

Die Verantwortung von Unternehmen zum Schutz der liberalen Demokratie

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Chair for Business Management, especially Responsible Management

**“It takes
twenty years
to build a
reputation
and five
minutes to
ruin it.”**

How quickly this can happen...

- ... All (!) major U.S. banks withdrew from the leading climate initiative, the Net Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA), following Trump’s election victory (even before his inauguration).
- ... Facebook’s parent company Meta dramatically changed its fact-checking policies.
- ... Fast-food chain McDonald’s announced it would rapidly scale back its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the United States.
- ... SAP decided to roll back key elements of its diversity and inclusion strategy. SAP eliminated its internal target of increasing the share of women in its workforce to 40% and removed related leadership targets in the U.S.
- ... T-Mobile, the U.S. subsidiary of Deutsche Telekom, announced that it would largely abandon its DEI initiatives

German Elections 2026

- Baden-Württemberg – State election on March 8, 2026
- Rhineland-Palatinate – State election on March 22, 2026
- Saxony-Anhalt – State election on September 6, 2026
- Berlin – Election to the House of Representatives on September 20, 2026
- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern – State election also on September 20, 2026

Shall I show you the forecasts?



	Nächster Wahltermin	Institut (Datum)	CDU/CSU	SPD	GRÜNE	FDP	LINKE	AfD	BSW	Sonstige
Baden-Württemberg	8. März 2026	Infratest dimap (22.01.26)	29 %	8 %	23 %	5 %	7 %	20 %	—	8 %
Bayern	Herbst 2028	Infratest dimap (14.01.26)	39 %	8 %	13 %	—	3 %	19 %	—	FW 9 % Sonst. 9 %
Berlin	20. September 2026	Infratest dimap (16.01.26)	22 %	14 %	16 %	—	18 %	17 %	3 %	10 %
Brandenburg	Herbst 2029	INSA (15.01.26)	13 %	25 %	5 %	—	8 %	34 %	8 %	7 %
Bremen	Frühjahr 2027	Infratest dimap (28.04.25)	22 %	25 %	14 %	—	13 %	15 %	—	BD 3 % Sonst. 8 %
Hamburg	Winter 2030	INSA (27.02.25)	18 %	33 %	17 %	—	12 %	9 %	—	Volt 3 % Sonst. 8 %
Hessen	Herbst 2028	INSA (09.10.25)	32 %	15 %	12 %	4 %	7 %	20 %	3 %	FW 3 % Sonst. 4 %
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	20. September 2026	Infratest dimap (27.01.26)	13 %	25 %	4 %	—	12 %	35 %	6 %	5 %
Niedersachsen	Herbst 2027	NDR (19.11.25)	26 %	26 %	12 %	3 %	6 %	20 %	3 %	4 %
Nordrhein-Westfalen	Frühjahr 2027	INSA (23.11.25)	36 %	19 %	12 %	5 %	7 %	16 %	—	5 %
Rheinland-Pfalz	22. März 2026	Infratest dimap (22.01.26)	29 %	26 %	10 %	—	6 %	18 %	—	FW 4 % Sonst. 7 %
Saarland	Frühjahr 2027	Infratest dimap (03.12.25)	25 %	27 %	7 %	—	7 %	23 %	3 %	8 %
Sachsen	Herbst 2029	INSA (07.06.25)	26 %	6 %	5 %	—	9 %	35 %	11 %	8 %
Sachsen-Anhalt	6. September 2026	INSA (27.01.26)	26 %	8 %	3 %	2 %	11 %	39 %	6 %	5 %
Schleswig-Holstein	Frühjahr 2027	INSA (22.01.25)	39 %	16 %	13 %	4 %	—	14 %	3 %	SSW 6 % FW 2 % Son 3 %
Thüringen	Herbst 2029	INSA (11.12.25)	24 %	6 %	3 %	—	14 %	39 %	7 %	7 %

Markus Scholz

WIRTSCHAFT MIT WERTEN

Warum Unternehmen
Verantwortung
übernehmen müssen

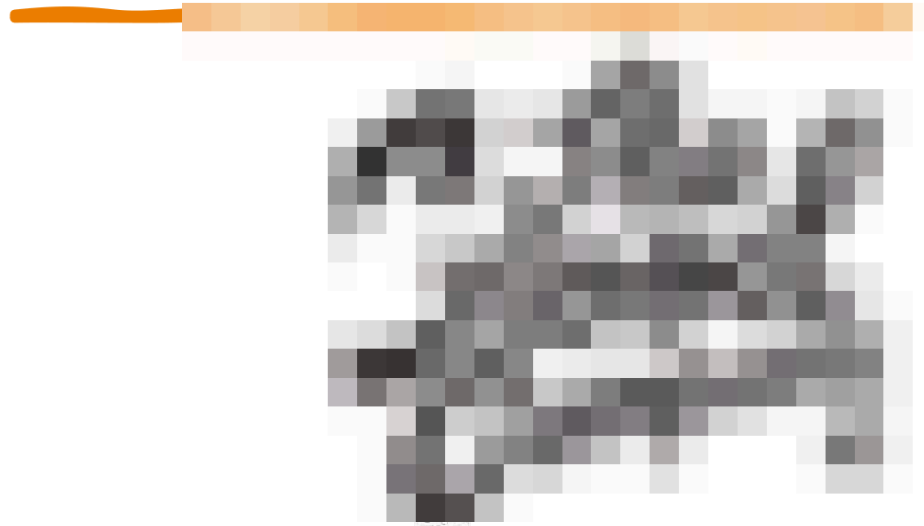
Unternehmen, Populismus und Freiheit

- In my book *Wirtschaft mit Werten* (Business with Values), I examine whether—and if so, how—**companies and their leaders should engage in protecting liberal democracy** against the rise of (right-wing) populism.

