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The Dynamics of Fine-Grained Firm–Stakeholder Contentions and Synergies in the Process of Sustainable Development: The Case of Cassava-Based Beer Production in Africa

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Abstract: Sustainable development (SD) involves a massive variety of stakeholders with differing objectives and values, and consequently comes with tensions and tradeoffs among such stakeholders. Yet, at the same time, these stakeholders often manage to create win–wins and synergies. Prior studies have not fully addressed the question of how stakeholders manage conflicts while creating synergies in the process of sustainable development. Focusing on the socioeconomic dimensions of sustainable development, we offer an empirical study on the tension-managing and synergy-creating process of sustainable development in the setting of SABMiller's cassava-based beer production project in Africa. The key approach in our study is to systematically capture fine-grained firm-stakeholder synergistic and contentious interactions that took place in specific situations over time throughout the production project. We then weave those fine-grained interactions together to create a process view of the project. Based on the process view through the contention–synergy lens, our study reveals some key insights on the internal dynamics of the process of sustainable development along socioeconomic dimensions, contributing to the current literature on socioeconomic sustainable development.

Keywords: sustainable development; supply chain management; creating shared value; Japan; empirical investigation; business and society

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1. Introduction

Sustainable development (SD) is a comprehensive, normative framework for promoting human wellbeing across a wide range of stakeholders including future generations [1–5]. One of the key challenges of sustainable development is how to address and cope with often competing and conflicting priorities and objectives of various stakeholders holding differing interests and values. In fact, the framework is rife with tensions and tradeoffs among stakeholders across multiple "conflict dimensions" such as current vs. future (temporal) [6], here vs. there (spatial) [7,8], economic vs. environmental vs. social [1,2]. At the same time, the stakeholders engaging in SD practices also create win–wins and synergies [9–19].

Prior studies have not fully addressed the question of how stakeholders manage tensions and at the same time create synergies through their joint effort in the process of SD. In particular, little empirical work exists that investigates the tension–synergy dynamics in the process of SD. Focusing on the economic and social dimensions of SD, we offer an empirical study of the dynamics in the setting of SABMiller's cassava-based beer production in Africa, a case of business-driven socioeconomic development.

The key approach in our study is to capture fine-grained firm–stakeholder interactions, of a contentious or synergistic nature, which took place in specific situations over time throughout the cassava-based beer production project. We then weave those fine-grained interactions together to create a process view of the project. Prior to the project, health-hazardous homebrew beer was the only beer affordable to the low-income population in Africa, and a large number of smallholder cassava farmers did not have dependable buyers

of their crop. At the end of the project, SABMiller achieved commercial success for their safe, affordable cassava-based beer and became a dependable, long-term buyer of cassava roots for smallholder farmers, promoting the wellbeing of both low-income consumers and smallholder farmers in Africa.

Based on the process view of the project through the contention–synergy lens, our study reveals some key insights on the inner working of the process of SD along socio-economic dimensions, an area of inquiry that is under-researched in the study of socio-economic sustainable development. In conclusion, we also offer a working framework for achieving successful firm–stakeholder win–win relationships.

2. Literature Review: Synergies and Contentions in Firm–Stakeholder Interactions

The literature on firm–stakeholder interactions tends to focus on synergistic interactions, contentious interactions, or ethnographic mixed-mode interactions.

2.1. Synergistic Interactions

The literature on firm–stakeholder interactions that emphasizes synergy creation includes business-driven social innovation [9,13,16], base of the pyramid [10–12,14,15], social enterprise [20–22], and creating shared value, or CSV [17–19]. These studies differ considerably from each other in terms of their relative weights on a firm's business interests and stakeholders' societal concerns.

In Bell Atlantic's "Project Explore", the firm gained access to the community as their "beta sites" to refine their R&D agenda while the community benefited from some technology-enhanced educational services [9]. Similarly, a case example of CSV is Marks and Spencer's ambitious reconfiguration of its supply chain for considerable cost savings, while "hugely reducing carbon emissions" [17]. Although these cases represent win–win outcomes, the motivations for identifying the social issues, and the business disciplines deployed to address those issues were not as explicit as other cases.

On the other hand, the innovation of microfinance in Bangladesh started more directly as a way to address the issue of a socially disadvantaged population in the country [20]. Similarly, another case of CSV is Nestlé's project in India that started with the malnutrition challenge in the country, invented a low-cost solution through extensive research and finally scaled up the project for both social impacts and business profitability [23].

Regardless of their differences in relative weights on business interests and societal concerns, the studies on synergistic relationships often do not address tensions and conflicts that business and society may face in their interactions. Criticizing the CSV framework as overlooking firm–stakeholder conflicts, Crane et al. claim that the CSV framework simplifies and misrepresents the often complex social and environmental issues, and such misrepresentation may encourage firms to believe that they have achieved win–win relationships when in reality, they may still have unresolved issues [24].

2.2. Contentious Interactions

The literature on firm–stakeholder interactions that acknowledges and highlights contentions includes inconsistent stakeholder priorities [25–27], conflicting sustainability dimensions [28,29], and competing institutional logics [30–32]. The work on stakeholder priorities examines, for instance, the tension between the management and the employees. In one such case, examining the case of a fatal helicopter crash, Hart suggests that the accident partially stemmed from prioritizing the stark economic realities of grounding a fleet of helicopters over critical safety issues of employees, which then disrupted the clients' operations, potentially impacting future contracts [33].

On the other hand, the studies on incompatible sustainability dimensions look into the tensions among economic, social, and environmental needs. Businesses in certain situations may decide to embrace immediate economic gains at the sacrifice of longer-term environmental protection [6]. Regarding the tension around competing institutional logics, a "hybrid" organization houses two competing logics of commercial interest and societal

concerns within a single organization. Hybrid organizations are typically seen in social enterprises such as work integration social enterprises (WISEs) that aim at placing long-term unemployed people into the workforce through retraining for new skills and, at the same time, income-generating activities for living expenses [21,30]. Thus, a tension arises, for instance, between the time for training and the time for income creation.

