2014). The critical management perspective argues that CSR can be infused with particular meanings that factually

engender CiR (Benson, 2017; Prasad & Holzinger, 2013; Zueva and Fairbrass, 2019). CiR often manifests as insensitive corporate violence that is, according to Chowdhury (2019), a form of violence with limited traceability (i.e. it is difficult to identify who did what to commit such violence) and invisible negative consequences (i.e. victims of violence are devalued by the systems within which such violence is carried out). Insensitive corporate violence recurs in countries with exploitative and uncooperative socio-structures that are ideologically sustained and perpetuated by powerful social actors, such as governments and large corporations, who, for their own benefit, aim to sustain exploitation of the victims of insensitive violence (Banerjee, 2008; Chowdhury, 2020, 2021).

However, the above cultural perspectives have theoretical gaps that, we argue, must be addressed for our understanding of the systemic origin of CiR to be advanced. Specifically, the comparative institutionalist perspective lacks an empirically driven explanation of how firms' home national systems of institutional absences shape CiR. In contrast, the critical management perspective lacks an empirically driven explanation of how firms' national institutional environments shape insensitive corporate violence. We fill these gaps by engaging with these perspectives “in a way that builds capacity for those frameworks to analyse ethical issues” (Greenwood & Freeman, 2018, p. 4) through an in-depth case study of how Russian systems of institutional absences shape insensitive corporate environmental violence of a Russian extractive multinational corporation (MNC). In doing so, we develop a novel cultural approach to the analysis of CiR, which depicts the mechanisms of how CiR is shaped by systemic logics of insensitive corporate violence, which are (re)produced by institutional absences within firms' home political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems.

By “studying more instances of insensitive violence that are difficult to detect because of limited traceability and its consequences” (Chowdhury, 2019, p. 3), our study advances knowledge about the systemic origin of CiR in two ways. First, we demonstrate how the sources of CiR are located within firms' home national systems of institutional absences that shape systemic logics, thus making corporate violence less traceable by firms and broader society. In doing so, our study extends prior research (Alcadipani & de Oliveira Medeiros, 2020; Wry, 2009) that has pointed to the limits of strategic and moral approaches to CSR to develop normative recommendations that can effectively prevent CiR. Second, we show how firms' home governments can sustain and perpetuate insensitive corporate violence not by infusing CSR with meanings that factually engender CiR (Zueva and Fairbrass, 2019), but more importantly, by deliberately and systemically absenting national institutions that could pressure firms to be more socially and environmentally responsible,

thus making negative consequences of corporate violence invisible to firms and broader society. In doing so, our study fine-tunes prior research (Banerjee, 2008; Chowdhury, 2019, 2020, 2021; Zueva and Fairbrass, 2019) that has conceptualised the role of powerful social actors in sustaining and perpetuating corporate violence and institutional environments that make this violence insensitive.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the following section, we present a review of the literature that examines the systemic origin of CiR—the comparative institutionalist perspective and the critical management perspective—to formulate a research question that requires further investigation. In the methodology section, we introduce the research context and design of our case study, outline how we collected data, and explain our data analysis process. In the findings section, we present how institutional absences within Russian political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems shape the systemic logics of the researched MNC's insensitive environmental violence. Then we develop a framework of systemic logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence, discuss how our study advances business and society scholarship, outline some avenues for future research, and propose policy changes in Russia and other mining and extractive countries with similar systems of institutional absences.

## Systemic Origin of Corporate Irresponsibility

### Comparative Institutional Perspective

Aiming to explain the systemic effects of broader environments on CSR, some business and society scholars have turned their attention to “comparative institutionalist” studies (Tempel & Walgenbach, 2007, p. 20), a strand of organisational literature that examines how national institutions shape economic organisations. The comparative institutionalist perspective leaves the question ‘what is CSR?’ open, as answering this question requires examining how firms’ home and host country institutions shape the ways these firms understand and practise CSR towards their stakeholders and broader society (Amaeshi & Amao, 2009; Blindheim, 2015; Chen & Bouvain, 2009; Gjølborg, 2009; Matten & Moon, 2008, 2020). For example, in their seminal work, Matten and Moon (2008) draw on the varieties of capitalism (VoC, Hall & Soskice, 2001) and national business system (NBS) frameworks (Whitley, 1999) to attribute explicit and implicit forms of CSR in the liberal market economy of the USA and the coordinated market economies of the Continental European countries (explicitly expressed through voluntary corporate activities and implicitly embedded in formal national institutions) to their distinct combinations (i.e. NBSs) of political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems.

Studies within this perspective tend to view CiR as absent or non-effective CSR. They argue that it is more likely to recur in developing countries, whose NBSs lack institutions that could pressure firms to behave socially and environmentally responsibly (e.g. transparent judiciary, free civil society, or strong stakeholder supervision and participation (Matten & Moon, 2008; Zhao et al., 2014). The comparative institutionalist perspective posits that although some firms from developing countries can be immune to their home national institutional absences and develop adaptive mechanisms of self-regulation, collaboration, or institution building to engage in socially and environmentally responsible practices (Amaeshi et al., 2016), the influence of home national institutional absences on most firms continues to remain salient and pervasive (Bansal & Kistruck, 2006). For example, when firms from developing countries internationalise and become more exposed to the global and host country institutional pressures to be responsible, they might improve their symbolic CSR reporting. However, their actual CSR often remains absent or non-effective, as their home national institutional absences continue constraining their capacity to change their operations substantially (Tashman et al., 2019).

### Critical Management Perspective

Some business and society scholars have turned their attention to critical management studies, a strand of organisational literature that focuses on firms’ ‘dark sides’, both within and outside organisational boundaries (Alcadipani & de Oliveira Medeiros, 2020). The critical management perspective posits that CSR is an ‘empty signifier’ (Zueva and Fairbrass, 2019) that is strategically endowed with specific meanings by powerful social actors, often to erase existing social antagonisms and hegemonise specific discourses. Governments can fill CSR with specific meanings that are not necessarily aimed at facilitating firms’ socially and environmentally responsible behaviour but are instead constructed to legitimise the coercion of firms and protect state interests (Zueva & Fairbrass, 2019). Firms, in turn, under the notion of CSR, can promote agendas other than social development and environmental protection, proclaiming de-facto CiR as CSR (Benson, 2017). CSR thus can be legitimised as inherently ‘good’ (e.g. the trickle-down effects of development, Chowdhury, 2019) yet produce a false consciousness that actually engenders CiR (Prasad & Holzinger, 2013).