A functionally differentiated society: a clear division of labor between politics and business.



- Establishing a stable legal and economic framework, including sanctions



- Complying with binding legal requirements
- Paying taxes
- Creating jobs
- Fostering innovation

“The only social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.”

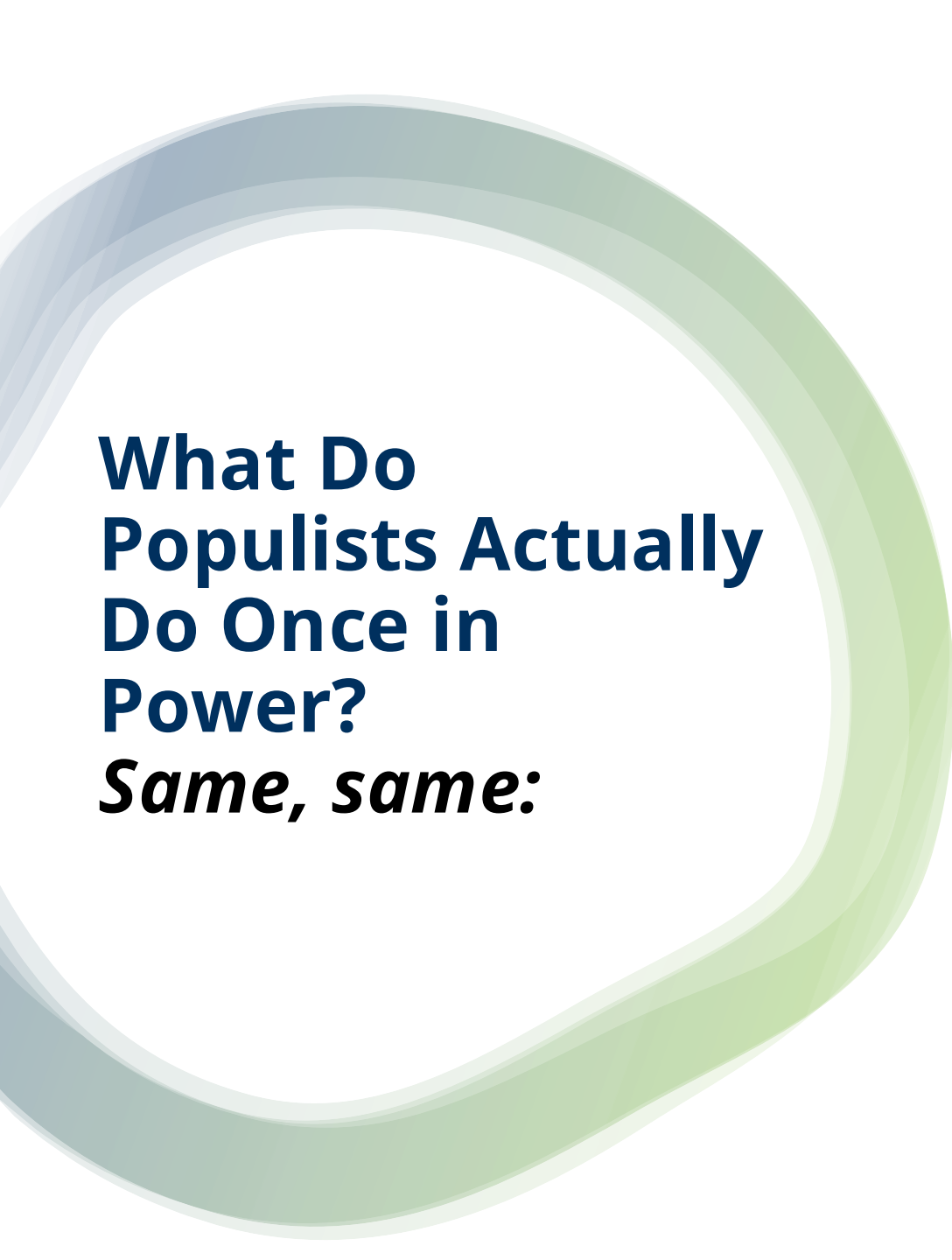
- **Companies have no political responsibility and should not engage in politics.**

Friedman’s argument:

- Spending someone else’s money
- Competitive disadvantages
- Competence problem
- Fairness and legitimacy concerns – dominance of economic actors / role of the state

What Do Populists Actually Do Once in Power?