2.3. Synergies despite Tensions along the Way

Whether synergies or contentions, extant research on firm–stakeholder interactions is by and large of a static nature, taking the outcome view of specific interactions as opposed to the process view of how such outcomes are derived over time. When observed over time, however, a business often does create synergistic relationships with its stakeholders in society, despite encountering contentions along the way.

For example, Grameen Bank's microfinance scheme in Bangladesh provides loans with no collateral to address the poverty and other social issues of the low-income segment in Bangladesh while achieving its own financial objectives as a business entity [20]. However, prior to such win–win relationships, Grameen Bank and the low-income women of Bangladesh faced some tensions in this microfinance scheme [34]. Through an extensive ethnographic study, Karim found that in the poor villages in Bangladesh, the role of honor shaped a woman's life and affected her within the microfinance scheme [35]. If a woman is unable to pay back the loan in time, her husband would "lose face" and accuse her of bringing shame on him and dishonor to the family, and he then may ostracize her from the family and from the village community [35].

In another case example, Starbucks created a high-quality premium coffee bean called "Shirkina Sun-Dried Sidamo" together with low-income Ethiopian farmers [36,37]. When the farmers obtained ownership over the trademark of the Sidamo coffee beans, they gained control over pricing and consequently greater income. Starbucks on the other hand secured consistent access to quality coffee beans [37]. However, before achieving such win–win relationships, Starbucks and the low-income coffee farmers faced some serious disputes over the "Sidamo" trademark [36,37].

2.4. Research Gap and Research Question

Beyond informal and ethnographic case studies, it remains unclear exactly how firms nurture synergistic interactions with their stakeholders in the society while managing tensions in the process of dynamically evolving situations over time. Hence, this study asks: How does a firm cultivate synergistic interactions with its stakeholders in society while managing tensions in the process of firm–stakeholder interactions over time?

3. Methods

The present study follows the framework of case-based empirical research [38], with the aim of building conceptual insights on the research question stated in the previous section. A critical point of the research design was to identify individual, fine-grained firm–stakeholder interactions as discrete events while also capturing the links among them in order to gain a process view of the SD project driven by SABMiller (see Section 3.3, Unit of data collection). Throughout this paper, we use terms such as tension, contention, and conflict interchangeably, and terms such as win–win, mutual benefit, and synergy synonymously.

3.1. Research Setting

The setting of this research is SABMiller's project for producing cassava-based beer in Africa. At the time of the project, SABMiller was the second largest beer brewery in the world. Cassava is a starchy root that is heavily farmed in Africa [39]. The project started around 2008 and lasted about 5 to 6 years until SABMiller successfully launched the cassava-based beer and established its market presence in Mozambique around 2013 [39,40]. Prior to the availability of cassava-based beer, the mainstream beer was barley-based beer

and too expensive for most beer consumers in Africa [41,42]. Unfortunately, then, the only beer available to low-income consumers was often health-hazardous homebrew beer, which sometimes caused death from its consumption [43,44]. Given these socio-economic conditions, SABMiller wanted to introduce safe, affordable beer to the large, untapped low-price beer market. This objective served both as a growth opportunity for the company and as a response to its social concerns regarding public health issues and the poverty of cassava farmers [44].

A key challenge this cassava project faced was how to scale up the production of cassava-based beer to lower unit costs: cassava farmers were widely dispersed in Africa and it was difficult to secure largescale cassava supplies for SABMiller. Coincidentally, a social enterprise called Dutch Agricultural Development and Trading (DADTCO), with its mission, "To initiate a cassava revolution across Africa", was already closely working with cassava farmers in Africa [45]. SABMiller, in collaboration with DADTCO, was then able to sufficiently scale up cassava supplies and hence their cassava-based beer production. This collaboration finally enabled SABMiller to launch cassava-based beer and gradually establish a strong market position in Mozambique.

Thus, SABMiller's cassava project represents a cultivation of significant win–win relationships between a firm and its stakeholders in the society: SABMiller gained the access to the huge, low-price beer market while on the society side the benefits included drastically increased income for many cassava farmers, safe and affordable beer for low-income consumers, and also a new tax revenue for the government of Mozambique. However, although the project was ultimately considered a win–win success, it also faced some challenging contentions with stakeholders in the society along the way. Thus, this research setting is well aligned with the aim of this study and provides a promising opportunity to capture and analyze the process of how a firm and its stakeholders create win–win relationships while managing tensions and conflicts between the two sides.

3.2. Data Sources

This study collected data from multiple sources, following the guidelines of data triangulation [38,46]. First, one of the authors, via Skype conversations, conducted semi-structured interviews with two key managers who jointly led the cassava-based beer project. At the time of the project, one interviewee, referred to as Hendriks (pseudonym), was the supply chain manager at SABMiller, and the other, referred to as Peters (pseudonym), was the CEO of DADTCO. The interview with Hendriks lasted about 90 min, and the interview with Peters about 120 min. In addition, three people were interviewed face to face, two from Mozambique and one from Kenya, who were, in varying degrees, familiar with cassava farming and beer-consumption situations in Africa. These three interviews lasted from about 30 to 60 min. All five interviews were audio-recorded and later fully transcribed (see Appendix A for summarized interview details). Second, 32 publicly available documents were collected about the cassava-based beer project and its background. These documents include corporate documents (annual reports, press releases, presentation materials, audio and video materials), media documents (reports in local, regional, and national newspapers, and news magazine articles), and government and institutional documents (articles and reports from local, state, and national governments, and articles and case reports from academic institutions).