Studies within this perspective tend to view CiR as corporate violence—forms of physical and non-physical corporate aggression that involves coercion, harm, and injury (Varman & Al-Amoudi, 2016). Yet, often, such violence turns out to be insensitive, meaning that it has limited traceability and invisible negative consequences (Chowdhury, 2019). Unlike the comparative institutionalist perspective, the critical

management perspective posits that insensitive corporate violence recurs in all countries that feature exploitative and uncooperative social structures that (re)produce, disavow, camouflage, or even justify systemic violence (e.g. environmental pollution for the sake of economic development (Benson, 2017; Chowdhury, 2019, 2020)). Such structures are ideologically sustained and perpetuated by powerful social actors, who de-realise or depersonalise groups of individuals (Banerjee, 2008) so they become of no value or impalpable and therefore easy to exploit, oppress, dispose, or subjugate with impunity (Chowdhury, 2019, 2021). Firms, in the meantime, may “truly think that [their] actions bring development to a community for the wider good” (Chowdhury, 2019, p. 11).

## Research Question

While shedding some light on the systemic origin of CiR, the above cultural perspectives, however, have gaps that need to be filled for this knowledge to be advanced. While the comparative institutionalist perspective has demonstrated how CiR is shaped by the *discrete* institutional absence of firms’ home countries, it lacks an empirically driven explanation of how firms’ home national systems of institutional absences shape CiR. While the critical management perspective has conceptualised that CiR often takes a form of insensitive corporate violence that is shaped by firms’ institutional environments, which are ideologically sustained and perpetuated by powerful social actors, it lacks an empirically driven explanation of how firms’ national institutional environments shape insensitive corporate violence. In this study, we aim to advance knowledge about the systemic origin of CiR by filling these two gaps. We do so by addressing the following research question: *How do firms’ home national systems of institutional absences shape insensitive corporate violence?*

## Methodology

### Research Context and Design

We address the above research question by drawing on an in-depth case study of a Russian MNC from the notoriously environmentally irresponsible extractive industry in the context of Russia. Russia is the country where the authors of this paper were born, grew up, studied, and have worked for over 20 years. Russia is a perfect context for addressing our research question as its national institutional fabric has been going through significant changes, including abolishing some of the old institutions inherited from the Soviet socialist system without replacing them with new ones.

Russia in the 1990s was characterised by the government’s ‘over withdrawal’ (Sil and Chen, 2004) from many social and environmental concerns, which created a high level of ‘institutional vacuum’ (Crotty, 2016). During the 2000s, the Russia created by President Vladimir Putin had a government that captured large corporations, controlled market competition and discouraged the establishment of autonomous labour and other associations and their engagement in policymaking. Today’s Russia still features significant institutional absences in many areas of social and environmental concerns, such as the absence of a domestic violence law or a social model of environmental conservation (e.g. park rangers).

Mining and extractive firms in Russia, like mining and extractive firms worldwide, create detrimental social and environmental impacts, often finding themselves at the centre of CiR conflicts with environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) and broader society. In the second decade of the 2000s, one of such conflicts escalated between environmental NGOs and a Russian extractive MNC (hereafter referred to as ‘ABC’), which was founded before the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and is now half state-owned. The environmental NGOs questioned environmental safety of an oil field development of ABC (hereafter called ‘Y’). The Y oil field had a life expectancy of almost 40 years, and the NGOs were concerned that ABC’s operations had created high environmental risks and threatened the region’s unique biodiversity. They specifically questioned the adequacy of ABC’s efforts to develop and implement action plans to prevent wildlife pollution (primarily for birds, the most likely victims in cases of oil pollution), rescue and rehabilitation activities, or restore the wildlife population. According to the environmental NGOs, such plans required not only advanced and thorough preparation but also the development of material and technical means and personnel training, of which there was no evidence in ABC’s plans. In this study, we investigate this contemporary phenomenon of ABC’s operations as a case study of environmental CiR to address the research question posed earlier (Yin, 2009).

### Data Collection

Data for this case study were collected in four stages

The first stage was an exploration of secondary data to identify potential interview respondents and gain an overview of the conflict between ABC and the environmental NGOs (April–May 2014). The first author researched the history of the development of Y oil field and identified ABC’s units and departments involved in this development, and the environmental NGOs concerned about the project’s environmental risks. This stage allowed the first author to identify a broad spectrum of potential respondents who



could offer a detailed understanding of the case study by providing different perspectives and prompting the interrogation of possible contradictions (Oliver, 2012). For example, the first author concluded that alongside ABC's internal specialists in environmental safety, external experts in environmental safety who were directly working with ABC should also be interviewed. At this stage, the first author learnt more about ABC's insensitive environmental violence through actors outside ABC, such as external advisors and environmental NGOs.

The second stage was the systematic collection of secondary data identified earlier, followed by pilot interviews (June–September 2014). The first author assessed 166 pieces of secondary data, including reports, press releases, videos, and publicly available interviews. The first author looked through all the publications the ABC had issued during the Y oil field's development to identify relevant corporate materials, and also searched for relevant publications of environmental NGOs on their official websites via the keywords 'ABC', 'ABC-for-Y' (ABC's division, created specifically for the development of the Y oil field), 'project P' (name of the project for the development of the Y oil field), and 'platform PC' (name of the platform which extracts oil from the Y oil field). At the same time, the first author conducted two pilot interviews with ABC's representatives, which helped to start snowball sampling by using referrals made by these interviewees (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This allowed the first author to capture the peculiarities of future interviews with different groups of respondents at the early stage of the study.

The third stage involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with the identified respondents (November 2014–March 2015). The first author held 25 90-min (on average) interviews with (a) ABC's specialists and managers, whose decisions influenced ABC's environmental safety practices; (b) external experts in environmental safety who were working with ABC on environmental safety issues; and (c) members of the environmental NGOs who were watching ABC's actions. Respondents from ABC represented ABC's headquarters, ABC's research institute, and the unit (ABC-for-Y) that ABC created for the development of the Y oil field. The first author interviewed ABC's current and former leading experts in environmental safety.

The fourth stage involved an in-depth search of more than 30 additional pieces of secondary data to explain the systemic origin of ABC's insensitive environmental violence, explicated from the interviews and secondary data collected earlier (April–June 2020). At this stage, both authors examined academic articles, book chapters, legal documents, and reports containing valuable information about the peculiarities of state intervention in economic processes (i.e. the political system), processes of capital accumulation or pricing (i.e. the financial system), trust and authority relations

among individuals and organisations (i.e. the cultural system), and skills development and organisation of labour (i.e. the education and labour systems). These constitute the context of the Russian NBS in general and its mining and extractive industry in particular. We found these sources by deriving new keywords and expressions (e.g. 'state environmental impact assessment', 'education of corporate leaders') from the previously collected primary and secondary data. Table 1 summarises the types and sources of the collected data.

## Data Analysis

Our data analysis followed retroduction, the central methodological principle of the critical realist philosophy that assumes observable social phenomena are always embedded in (less observable) broader social structures, and knowledge about these structures allows for developing normative recommendations for social or environmental emancipation (Belfrage & Hauf, 2017). To identify how a phenomenon can be explained with broader social structures, retroduction seeks to address the question 'what must be true for events to be possible?' (Bhaskar, 2009). Retroduction implies that theorisation of a phenomenon is not discovered in the data but is rather elaborated proceeding from the data and represents 'thought trials' of identifying a possible causal explanation of the observed events (Belfrage & Hauf, 2015, 2017; Fletcher, 2017). Retroduction is thus a particularly suitable methodology to address our research question because, as suggested by Wry (2009, p. 162), "rather than assuming the causes of irresponsible acts and offering blanket solutions", it "facilitates nuanced and targeted propositions based on a deep understanding of the structural roots of harmful practices" and "sensitises us to bad acts that are perpetuated through constellations of multiple actors, structures/logics, and institutions".

During our data analysis, we first contrasted and clustered relevant expressions from our primary and secondary data collected during the first, second, and third stages of data collection into eight first-order descriptive codes, indicating ABC's environmental safety meanings and practices that reflect ABC's insensitive environmental violence. For example, multiple statements reflecting insufficient environmental safety training of ABC's employees were coded as 'ABC does not provide sufficient environmental safety training for its employees'.

Second, we referred to the widely used Whitley's (1999) NBS approach as a pre-existing theory, or a "proto-theory" (Collier, 1994, p. 165), which helped us to develop conceptual relationships amongst the eight first-order descriptive codes by grouping them into four pairs, each of which reflected one of the NBS systems—political, financial, cultural, or education and labour. For instance, the first-order

**Table 1** Data

Type of data	Source of data	Number of data sources	
Primary data sources			
12 interviews with ABC, 60–120 min each (2014)	<i>ABC Headquarter</i>		
	Head of industrial safety and environmental protection office	1	
	Specialist in occupational safety	1	
	IT infrastructure engineer	1	
	Process automation specialist	1	
	Secretary for the department of strategic development	1	
	<i>ABC Research Institute</i>		
	Director of the centre for environmental safety, energy efficiency and labour protection	1	
	Research expert in the field of technology for oil field development projects	2	
	<i>ABC-for-Y</i>		
	Current leading expert in industrial safety	1	
	Current leading expert in environmental safety	1	
	Former leading expert in environmental safety	1	
	Deputy director-general for organisational matters	1	
	10 interviews (including one via emails) with environmental NGOs, 60–120 min each (2014)	<i>Large Russian Environmental NGO</i>	
		Head of the program for environmental policy of the fuel and energy complex	3
		Regional oil and gas projects coordinator (where the Y oilfield is located)	1
		External advisor in the field of environmental policy of Russian extractive industry	1 (via 3 emails)
		<i>Russian Branch of an International Environmental NGO</i>	
Head of energy unit		2	
<i>Small Russian Wildlife Protection NGO</i>			
Director for development		1	
<i>Regional Russian Environmental Organisation (watching the area of Y oil field)</i>			
Director		1	
Public relations specialist	1		
3 interviews with external experts in environmental safety, 60–120 min each (2014)	<i>Technical Advisor to the Oil and Gas Industry</i>		
	Head of the environmental monitoring department	1	
	<i>Scientific Centre for Environmental Risk Assessment in Oil and Gas Projects</i>		
Director	2		
Secondary data sources			
118 press releases and videos (2010–2017)	ABC's and its subsidiaries' press releases	37	
	ABC's videos about environmentally responsible practices and Y oil field	2	
	Press releases of environmental NGOs (e.g., Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Russia)	77	
	Website of an external consultant in environmental safety	1	
	Video with a conference presentation by an external consultant in environmental safety	1	

**Table 1** (continued)

Type of data	Source of data	Number of data sources
18 letters, statements, public interviews, and speeches (2010–2017)	ABC's letters, statements, public interviews, and speeches (e.g., interviews with the executive directors and chairman, response letters to environmental NGOs)	10
	Environmental NGOs' letters, statements, public interviews, and speeches (e.g., letters to ABC's managers, letters to state authorities, interviews with the leaders of environmental organisations, joint statements of all concerned NGOs)	7
	Radio interview with an independent expert in environmental safety	1
30 reports, commentaries, and conference programs (2010–2017)	ABC's reports, commentaries, and conference programs (e.g., sustainability reports, R&D articles)	24
	Environmental NGOs' reports, commentaries, and conference programs (e.g., a report on the cases of ABC's environmental irresponsibility)	3
	Reports, commentaries, and conference programs of external consultants in environmental safety (e.g., a report on modelling behavioural scenarios in possible oil spills from the platform PC)	3
Over 30 academic articles, book chapters, reports, and legal documents	Academic articles, book chapters, reports, and legal documents revealing the peculiarities of the national-level constituents of the Russian NBS (e.g., Economic Security Strategy of the Russian Federation)	Over 30

codes 'ABC symbolically participates in international environmental research and development (R&D) projects' and 'ABC does not provide sufficient environmental safety training for its employees' were grouped as both indicating issues related to skills development and organisation of labour (i.e. the education and labour system). However, to theorise causal explanations of ABC's insensitive environmental violence, the emerging theorisation of these groupings needed to be developed through further research on Russian systems of institutional absences.

Third, to explain the four pairs of first-order descriptive codes, we turned to the secondary data that indicated the peculiarities of the Russian NBS, collected during the fourth stage of data collection. From this data set, for example, we learnt that at the beginning of the 2000s, the Russian state-autonomous environmental impact assessment (EIA) agency ceased to exist, and a new state economic development program placed an emphasis on the further development of the mining and extractive industry. By linking the identified peculiarities of the Russian NBS with the four pairs of the first-order descriptive codes derived from the earlier analysed primary and secondary data, we developed four second-order explanatory concepts to offer a causal explanation of how four institutional absences within Russian political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems shape ABC's insensitive environmental violence. For example, the first-order codes 'ABC understands environmental safety as a bureaucratic task of ticking all the boxes required by the

state EIA' and 'ABC addresses the state EIA requirements that are loosely relevant to the actual environmental risks of its extractive projects' grouped earlier, as they indicated the issues related to the state intervention in economic processes (i.e. political system). These were then explained with the second-order explanatory concept from the literature on the Russian NBS—'absence of a state expert system for autonomous environmental impact assessment'.