3.3. Unit of Data Collection

The unit of data collection in this study is the individual interaction between a business (SABMiller or DADTCO) and its stakeholders (beer consumers, smallholder cassava farmers, a government, a non-profit organization). To identify such interactions, we captured a pair of resources, one on the business side and the other on the stakeholder side and, additionally, we also extracted the resource, which is derived from the interaction between the business and the stakeholder. A resource, in its broad definition, is "anything upon which an organization can draw in an effort to accomplish its aims" ([47], p. 122). More

specifically, a resource can be tangible (e.g., cassava roots, cassava-processing equipment), or intangible (e.g., cassava-farming skills, SABMiller–farmer relationships). Following the definition of the term "resource" above and also the well-accepted use of the term in management literature (e.g., [48]), we use "resource" in this study to refer to an organizational capability as well (e.g., SABMiller's low-cost beer production capability, cassava supply capability of smallholder farmers).

Given a firm–stakeholder interaction, either a source interaction or a destination interaction, the elements mentioned above are used to identify whether the interaction is synergistic or contentious. When the resource on the business side (e.g., high-quality cassava that SABMiller uses for its beer production) matches the resource on the stakeholder side (e.g., high-quality cassava supplied by smallholder farmers), the interaction is regarded as win–win. On the other hand, when the resource on the business side (e.g., cassava-processing capacity of SABMiller) mismatches the resource on the stakeholder side (e.g., small-scale cassava supply that smallholder farmers were capable of), the interaction is regarded as contentious. In the first case, when the interaction is win–win, a point of synergy emerges over a certain property of the resource (e.g., cassava quality). On the other hand, as in the second case, when the interaction is contentious, a point of tension manifests over a certain property of the resource (e.g., cassava quantity).

3.4. Data Analysis

Given the data transcribed and collected, we took the following analytical steps.

Step 1: Identify a situational context in which a notable firm–stakeholder interaction occurred.

Step 2: Extract a firm–stakeholder interaction from the situational context in Step 1, by identifying a pair of resources, one on the firm side and the other on the stakeholder side, and a resource derived from the interaction. Steps 1 and 2 are highly iterative.

Step 3: Determine whether the interaction is synergistic or contentious.

Step 4: For each pair of firm–stakeholder interactions, analyze if the resource derived from one interaction is, one way or another, related to the other interaction.

Step 5: For each pair of interrelated interactions, characterize the nature of the interrelatedness.

4. Findings

The data analysis has identified nine discrete firm–stakeholder interactions situated in dynamically shifting contexts throughout the project. Among nine interactions, three interactions are contentious and the remaining six are synergistic. Each interaction is also interrelated to one or more interactions. Such relationships among firm–stakeholder interactions are summarized in Table 1. For each pair of interactions, Table 1 gives a brief description of how the *source interaction* is interrelated to the *destination interaction*, together with a label that captures the nature of the interaction (e.g., tension resolving, tension entailing, and contributing). Figure 1 visually captures the nine interactions with relationships among them. These nine interactions are summarized in Appendix B ("Fine-grained Firm–stakeholder Interactions") for further information. For each interaction, its situational context was captured, and a pair of firm and stakeholder resources were identified, together with the resource derived from the interaction. For each interaction, Appendix B also shows its interaction mode (synergistic or contentious).

Table 1. Relationships among firm–stakeholder interactions.

Source	Destination	How the Source Interaction Is Related to the Destination Interaction
Interaction 1	Interaction 2	Tension addressing: The price-mismatched tension on barley-based beer in Interaction 1 was addressed through the intended solution of cassava-based beer production in Interaction 2.
Interaction 2	Interaction 4	Tension resolving: The scale-mismatched tension on cassava purchasing and supplying in Interaction 2 was resolved through the AMPU-enabled cassava transaction platform in Interaction 4.
Interaction 3	Interaction 4	Enhancing: DADTCO'S AMPU-enabled cassava processing in Interaction 3 was significantly enhanced through the joint effort between SABMiller and DADTCO that created a largescale cassava processing platform in Interaction 4.
Interaction 4	Interaction 5	Tension entailing: The initial AMPU-enabled cassava transaction platform in Interaction 4, although successful in terms of greater scaling, entailed the quality-mismatch tension of cassava purchasing and supplying in Interaction 5, where the tension was latent in Interaction 4 but became salient in Interaction 5.
Interaction 5	Interaction 6	Tension resolving: The quality-mismatch tension in Interaction 5 was resolved through the quality-matching platform enabled by "structured farming" in Interaction 6.
Interaction 6	Interaction 8	Contributing: The quality-matching transaction platform in Interaction 6 contributed to SABMiller's market success through the introduction of low-priced yet high-quality beer in Interaction 8.
Interaction 7	Interaction 8	Contributing: SABMiller's positive relationship with the Mozambican government in Interaction 7 contributed to the introduction of price-competitive beer via tax reduction in Interaction 8.
Interaction 6	Interaction 9	Contributing: The structured farming maturing as a community practice in Interaction 6 contributed to the largescale, long-term, mutually dependable interactions between SABMiller and smallholder farmers in Interaction 9.
Interaction 8	Interaction 9	Contributing: The very market success of SABMiller in Interaction 8 contributed to the largescale, long-term, mutually dependable interactions between SABMiller and smallholder farmers in Interaction 9.
Interaction 9	Interaction 7	Contributing: The largescale, long-term, mutually dependable interactions between SABMiller and smallholder farmers in Interaction 9 in turn contributed to the positive SABMiller–government relationship in Interaction 7.
Interaction 9	Interaction 8	Contributing: The largescale, long-term, mutually dependable relationship between SABMiller and smallholder farmers in Interaction 9 in turn contributed to the continued market success of SABMiller in Interaction 8.