Finally, we developed four constructs that capture how the institutional absences identified earlier informed the outcome of our research investigation—ABC's insensitive environmental violence. To do so, we went back to the first-order descriptive codes of ABC's insensitive environmental violence manifestations and the second-order explanatory concepts of the identified institutional absences within the Russian political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems, intending to understand ABC's insensitive environmental violence as an outcome of the identified institutional absences. As a result, we coded four third-order outcome constructs of the four different systemic logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence: 'tick-box', 'barrier-free efficiency', 'pollution is normal' and 'environmental protection is unimportant'. For example, the first-order descriptive codes of 'ABC understands environmental safety as a bureaucratic task of ticking all the boxes required by the state EIA' and 'ABC addresses the state EIA requirements that are loosely relevant to the actual environmental risks of its extractive projects', which we earlier explained

**Table 2** Coding

First-order descriptive codes	Second-order explanatory concepts	Third-order outcome constructs
Insensitive corporate environmental violence	National institutional absences	Systemic logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence
ABC understands environmental safety as a bureaucratic task of ticking all the boxes required by the state EIA	Absence of a state expert system for autonomous EIA	'Tick-box'
ABC addresses the state EIA requirements that are loosely relevant to the actual environmental risks of ABC's extractive projects		
ABC sees environmental safety as a cost, the reduction of which can increase ABC's financial efficiency, especially during economic downturns	Absence of a state system for the financial assessment of environmental risks	'Barrier-free efficiency'
ABC sees environmental safety as a barrier towards its new and ongoing extractive projects		
ABC considers environmental pollution as a normalised part of oil extraction	Absence of a state cultural system for environmental citizenship	'Pollution is normal'
ABC does not consider environmental NGOs as stakeholders whose critique and suggestions should be included in ABC's decision making		
ABC symbolically participates in international environmental R&D projects	Absence of a state business education system for environmental enlightenment	'Environmental protection is unimportant'
ABC does not provide sufficient environmental safety training for its employees		

through the second-order explanatory concept 'absence of a state expert system for autonomous environmental impact assessment', were then developed into the third-order outcome construct of 'tick-box' logic of insensitive corporate environmental violence.

Table 2 presents the first-order descriptive codes, second-order explanatory concepts and third-order outcome constructs.

## Findings

The analysis of our findings helped us to identify four systemic logics of ABC's insensitive environmental violence—'tick-box', 'barrier-free efficiency', 'pollution is normal' and 'environmental protection is unimportant'. Below, we describe how these four logics are shaped by the systemic effects of the four institutional absences within the Russian NBS.

### 'Tick-box' Logic in the Absence of a State Expert System for Autonomous Environmental Impact Assessment

The first systemic logic of ABC's insensitive environmental violence is 'tick-box'. This logic means that ABC considers environmental safety a bureaucratic task whereby it must tick all the boxes required by the state EIA to obtain all the necessary legal permissions for its

extractive projects, even though these requirements are loosely related to the actual environmental risks of these projects. We suggest that this 'tick-box' logic is shaped by the effects of the Russian political system—specifically, the absence of a state expert system for autonomous EIA.

After the collapse of the USSR, the monitoring of the environmental protection policies regarding Russian state and business environmental responsibility, as well as the assessment of all new projects impacting the environment, was conducted by the State Committee for Environmental Protection (Goskomekologiya). Goskomekologiya was a state agency autonomous from the process of issuing permissions for mining and extractive projects (Feldman & Blokov, 2012). Experts from Goskomekologiya had the power to block any environmentally threatening projects (Kreidlin, 2020a). However, in 2000, driven by the idea of vertical policymaking and aiming to reform regulatory frameworks to promote Russian mining and extractive industry abroad (Crotty, 2016), President Putin eliminated Goskomekologiya and transferred its responsibilities to the Ministry of Natural Resources (Minprirody)—a federal agency that governs the needs of the extraction of natural resources and issues permissions for mining and extractive projects. This political decision has transformed previously autonomous state EIA into a 'tick-box' institution, which aims to serve the mining and extractive industry rather than guarding the interests of nature. When the state's EIA was conducted by Goskomekologiya, only



about 50 per cent of the assessed projects received positive appraisals, whereas under Minprirody this number is almost 100 per cent (Head of energy unit, Environmental NGO MNP, interview 2014).

Having been disappointed by the reformation of the state EIA system, many environmental specialists who used to work for Goskomekologiya left Minprirody and joined environmental NGOs (e.g. Greenpeace), who often disagree with the positive appraisals made by specialists from Minprirody (Kreidlin, 2020b; Stepanitskiy, 2017). State officials who have stayed in Minprirody and currently determine the process and outcomes of the state EIAs, in turn, lack sufficient ecological expertise and authentic environmental concerns (Stepanitskiy, 2017). As a result, they ‘tick boxes’ when checking whether mining and extractive firms tick all the boxes of the state’s EIA, regardless of whether these EIA requirements are relevant to the actual environmental risks of the assessed projects or not.

The absence of a state expert system for autonomous EIA resulting from the above ideological peculiarities of the Russian political system has shaped the ‘tick-box’ logic of ABC’s insensitive environmental violence, as illustrated below.

According to ABC’s former leading internal expert in environmental safety, who used to be engaged in obtaining positive state EIAs for ABC, state officials conducting EIA demanded ABC implement activities that were loosely related to the environmental safety of its projects. These activities included mapping fisheries, breeding valuable fish, monetary compensation to fish factories for breeding fish, and reconstructing a fishery plant. Similarly, ABC’s current leading internal expert in environmental safety commented:

*The project goes through the state EIA. The experts working there [in the state EIA] are far from the industry. They are related to various public funds aiming to protect land, air, birds of Russia, Atlantic walrus, dandelions, squirrels. And we must work with these people.* (ABC-for-Y’s current leading internal expert in environmental safety, interview, 2014)

Whereas ABC’s internal experts in environmental safety were concerned the measures ABC had to implement as part of the state EIA were loosely related to the actual environmental safety of the project, ABC’s top managers perceived those imposed measures as constituting environmental responsibility because they ticked all the boxes state officials had asked them to tick. For example, while talking about the environmental safety of ABC’s project in his interview, ABC-for-Y’s deputy director-general for organisational matters emphasised the release of sturgeon fry (larva) into rivers as a critical environmental issue that ABC addressed:

*Every year, we release tens of thousands of sturgeon fry into rivers. We spend much money on this topic. We have information about it on our website.* (ABC-for-Y’s deputy director-general for organisational matters, interview, 2014)

Indeed, a section on ABC’s website that is dedicated to sustainable development states that “ABC has developed and is implementing a special program for the conservation of biodiversity in the region X [the region where Y oilfield is located]. ABC finances the cultivation of salmon fry, which, after turning the age of two, are released into natural waters” (ABC-for-Y website, 2014). A video on the website mentions this release holds “a special place among the firm’s environmental measures... evidencing that strict compliance with environmental standards is a priority for ABC in the development of the Y oil field” (ABC-for-Y website, 2014).