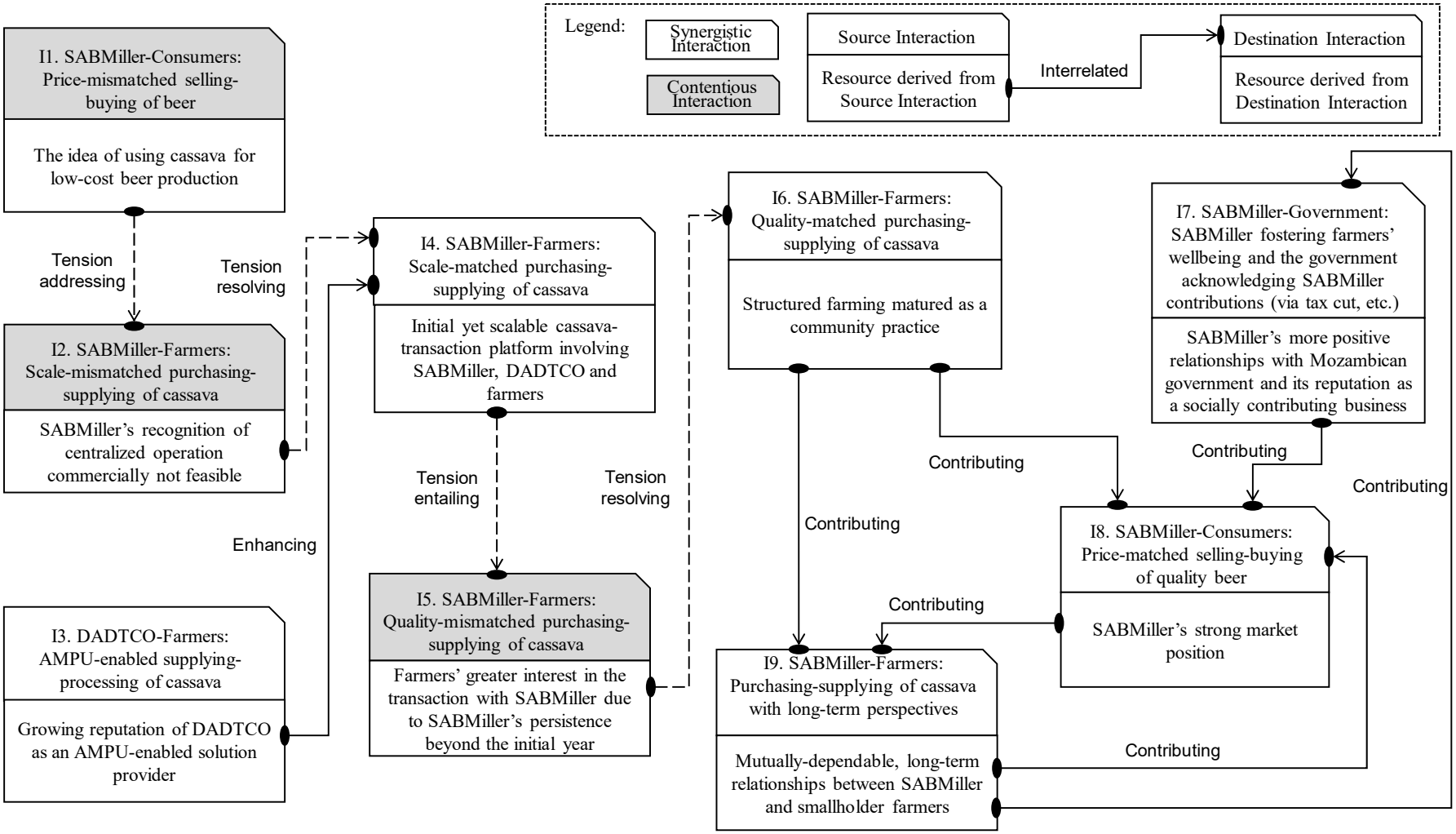

Figure 1. Process view of SABMiller's sustainable development project.

4.1. Phases of the Process

The process of SABMiller's cassava-based beer project can be summarized in terms of three phases:

4.1.1. Phase 1 (Interactions 1, 2, 3, and 4): Scaling Challenge and Solution

In the beginning, SABMiller's first attempt to produce cassava-based beer failed. The key reason for the failure was the scaling challenge. SABMiller's centralized cassava-processing effort (Interaction 2) did not scale up due to the limited cassava supply capabilities of the smallholder farmers in the close vicinity of the centralized processing location. Interestingly, DADTCO, a social enterprise with its mission, "To initiate a cassava revolution across Africa", was already working with widely dispersed cassava farmers with its invention, Autonomous Mobile Processing Unit (AMPU), which enabled DADTCO to relocate and distribute its cassava-processing stations and gain access to a much greater number of cassava farmers. However, mainly due to the limitation of its financial strength, its operations were also facing a scaling challenge to meet the ambition of its mission. The solution to this scaling challenge was the coupling of DADTCO's AMPU innovation and SABMiller's financial strength. SABMiller financed DADTCO's cassava-processing activities, and DADTCO was able to build more AMPUs and scale up their operations. SABMiller also served as a dependable buyer of processed cassava, which they used for their beer making.

4.1.2. Phase 2 (Interactions 5 and 6): Quality Challenge and Solution

Despite the joint scaling solution implemented in Interaction 4, a new challenge was gradually surfacing, which was about the quality of cassava roots. While SABMiller wanted 1-year-old cassava roots for quality beer production, cassava farmers, being skeptical of SABMiller to be a trustworthy, long-term partner given their past unsettling experience with other cassava buyers, sold SABMiller older cassava roots that had been in ground for 2 to 3 years. Thus, a tension over cassava quality emerged between SABMiller and cassava farmers (Interaction 5). This tension over cassava quality was ultimately resolved when SABMiller, DADTCO, and the farmers jointly introduced an innovative practice of "structured farming", in which cassava planting months were shifted from one area to another so that 1-year-old cassava roots were consistently available to DADTCO and SABMiller (Interaction 6).

4.1.3. Phase 3 (Interactions 7, 8, and 9): The Final Cultivation of Mutually Beneficial Relationships

Although in the past, companies in the alcohol business were normally seen as "the enemy by the government" in Mozambique and elsewhere in Africa, SABMiller was able to nurture significantly more positive relationships with the government of Mozambique. Filipe Nyusi, the President of Mozambique at the time, acknowledged: "*[Cassava] now has a guaranteed market. . .a true contribution to national development. . . [The additional tax revenue] will contribute to expanding education, health and water supply service. . .*" (as quoted in [49]). Acknowledging SABMiller's contributions to the wellbeing of the country's smallholder farmers, the Mozambican government gave SABMiller a tax cut, which helped SABMiller make their cassava-based beer more price-competitive in the market. Hendriks stated: "*we were able to drop the price to about 60% of the mainstream [barley] beer*". Also, according to Hendriks, their cassava-based beer (branded as "Impala") grew into the second largest beer brand in Mozambique. Impala's strong market position enabled SABMiller to serve as a mass-purchasing, long-term cassava buyer for smallholder farmers. This market-driven dynamic, in turn, further strengthened the mutually dependent bond between SABMiller and smallholder farmers. Hendriks noted: "*The fact that they were supplying cassava created a very strong bond, and on our label [of the beer bottle] we actually had 'Made from cassava on your very own farms'. We kind of reinforced that bond*".

As illustrated above, the process of SABMiller's sustainable development project exhibits the pattern of serious stakeholder contentions in its early phases, which were resolved through innovative responses, and then there was the final cultivation of mutual benefits with its key stakeholders. Underlying this positive dynamics of the process, two factors are worth noting.

One is DADTCO's deep local knowledge in Africa (e.g., knowledge about extremely poor transport infrastructure and how smallholder farmers cope with the infrastructure challenge in transporting their cassava roots) and their mission-driven willingness to work out daunting details of AMPU deployment (e.g., communication with smallholder farmers often through a village chief for AMPU scheduling and mutually acceptable cassava-purchasing scheme).

Second is SABMiller's simultaneously instrumental and normative motivation for cassava-based beer production. Clearly a low-priced beer market in Africa presented a huge, untapped opportunity for SABMiller, and hence building positive relationships with cassava farmers was instrumental to their business success. At the same time, however, Hendricks and his team were genuinely concerned with the wellbeing of smallholder farmers. Even before the cassava-based beer project, they had personally visited the villages of smallholder farmers. Hendriks explained: "*. . . we went around the community and we surveyed the community in terms of their current income, schooling for their children, the medical thing, all those socioeconomic factors. . . . I repeated the survey every year and then tracked the impact of this project on the socioeconomic status of these farmers*".

Given that these two factors were critical in tension resolution and synergy creation throughout the project, the contention–synergy view of fine-grained firm–stakeholder interactions was able to serve as a proper lens to observe the process dynamics of sustainable development along socioeconomic dimensions.

5. Discussion

This research has revealed three key insights on the SD process along socioeconomic dimensions:

1. Dynamically initiated waves of stakeholder mobilization throughout the process.
2. Dynamics of contention-to-synergy and synergy-to-contention transitions.
3. Creation and cultivation of "shared resources" that bond the firm and its stakeholders.

5.1. Dynamically Initiated Waves of Stakeholder Mobilization

As detailed in the *Findings* section, the present study has captured a chain of interrelated firm–stakeholder interactions that occurred in specific situations over time. A prominent feature of the process of SD thus captured is SABMiller's dynamically shifting waves of stakeholder mobilization throughout the process. It is important to note here that the way a stakeholder is mobilized is situation specific and hence can differ considerably in different situations. For instance, the way SABMiller mobilized cassava farmers changed strikingly from the initial context of not having AMPUs (limited mobilization making the centralized cassava processing commercially infeasible) to the succeeding context of having AMPUs and AMPU-enabled distributed cassava-processing available to the farmers (extensive mobilization enabling the initial cassava transaction platform).

Thus, in order to accurately grasp SABMiller's stakeholder mobilization, it is important to capture stakeholders (or stakeholder groups) situated in different contexts. Such stakeholders of SABMiller in different situations include low-income consumers without access to safe and affordable beer, smallholder farmers in the vicinity of SABMiller's central cassava-processing site, DADTCO in the effort to establish large-scale distributed cassava-processing, smallholder farmers from across a geographically dispersed area, smallholder farmers not trusting SABMiller as a dependable buyer, smallholder farmers organized for structured farming, the non-profit organization who participated in agricultural farmer training, the government of Mozambique keen on food security of cassava farmers, and low-income consumers having access to safe and affordable beer. It is clear from the list

above, throughout the cassava-beer project, SABMiller unceasingly mobilized a host of external stakeholders in different situations in a way specific to those situations.

5.2. Dynamics of Contention-to-Synergy and Synergy-to-Contention Transitions

Somewhat counterintuitively, it has been observed that contentious interactions can actually lead to the emergence of win–win interactions. For instance, the tension over scalability (Interaction 2) led to the synergy over scalability (Interaction 4). Similarly, the tension over cassava quality (Interaction 5) transitioned to the synergy over cassava quality (Interaction 6). These findings are consistent with the literature on hybrid organizations [30,50], where a hybrid organization is an organization that is capable of embracing two competing logics of commercial interest and social welfare [21]. A point of conflict between the two competing logics may mature as a "productive tension" [30], and possibly deliver a "creative synthesis" [50]. The two examples of tension-to-synergy transitions above illustrate how a point of tension is nurtured as a productive tension and eventually creates a solution that satisfies the two competing logics of business and societal concerns.