### **‘Barrier-Free Efficiency’ Logic in the Absence of a State System for the Financial Assessment of Environmental Risks**

The second systemic logic of ABC’s insensitive environmental violence is ‘barrier-free efficiency’. This logic means that ABC prioritises its financial efficiency over environmental impacts and, hence, sees environmental safety as a barrier to its ongoing and new extractive projects and a cost, the reduction of which can increase its financial efficiency, especially during economic downturns (e.g. during decreases in oil prices). We suggest this ‘barrier-free efficiency’ logic is shaped by the effects of the Russian financial system—specifically, the absence of a state system for the financial assessment of environmental risks.

Since the Soviet era, the exploitation of nature and natural resources has been a pivotal ideological element of the Russian economic model, with the mining and extractive industry being viewed as the strategic source of state income. Many of the current Russian mining and extractive projects were already planned during the Soviet era (e.g. plans for the coal industry were conceived in the 1920 and 30 s and the oil and gas sector in the 1940 and 50 s). Modern Russia has continued the Soviet legacy of being a global leader in coal and oil production; for example, in 2016, it was the second-largest global oil producer (BP, 2017; Rozhkov & Solovenko, 2017; Slavkina, 2016). In 2018, oil and gas revenues made up 46.3% of all Russian federal budget revenues (Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation, 2020).

Because of the strategic importance of the mining and extractive industry, many large mining and extractive firms, including ABC, have state ownership. For the same reason, there are no frameworks for the financial assessment of environmental and social risks of mining and extractive

projects, which could be applied by state organisations that finance such projects (Kuznetsova, 2016). The Economic Security Strategy, which defines the development course of Russia until 2030, describes issues with “*excessive requirements in the field of environmental safety [and] ensuring environmental standards of production*” as “*threats to the [Russian] economic security*” (President of Russia, 2017, p. 6, i. 12.25). As a result, social and environmental aspects of project management are of secondary importance for Russian financial institutions (Matyugina & Yarushkina, 2017; Rodionov & Smirnov, 2016).

The absence of a state system for the financial assessment of environmental risks, resulting from the above ideological peculiarities of the Russian financial system, has shaped the ‘barrier-free efficiency’ logic of ABC’s insensitive environmental violence, as illustrated below.

In 2011, in response to environmentalists’ calls for a comprehensive ornithological assessment of the Y oil plant, ABC’s manager for environmental monitoring and EIA said that “*if a firm is rich and wants to explore something, it can do so, but first of all, the project should be profitable*” (Environmental NGO JKL press release, 2011). In 2013, ABC reiterated this idea in a document titled ‘Environmental safety of Project Y’, which ended with the following quotation by the Director of the National Energy Security Fund: “*... this topic [environmental protection] should not be turned into a universal barrier that prohibits the start of new projects*” (ABC-for-Y website, 2013). When oil prices dropped in the global oil markets, ABC cancelled the purchase of equipment for saving birds impacted by oil pollution. According to ABC-for-Y’s current leading internal expert in environmental safety, this was to reduce the overall costs of environmental safety:

*If oil was \$96 per barrel... It is \$60 now. Forty per cent lower... So, 40 per cent of something else also must be lower... What birds are you guys talking about? (ABC-for-Y’s current leading internal expert in environmental safety, interview, 2014)*

According to the interviewed members of environmental NGOs, if all necessary environmental costs were considered in the Y oil development project, it would not have been profitable, even if oil was selling at \$100 per barrel. ABC’s managers, on the contrary, believed that the project would remain profitable at \$80 per barrel, which they saw as “*the most pessimistic scenario*” (ABC board chairman, publicly available interview on ABC’s website, 2014). They also believed that federal government support would secure the financial efficiency of the project. For instance, in his interview publicly available on ABC’s website, when the CEO of ABC-for-Y was asked to comment on the environmentalists’ statements regarding the development of the Y oil field as being not profitable, he said that the state financial

support and tax incentives “*are effective for both the state and [ABC-for-Y]*” (Public interview with the CEO of ABC-for-Y, 2013). However, these state financial support and tax incentives were given to ABC-for-Y without any prior financial assessment of the social and environmental risks of the ABC project.

### **‘Pollution is Normal’ Logic in the Absence of a State Cultural System for Environmental Citizenship**

The third systemic logic of ABC’s insensitive environmental violence is ‘pollution is normal’. This logic means that ABC tends to ignore environmental safety because it considers environmental pollution a normalised part of oil extraction. ABC therefore does not consider environmental NGOs as stakeholders whose critique and suggestions should be included in ABC’s decision making. We suggest that this ‘pollution is normal’ logic is shaped by the effects of the Russian cultural system—specifically, the absence of a state cultural system for environmental citizenship.

Soviet Russia followed the ideological imperative that people and nature should not be an obstacle to the country’s geopolitical competitive advantage (Yanitskiy, 2005). Modern Russia continues this legacy by perpetuating a culture with place for environmental citizenship. This manifests as the trend of the so-called ‘de-ecologising’ political decisions aimed at turning the country’s environmental pollution into a competitive advantage for both the state and businesses (Schwartz, 2012). For example, in 2000, the Russian Parliament rejected the projects of the National Ecological Code and Federal Law on Ecological Culture, which aimed to harmonise civil, administrative, land, and other laws of the Russian Federation to protect national environmental interests consistently and uniformly (Grin et al., 2016). In 2006, the Forest Code of the Russian Federation was amended to lower the number of state forest guards from more than 80,000 to less than 700 (Davydov, 2011). In the same year, a law prohibiting domestic NGOs from accessing funds from foreign donors was accepted (Kamhi, 2006). In 2012, the ‘foreign agents’ law was accepted, under which the Russian President’s Administration then labelled many environmental groups operating in Russia as ‘anti-Russian’, thus having made these groups the subjects to the aggressive state tactics such as raiding their offices and ongoing intimidation (Newell & Henry, 2017).

The absence of a state cultural system for environmental citizenship resulting from the above ideological peculiarities of the Russian cultural system has shaped the ‘pollution is normal’ logic of ABC’s insensitive environmental violence, as illustrated below.