It is also interesting to note that a win–win interaction may entail a tension and, under some conditions, lead to a contentious interaction. For instance, when SABMiller, together with DADTCO and cassava farmers, established the initial, functioning platform for cassava transaction (Interaction 4), due to the very presence of the transaction platform, many of the farmers supplied older cassava roots that did not meet the quality desirable to SABMiller, resulting in the contentious interaction over cassava quality (Interaction 5). The behavior of these farmers stemmed from their preexisting concerns about cassava buyers not being dependable. Thus, it is possible that the tension over quality was already there but stayed latent until it gained a means of expression, namely the transaction platform, and became salient. Smith and Lewis formalize such dynamics of tension in terms of a latent phase shifting to a salient phase, which then faces the challenge of tension resolution [51]. The point to note here is that when a firm and its stakeholders experience win–win interactions, they may still face contentions precisely because of those prior success milestones that entail latent tensions. In other words, synergy-to-contention transitions are just part of the dynamics of the SD process towards more stable win–win relationships.

Regardless of how tensions manifest, once they arise, a firm and its stakeholders must cope with them, potentially turning them into win–win interactions. However, the passage from contention to synergy is not a mechanical process, and appears to require the mindful attention of those involved in the transition. For example, in coping with the tension over scalability (Interaction 2), SABMiller and DADTCO wanted to deploy AMPUs but the process of the deployment was hardly straightforward. According to Peters, among other unsettled issues of AMPU-enabled cassava processing, the deployment necessitated intricate communication and coordination with smallholder farmers, often via village chiefs. Such communications were about where and when AMPUs will arrive, how long they will stay there, how to manage "purchase agreements" in order to avoid oversupply beyond the processing capacity of an AMPU, and how to measure cassava in kilos instead of quantities in terms of individual roots or bags of roots. Thus, mindful attention to contention-to-synergy transitions was a key driver of the process that created win–win relationships between SABMiller and their stakeholders in the face of tensions along the way.

5.3. Creation and Cultivation of Resources That Bond Business and Society

Throughout the project, a class of resources, referred to as *shared resources* in this paper, served as a powerful driver of the project towards win–win relationships. Following Helfat and colleagues, a resource can be one's resource if it "owns, controls, or has access to [the resource] on a preferential basis" ([47], p. 4). Thus, for example, AMPUs are owned by DADTCO, not SABMiller, yet they are a resource of SABMiller as SABMiller has access to AMPUs on the preferential basis that SABMiller had established by financing DADTCO to build AMPUs and through its close working relationships with DADTCO. Similarly, AMPUs represent a resource to many smallholder cassava farmers as DADTCO specifically

built them under the decree of their mission, "To initiate a cassava revolution across Africa". Thus, AMPUs are a (tangible) shared resource of SABMiller and cassava farmers in Africa. Along the line of similar arguments, structured-farming practice is a (intangible) shared resource of SABMiller and cassava farmers who engage in the practice.

Note that when SABMiller faced contentions with its stakeholders, their responses can be framed in terms of creation and cultivation of shared resources. For example, when faced with the contention over scalability, the AMPUs, as a shared resource of SABMiller and the cassava farmers, provided a solution. Likewise, structured farming as a shared resource of SABMiller and cassava farmers was a solution to the tension over cassava quality.

Beyond these shared resources, SABMiller also cultivated "relational resources", which are "qualities of relationships that enable people to work together" ([52], p. 300). Thus, by definition, a relational resource is a shared resource of two parties working together. For example, against the commonly held view of companies in the alcohol sector as "the enemy of the government", SABMiller was able to cultivate more positive relationships with the government of Mozambique. Their working relationships represent a shared resource of the two parties, which enabled them to work together for the market success of the cassava-based beer, Impala (Interaction 8). Another powerful relational (and hence shared) resource was the mutually dependable, long-term relationships between SABMiller and smallholder farmers (Interaction 9), which underpins the win–win outcome of the cassava-based beer project. It should be noted here that the mutually dependable, long-term relationships were the cumulative outcome of prior interactions between SABMiller and its stakeholders. Most directly, the Impala's strong market position was a key to the long-term relationships because without its market success, SABMiller would be unable to serve as a dependable, long-term cassava buyer. For their market success then, AMPUs and structured farming were the two of the most significant contributors. Thus, the process of the whole cassava-based beer project can be seen as a process of creating and cultivating shared resources, bonding together SABMiller and its key stakeholders for mutual benefits and also for tension resolution for SD.

5.4. Working Framework for Mutually Beneficial Firm–Stakeholder Relationships

Here, we propose a working framework to identify cases of successful mutually beneficial relationships between the firm and their stakeholders in society (Figure 2).

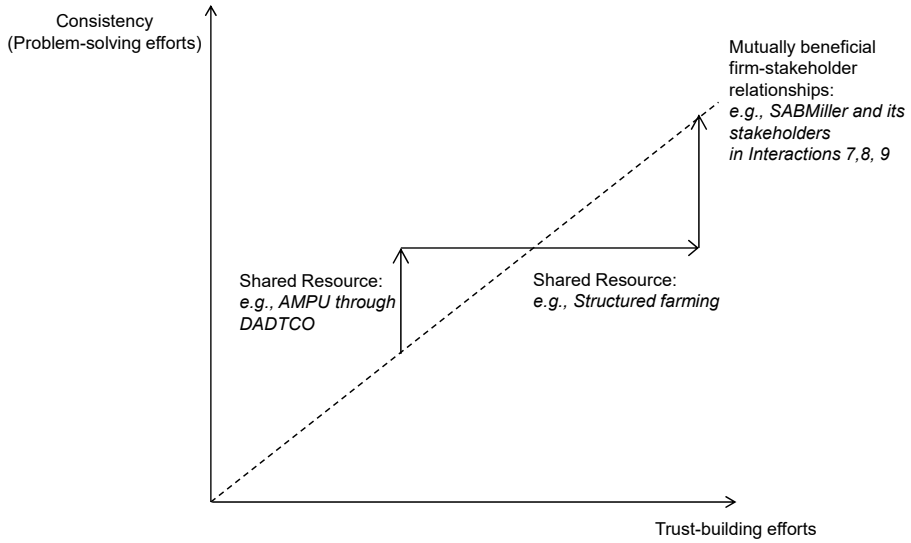

Figure 2. A framework for mutually beneficial firm–stakeholder relationships.