ABC believes that “*any production activity carries specific environmental risks*” (ABC corporate magazine, 2013). For example, in 2013, when ABC was once again criticised

by environmental NGOs for its ignorance of environmental risks in the development of the Y oil field, ABC emphasised the normality of environmental pollution in the modern industrialised world. In his interview publicly available on ABC's website, the CEO of ABC-for-Y commented on this normality stating that *"in various parts of the world, oil is shipped daily in huge volumes, and no one declares this a deadly threat to the environment"* (Public interview with the CEO of ABC-for-Y, 2013).

ABC also does not view environmental NGOs as important stakeholders in its projects. For example, when different environmental NGOs, including the WWF Russia, asked ABC to account for their knowledge and expertise in ABC's environmental risk assessment and management, ABC drew a boundary between those who could participate in the environmental risk assessment and those who could not by including technical advisors in risk management and quality assurance, yet excluding environmental NGOs as 'non-experts'. ABC only later informed these NGOs about the results of its analysis and actions to reduce the identified risks. Moreover, ABC demonstrated a hostile attitude toward environmental NGOs. For example, ABC-for-Y's current leading internal expert in environmental safety suggested that they would allow only such an interaction with environmental NGOs that would be, according to him, unpleasant for these NGOs' environmentalists:

*I have some old scores to settle with them [the environmentalists] ... I know them very well from my past work in Western Siberia. We had an oil spill there, and they put condoms on bushes around the oil spill. They collected oil in tanks and then quickly went to Moscow to spill the oil in front of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment... You know, there are such exercises when hens are first dosed with oil and then volunteers are taught how to save these birds from oil pollution. We will invite environmentalists for such exercises for sure.* (ABC-for-Y's current leading internal expert in environmental safety, interview, 2014).

### **'Environmental Protection is Unimportant' Logic in the Absence of a State Business Education System for Environmental Enlightenment**

The fourth systemic logic of ABC's insensitive environmental violence is 'environmental protection is unimportant'. This logic means that ABC considers environmental safety an unimportant issue to address or address this issue symbolically as its managers do not understand what environmental safety is. We suggest that this 'protection of the

environment is unimportant' logic is shaped by the effects of the Russian education and labour system—specifically, the absence of a state business education system for environmental enlightenment.

Russian business education has inherited the Soviet ideology of the technocratic approach to development, which has traditionally prioritised economic growth over sustainable development and has hence focused on technical disciplines aimed at developing strategies and techniques for optimal resource allocation (e.g. applied engineering, mathematics, and statistics), over liberal arts. Modern Russian universities consider business education as something practical that provides "a set of tested useful tools, practices and skills, with which a manager can manage resources (human, financial and others), avoid threats from the external environment and use opportunities, moving on the way to success and prosperity" (Kalnitskaya, 2018, p. 14).

This practical technocratic approach to business education leaves almost no room for the environmental enlightenment of students. Subjects such as business ethics, corporate social and environmental responsibility, and sustainability have been integrated into the teaching programs only recently and only in a few major universities. Moreover, Russian business education is characterised by a high level of commodification and commercialisation. This means that knowledge is viewed as a commodity, service, or item of commercial use (Karpov, 2013), and the process of education is seen as a paid-for activity, and universities identify themselves and act as revenue-generating organisations (Minina, 2018). As a result, Russian universities consider businesses—not broader society—as the primary receiver of business education services, with 'business cases' being prioritised over 'cases for sustainability'.

The absence of a state business education system for environmental enlightenment resulting from the above ideological peculiarities of the Russian education and labour system has shaped the 'environmental protection is unimportant' logic of ABC's insensitive environmental violence, as illustrated below.

According to ABC-for-Y's former leading internal expert in environmental safety, ABC's managers *"simply do not understand what ecology is and whether it is generally needed, and why it is needed... They do not have any education in the field of ecology, no education"* (interview, 2014). Also, ABC-for-Y's current leading internal expert

in environmental safety pointed to ABC's lack of environmental awareness, comparing ABC to foreign (Western) extractive firms operating in Russia, which, according to him, know what ecology is and why environmental safety is important:

*There is no need to explain twice what ecology is [to foreign firms' managers in Russia]. And here [in ABC], it is necessary to explain that the platform needs not one doctor but two. I am like Greenpeace for them. And who is Greenpeace? My pale youth with your look full of fire!*<sup>1</sup> (ABC-for-Y's current leading internal expert in environmental safety, interview, 2014)

As a result, ABC demonstrates symbolic participation in international environmental safety projects. For example, ABC published information about its participation in the Joint Sectoral Program for the Development of Technologies for Preventing Oil Spills, stating that this initiative “will expand [ABC's] knowledge and skills in the field of oil spill response and demonstrate [ABC's] environmental and social responsibility towards its stakeholders” (ABC corporate magazine, 2013). External experts in environmental safety who used to work with ABC considered ABC's decision to join the program as a positive yet insufficient and rather symbolic step because, within this program, ABC had chosen a passive “role of an observer” instead of being “an active participant of experiments and research” (External expert in environmental safety, Environmental assessment company GHI, interview, 2014).

Furthermore, ABC does not provide sufficient environmental safety training for its employees. For example, ABC-for-Y's former leading internal expert in environmental safety mentioned that ABC's managers refused to train its staff on environmental issues, even though this training had been planned by ABC's environmental specialists:

*We planned to train the staff on environmental issues so that they can act, know, learn. Yet, nothing has happened. There is nothing.* (ABC-for-Y's former leading internal expert in environmental safety, interview, 2014)

## Framework

The findings of this case study allowed us to propose a novel framework of systemic logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence (see Fig. 1).

<sup>1</sup> A line from the poem ‘The Young Poet’ (1896) by the Russian poet Valery Bryusov, which is used as a humorous-ironic characteristic of a very emotional, excited, or enthusiastic person (not necessarily young).

First, the framework demonstrates how insensitive corporate environmental violence can be shaped through four systemic logics that define firms' understanding of environmental safety. ‘Tick-box’ is a logic whereby firms are ready to address environmental safety issues only within the state requirements to obtain legal permissions for their projects, even though these requirements can be loosely related to the actual environmental risks of these projects. ‘Barrier-free efficiency’ is a logic whereby firms consider environmental safety a barrier to their projects as it is a cost, the reduction of which can increase their financial efficiency, especially during economic downturns. ‘Pollution is normal’ is a logic whereby firms tend to ignore environmental safety because they consider environmental pollution a normalised part of their industry and therefore do not consider environmental NGOs as stakeholders whose critique and suggestions should be included in corporate decision making. Finally, ‘environmental protection is unimportant’ is a logic whereby firms consider the environmental safety of their projects an unimportant issue to address, or else only address this issue symbolically, as their managers do not understand what environmental safety is.