Through our analysis and in-depth study of the SABMiller case, we observed two main characteristics throughout the process toward creating a mutually beneficial firm–stakeholder relationship, namely, consistency (problem-solving efforts) of the firm (vertical axis) and cumulative trust-building efforts of the firm (horizontal axis).

Consistency (problem-solving efforts): "Consistency" is when unceasing actions are made by the firm in the face of tensions and conflicts for the purpose of addressing and possibly resolving them. For example, SABMiller was met with challenges in terms of scalable supply in the beginning of their cassava-based beer production project. However, they persevered and overcame the scalable supply challenge by partnering with DADTCO and introducing AMPUs (a shared resource).

Trust-building efforts: "Trust-building efforts" is when cumulative actions are made by the firm over a long period of time to cultivate mutually reliable relationships with stakeholders. For example, over the course of a few years SABMiller would return time and again to buy from the smallholder cassava farmers. Such long-term, continuous efforts nurtured trusting relationships to the point where the farmers began to organize themselves to more efficiently supply cassava to SABMiller.

Over time, SABMiller and the farmers achieved a mutually beneficial relationship. This process toward a successful mutually beneficial relationship while overcoming tensions may be observed in other cases as well, yet that still remains to be tested, hence, further research is needed.

6. Conclusions

In order to gain insights on the internal dynamics of the process of sustainable development, we deployed two conceptual tools: fine-grained interactions among stakeholders with differing interests and values and the tension–synergy lens on those interactions. Our focal domain of study was a socioeconomic development driven by a business entity. In general, a process is defined as a "sequence of events that describe how things change over time" [53]. In terms of this definition, "events" in our study are fine-grained stakeholder interactions of contentious or synergistic nature, and "things" are the wellbeing of low-income consumers and smallholder farmers as well as the business of SABMiller in Africa. Because the level of granularity in our analysis was on individual "events", not the whole process, we were able to reveal some insights on the internal dynamics of the process. However, our study was a single-case, empirical study in a specific domain within the all-embracing scope of sustainable development in general. Thus, the effectiveness of the conceptual tools we deployed remains to be tested in other conflict dimensions such as temporal, spatial, and those involving environmental sustainability.

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Appendix A. Interviewees

Interviewee	Position	Length of Interview	Type of Interview	Year of Interview
Hendriks (Pseudonym)	Key senior supply chain manager of SABMiller, led the cassava-based beer project	About 90 min	Skype conversation	2017
Peters (Pseudonym)	Former CEO of DADTCO	About 120 min	Skype conversation	2017

Appendix B. Fine-Grained Firm–Stakeholder Interactions

Interaction 1: SABMiller and Consumers Price-mismatched selling-buying of beer	Situational Context			
	Initially, SABMiller was producing and selling barley-based beer to consumers in Mozambique and elsewhere in Africa [42]. However, the low-income population comprises a large portion of the potential market in Africa [39,41], and, as informed by Hendriks at SABMiller, only 10 to 15% of alcohol consumers in Africa could afford the barley-based beer. In addition, the rural population in Mozambique were drinking "cheap spirits...made from all sorts of horrible raw materials...[and] lots of people in Africa die every year...particularly in areas like Kenya and Mozambique", explained Hendriks. In 2015, it has been reported that around 70 people died in Mozambique from consuming the homemade beer [44].			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	Barley-based beer production capabilities of SABMiller	Purchasing power of low-income consumers in Africa	Tension over pricing	The idea of sourcing cassava roots for beer production
Interaction 2: SABMiller and Farmers Scale-mismatched purchasing-supplying of cassava	Situational Context			
	SABMiller tried to process the cassava roots at a centralized location in Nigeria for a few years using the cassava from the smallholder farmers. However, SABMiller's centralized cassava processing faced some serious challenges. Peters noted: "In Africa first of all [cassava is] grown by smallholder farmers who are widely everywhere, . . .100s of kilometers between them. Secondly you have a crop that if you take it out of the soil you have to process within 24 h [before it perishes]. And thirdly. . .it will cost you a lot of money [to transport]. . . .70% of the root is water and there's only about 25% of useful materials in the root. . . . Transport in Africa is very difficult. The roads, especially feeder roads to farmers are very bad or non-existent".			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	SABMiller's centralized cassava-based beer production capabilities	The supply capabilities of cassava farmers from a geographically limited range	Tension overscalability	SABMiller's recognition that centralized cassava processing was not scalable in the situation of smallholder farming in Africa
Interaction 3: DADTCO and Farmers AMPU-enabled supplying-processing of cassava	Situational Context			
	In response to cassava transportation challenges in Africa, DADTCO invented the "Autonomous Mobile Processing Unit" (AMPU). The AMPU is mobile and can be relocated closer to the smallholder farmers about five times in a year throughout the cassava farming areas, and DADTCO processed the cassava roots, making "cassava cakes" that can be preserved for at least one year [54]. Through AMPU-enabled, distributed cassava processing, the supply capabilities of smallholder cassava farmers radically increased. Peters observed: "So from USD 750 per month total economic value of that district, going now to USD 57,000 ~ 80,000 per month".			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	AMPU-enabled cassava-processing capabilities of DADTCO	AMPU-enabled cassava-supplying capabilities of a greater number of farmers in the same district	Synergy over effective use of AMPUs	Growing reputation of DADTCO as an AMPU-enabled solution provider

Interaction 4: SABMiller/ DADTCO and Farmers Scale-matched purchasing-supplying of cassava	Situational Context			
	At the time of the project, DADTCO was a small company of about ten people and it was not financially capable of scaling up its cassava processing operations. On the other hand, SABMiller was a large company with financial strength and it financed DADTCO's upstream activities. DADTCO was then able to build more AMPUs and pay the smallholder farmers upfront in cash for the cassava roots they brought to the processing sites. DADTCO then produced, collected, and sold cassava cakes in sufficiently large quantities to SABMiller. Peters reflected: "So, SABMiller was not only the buyer but was also our banker. It was that kind of relations". Peters also noted: "I'm very happy at the moment because I've found people who are willing to invest and I can expand, . . . And instead of touching thousands of farmers, touching on the lives of hundreds of thousands of farmers".			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	Decentralized cassava-processing capabilities jointly realized by SABMiller and DADTCO	Cassava-supplying capabilities of farmers from geographically dispersed areas enabled by a greater number of AMPUs	Synergy over scalability	Initial yet scalable cassava-transaction platform involving SABMiller, DADTCO and farmers
Interaction 5: SABMiller and Farmers Quality-mismatched purchasing-supplying of cassava	Situational Context			
	Although the initial cassava transaction platform was established, there were some issues with the cassava quality between SABMiller and smallholder farmers. According to Hendriks, the ideal cassava for beer making was one that had been in the ground for 1 year. However, the cassava farmers were initially suspicious of SABMiller having had prior experience with other companies whose transaction behaviors were inconsistent over time and unreliable. Thus, the farmers sold DADTCO older, less fresh cassava, which had been in the ground for 2 to 3 years. However, SABMiller came back to the transaction with smallholder farmers beyond the initial year, unlike many of cassava buyers of the past, and the farmers began to change their views on SABMiller.			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	Quality of cassava roots desirable to SABMiller	Quality of cassava roots supplied by farmers	Tension overcassava quality	Farmers' increasing interest in the transaction with SABMiller due to SABMiller's persistence beyond the initial year
Interaction 6: SABMiller and Farmers Quality-matched purchasing-supplying of cassava	Situational Context			
	In order to ensure a steady supply flow of year-old cassava, SABMiller, together with the farmers and DADTCO, set up "structured farming" for cassava planting and harvesting. As Hendriks explained, the structured farming encouraged the farmers in different regions to plant cassava in different months so that 1-year-old cassava would be available every month throughout the year. Along with the farmers' improving perception of SABMiller as a dependable buyer, the cassava farmers in large geographic areas were ready to organize themselves to coordinate their farming activities in order to manage a steady supply flow of 1-year-old cassava for SABMiller.			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	Steady inflow of one-year-cassava for SABMiller	Smallholder farmers' supply capacity for 1-year-cassava	Synergy over cassava quality	Structured-farming matured as a community practice

Interaction 7: SABMiller and Mozambican Government SABMiller fostering the wellbeing of farmers and the Mozambican government acknowledging its contributions (via tax cut, etc.)	Situational Context			
	Hendriks and his team had personally visited the villages of smallholder farmers. Hendriks explained: "... we went around the community and we surveyed the community in terms of their current income, schooling for their children, the medical thing, all those socioeconomic factors. ... I repeated the survey every year and then tracked the impact of this project on the socioeconomic status of these farmers". Although in the past, companies in the alcohol business were normally seen as "the enemy by the government", SABMiller was able to nurture significantly more positive relationships with the government of Mozambique. Filipe Nyusi, the President of Mozambique at the time, acknowledged: "[Cassava] now has a guaranteed market...a true contribution to national development... [The additional tax revenue] will contribute to expanding education, health and water supply service..." (as quoted in [49]).			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	SABMiller's capacity to address social issues	Wellbeing of farmers as an asset to the Mozambican government	Synergy over farmers' wellbeing	SABMiller's more positive relationships with Mozambican government and its reputation as a socially contributing business
Interaction 8: SABMiller and Consumers Price-matched buying-selling of quality beer	Situational Context			
	SABMiller launched a low-priced cassava-based beer called "Impala" for the low-income consumers in Mozambique. Hendriks stated: "we were able to drop the price to about 60% of the mainstream [barley] beer". In order to compete effectively in the low-priced beer market in Mozambique where homebrew competitors were not paying any excise, the Mozambican government, pleased with SABMiller's socially oriented interactions with the farmers, gave SABMiller a tax reduction. Only 2 years into the project, "18.5 million bottles of Impala had been sold" [39]. Also, according to Hendriks, Impala grew into the second largest beer brand in Mozambique.			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	SABMiller's access to the huge, low-price beer market	Affordable and safe beer accessible to low-income consumers in Mozambique	Synergy over pricing of quality beer	SABMiller's strong market position
Interaction 9: SABMiller and Farmers Purchasing-supplying of cassava with long-term perspectives	Situational Context			
	SABMiller's market success sparked the mutually reinforcing dynamics of greater demand and greater supply on quality cassava. The dynamics in turn further strengthened the mutually dependable bonding between SABMiller and farmers. Hendriks noted: "The fact that they were supplying cassava created a very strong bond, and on our label [of the beer bottle] we actually had 'Made from cassava on your very own farms'. We kind of reinforced that bond".			
	Firm Resource	Stakeholder Resource	Interaction Mode	Derived Resource
	SABMiller's capacity to serve as a long-term consistent buyer of cassava	Long-term benefits to farmers that derived from their dependable relationships with SABMiller	Synergy over long-term partnership	Mutually-dependable, long-term relationships between SABMiller and farmers

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