Second, the framework shows how the above four systemic logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence can be (re)produced by institutional absences within firms' home political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems. The ‘tick-box’ logic is (re)produced by the absence of a state expert system for autonomous EIA, which would allow conducting autonomous EIA and not issuing positive permissions for mining and extractive projects. The ‘barrier-free efficiency’ logic is (re)produced by the absence of a state system for the financial assessment of environmental risks, which would assess the economic and financial efficiency of mining and extractive projects as not possible in isolation from environmental sustainability. The ‘pollution is normal’ logic is (re)produced by the absence of a state cultural system for environmental citizenship, which would cultivate the idea of an ecologically just society where natural environment is considered an integral stakeholder of state policies. Finally, the ‘environmental protection is unimportant’ logic is (re)produced by the absence of a state business education system for environmental enlightenment, which would cultivate the idea of a manager who does not subjugate but serves nature and therefore prioritises cases for sustainability over business cases.

Third, the framework sheds light on how the above four institutional absences can be ideologically sustained and perpetuated through the political, financial, cultural, and educational values of firms' home governments. The absence of a state expert system for autonomous EIA is sustained and perpetuated through the political value of vertical policymaking that is seen as necessary for promoting national MNCs abroad. The absence of a state system for

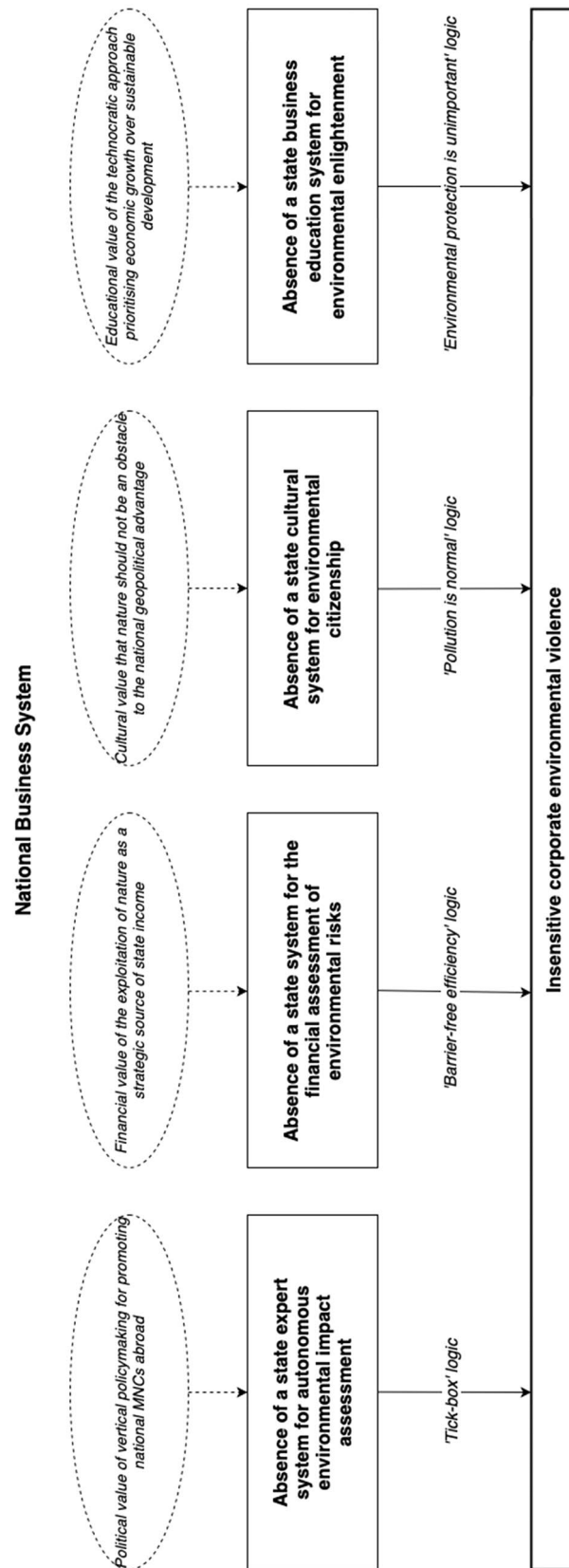


Fig. 1 Framework of systemic logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence



the financial assessment of environmental risks is sustained and perpetuated through the financial value of exploiting nature as a strategic source of state income. The absence of a state cultural system for environmental citizenship is sustained and perpetuated through the cultural value that nature should not be an obstacle to the national geopolitical advantage. Finally, the absence of a state business education system for environmental enlightenment is sustained and perpetuated through the educational value of the technocratic approach that prioritises economic growth over sustainable development.

## Discussion

In this study, we aimed to understand how recurring cases of environmental CiR (e.g. the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989, the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, BHP Billiton's deadly iron ore dam burst in Brazil in 2015, or the Nornickel diesel fuel spill in Russia in 2020) might be prevented. To develop normative recommendations for preventing CiR, the extant business and society literature tends to take two broad approaches—strategic and moral. Yet, business ethics scholars such as Wry (2009) and Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros (2020) argue that these approaches are too simplistic because they locate the sources of CiR predominantly within 'bad apple' firms. Such simplistic approaches do not allow for understanding the more complex, macro-level institutional systems that embed firms and shape their irresponsible behaviour. Despite these scholars' calls for cultural approaches that would unpack the effects of systemic logics of broader institutional environments on CiR, surprisingly little empirical business and society research has been devoted to this scholarly inquiry.

We have responded to the call of Wry (2009) and Alcadipani and de Oliveira Medeiros (2020) by engaging with the two cultural perspectives that have shed some light on the systemic origin of CiR—the comparative institutionalist perspective and the critical management perspective. Prior comparative institutionalist research has discussed how CiR can be shaped by firms' home discrete national institutional absences (Bansal & Kistruck, 2006; Matten & Moon, 2008; Tashman et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2014). However, this perspective has never offered a more complex explanation of how these absences are situated within NBSs. Prior critical management research has primarily drawn on thick cases to argue that insensitive corporate violence is shaped by national institutional mechanisms that are ideologically sustained and perpetuated by powerful social actors (Banerjee, 2008; Chowdhury, 2019, 2020, 2021). However, this perspective has never offered an operationalisation of such mechanisms to explain the insensitive corporate violence of a particular firm in a particular national context.

Drawing on an in-depth case study of how Russian national systems of institutional absences shaped the insensitive environmental violence of a Russian extractive MNC, we have filled the above gaps. To do so, we have drawn on the insights from the comparative institutionalist perspective that NBSs and institutional absences inform firms' (ir) responsible behaviour, and the insights from the critical management perspective that CSR, often infused with meanings by powerful social actors, can factually engender CiR, which often manifests as insensitive corporate violence. In doing so, we have developed a novel cultural approach to the analysis of insensitive corporate environmental violence. This approach theorises the mechanisms of how corporate environmental violence can become insensitive—i.e. with limited traceability and invisible negative consequences for the environment—as it is shaped by 'tick-box', 'barrier-free efficiency', 'pollution is normal' and 'environmental protection is unimportant' logics that are (re)produced by institutional absences within firms' home political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems. These systems are, in turn, ideologically sustained and perpetuated through the relevant values of firms' home governments.

By "studying more instances of insensitive violence that are difficult to detect because of limited traceability and its consequences" (Chowdhury, 2019, p. 3), our study advances knowledge about the systemic origin of CiR in two ways.

First, our study advances a complex ethical assumption about how broader institutional environments (re)produce insensitive corporate violence. We demonstrate how the sources of CiR are located within firms' home national systems of institutional absences, which shape systemic logics of CiR that make corporate violence less traceable by firms and broader society. This assumption has an important implication for understanding the level of normative recommendations aimed to prevent CiR and the extent to which such recommendations can make an actual difference to corporate behaviour. Strategic arguments about the profitability of CSR are unlikely to change the behaviour of firms like ABC because the national institutional systems in which these firms operate are constructed by their home governments in such a way that they actually *encourage* insensitive corporate violence. Moral arguments for managers of firms like ABC to be responsible because it is 'the right thing to do' are unlikely to be efficient because these national institutional systems reinforce managers' choices of insensitive corporate violence. Hence our study also extends prior research (Alcadipani & de Oliveira Medeiros, 2020; Wry, 2009) that has pointed to the limits of strategic and moral approaches to develop normative recommendations that can effectively prevent CiR.

Second, our study sheds new light on how firms' home governments can sustain and perpetuate insensitive corporate violence. We show how governments can do so not by



infusing CSR with meanings that factually engender CiR (Zueva and Fairbrass, 2019) but, more importantly, by deliberately and systemically absenting national institutions that could pressure firms to be more socially and environmentally responsible, thus making negative consequences of corporate violence invisible to firms and broader society. We illustrate how firms' home governments strategically sustain and perpetuate institutional absences in national financial and political systems to make violence a lucrative choice for these firms, in the cultural system—to diminish a potential opposition to such choice and in the education and labour system—to educate managers' 'correct' moral beliefs that justify this violence. This leads us to suggest another important assumption that governments that strategically sustain and perpetuate such institutional absences should be held responsible for insensitive corporate violence because they make this violence insensitive to firms and broader society. In doing so, our study fine-tunes prior research (Banerjee, 2008; Chowdhury, 2019, 2020, 2021; Zueva and Fairbrass, 2019) that has conceptualised the role of powerful social actors like governments in sustaining and perpetuating corporate violence and institutional environments that make this violence insensitive.

Unfortunately, despite a longstanding discussion about a so-called 'structural evil', which is (re)produced by social systems and hence cannot be eliminated without structural changes in these systems (e.g. in Christian ethics, see Rich, 2006 and Scriven, 2013 for a review), theorising the role of deeper social systems in (re)producing CiR has yet to gain more attention in business and society scholarship. A simplistic ethical assumption that factors of CiR are predominantly rooted at the individual or firm levels and can be easily reduced to corporate greed and profit-maximisation results in the development of normative recommendations that are dissociated from the broader institutional environments that embed these individuals and firms. We therefore suggest that future business and society studies use our approach to explore the 'dark sides' of NBSs by studying (a) how firms' home and host national systems of institutional absences shape insensitive corporate violence towards various human and non-human stakeholders, and (b) how these institutional absences are sustained and perpetuated by governments through the deliberate and systemic absenting of national institutions that could pressure firms to be more socially and environmentally responsible. In doing so, future business and society research will advance the emancipatory knowledge developed in this study and offer normative recommendations that go "beyond appealing to managers' strategic or moral sensibilities" (Wry, 2009, p. 151) by targeting the systemic logics of insensitive corporate violence across various industry and national contexts.

## Policy Implications

The findings of our study can be theoretically generalised—but not predicted or replicated as empirical regularities (Yin, 2009)—in mining and extractive countries with national systems of institutional absences like those in Russia (foremost but not limited to post-Soviet countries, as those share similar historically path-dependent NBSs). For these countries, we propose policy changes that aim to disrupt systemic logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence and require state policymakers to prevent the relevant institutional absences within national political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems.

To disrupt the 'tick-box' logic, state policymakers should facilitate an autonomous agency for environmental protection, whose fundamental aim is not defending the interests of the mining and extractive industry but putting into place, monitoring, and changing environmental protection policies about state and business environmental responsibilities. To disrupt the 'barrier-free efficiency' logic, state policymakers should facilitate a system for state financial assessment of environmental risks, which would transparently and effectively determine and assess the financial implications of environmental and social risks of new mining and extractive projects. To disrupt the 'pollution is normal' logic, state policymakers should facilitate a state cultural system for environmental citizenship, supported and enforced by a harmonised system of environmental legislation and non-discreditation of environmental NGOs. Finally, to disrupt the 'environmental protection is unimportant' logic, state policymakers should facilitate a state business education system for environmental enlightenment, characterised by a more critical approach to business education with an emphasis on environmental sustainability, a non-barbaric attitude to nature, and consideration of a fuller range of stakeholders—including natural environment—as the recipients of business educational services.

## Concluding Remarks

Given that political, financial, cultural, and education and labour systems co-implicate within one NBS, disrupting one systemic logic of insensitive corporate environmental violence without disrupting the other three logic is likely to be an insufficient political intervention. Disrupting all four logics of insensitive corporate environmental violence requires state policymakers to reconsider the political, financial, cultural, and educational values that support these logics. This, we argue, is possible only when state policymakers are driven by an ideology that views natural environment as

a stakeholder who should benefit from policymaking and not by the interests of small groups of political and business elites, for whom these policymakers design NBSs that systematically de-realise natural environment so that it becomes an invisible victim of corporate violence.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** All authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organisation or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

**Ethical Approval** This study was a part of Sofia Villo's dissertation project, and the procedures used in this study adhere to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

**Informed Consent** Informed verbal consent to participate and publish was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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