- *Same, same...*



What Do Populists Actually Do Once in Power? *Same, same:*

➔ The Defense of the Open Society (Liberal Democracy)

The danger of populist parties lies not primarily in their programs, but in the **techniques of domination** they almost inevitably resort to due to **their political paranoia** once they gain power.

It is the use of these techniques that undermines liberal democracy and with it the institutional and economic foundations on which entrepreneurial activity in a (social) market economy has rested since World War II. Companies cannot have an interest in this.

The Five Techniques of Domination Used by Populist Parties – Everywhere:

1. Restriction of media freedom
2. Capture of the state
3. Weakening of the rule of law
4. Clientelism, patronage, and cronyism
5. Suppression of civil society and discrediting of the opposition

WIRTSCHAFT MIT WERTEN

Warum Unternehmen
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Companies, Populism, and Freedom

- Corporate responsibility for liberal democracy — *also independent of purely instrumental considerations*



The responsibility of companies to protect the open society

STANDPUNKT

Unternehmen als politische Akteure

Von Thomas Beschorner, Markus Scholz 31.01.2024, 19:11 Lesezeit: 4 Min.

Sollen Unternehmen politische Position gegen den Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland und für Vielfalt und Offenheit beziehen – und diesen klaren Bekenntnissen Taten folgen lassen? Ein Gastbeitrag.

Teilen

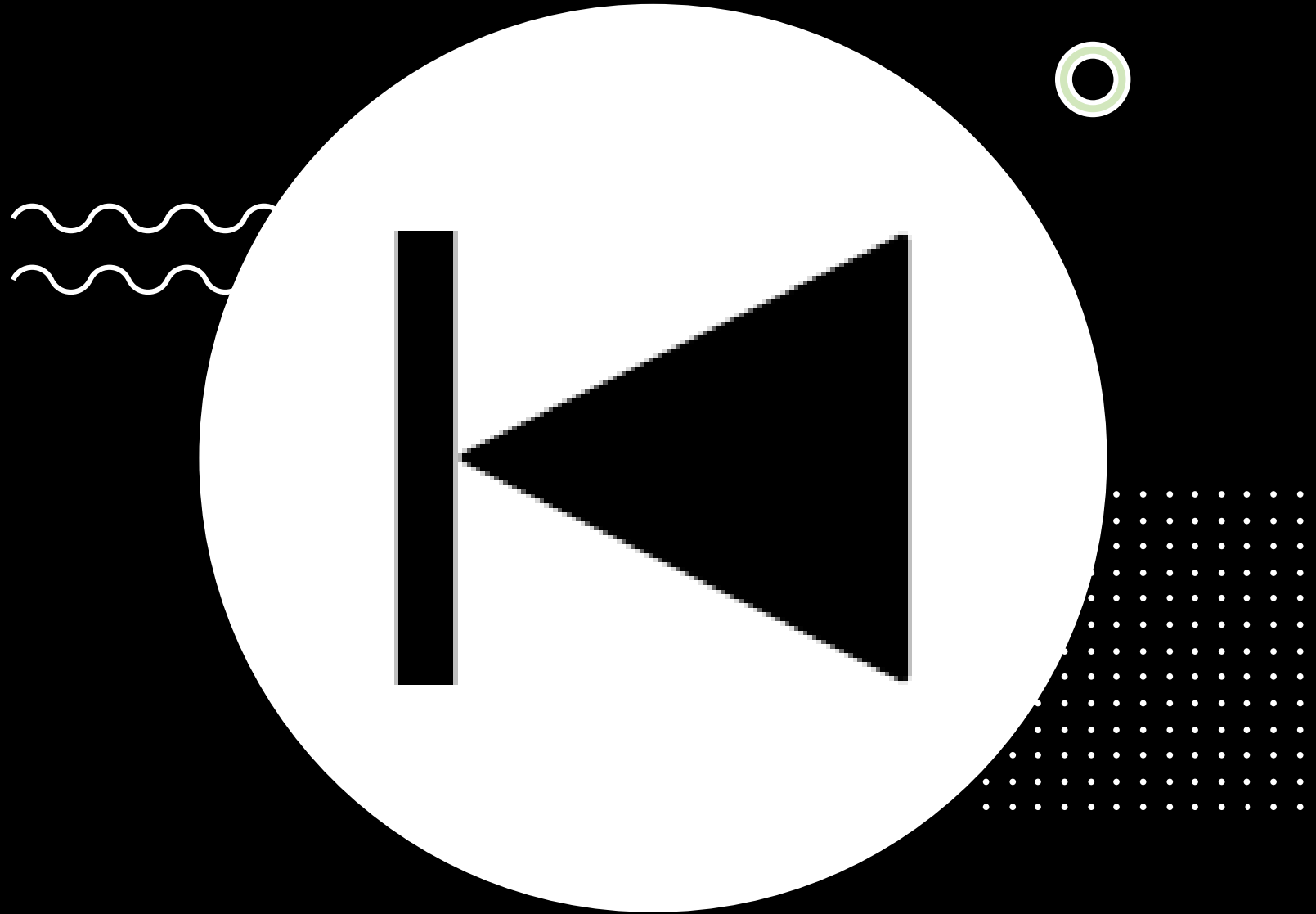
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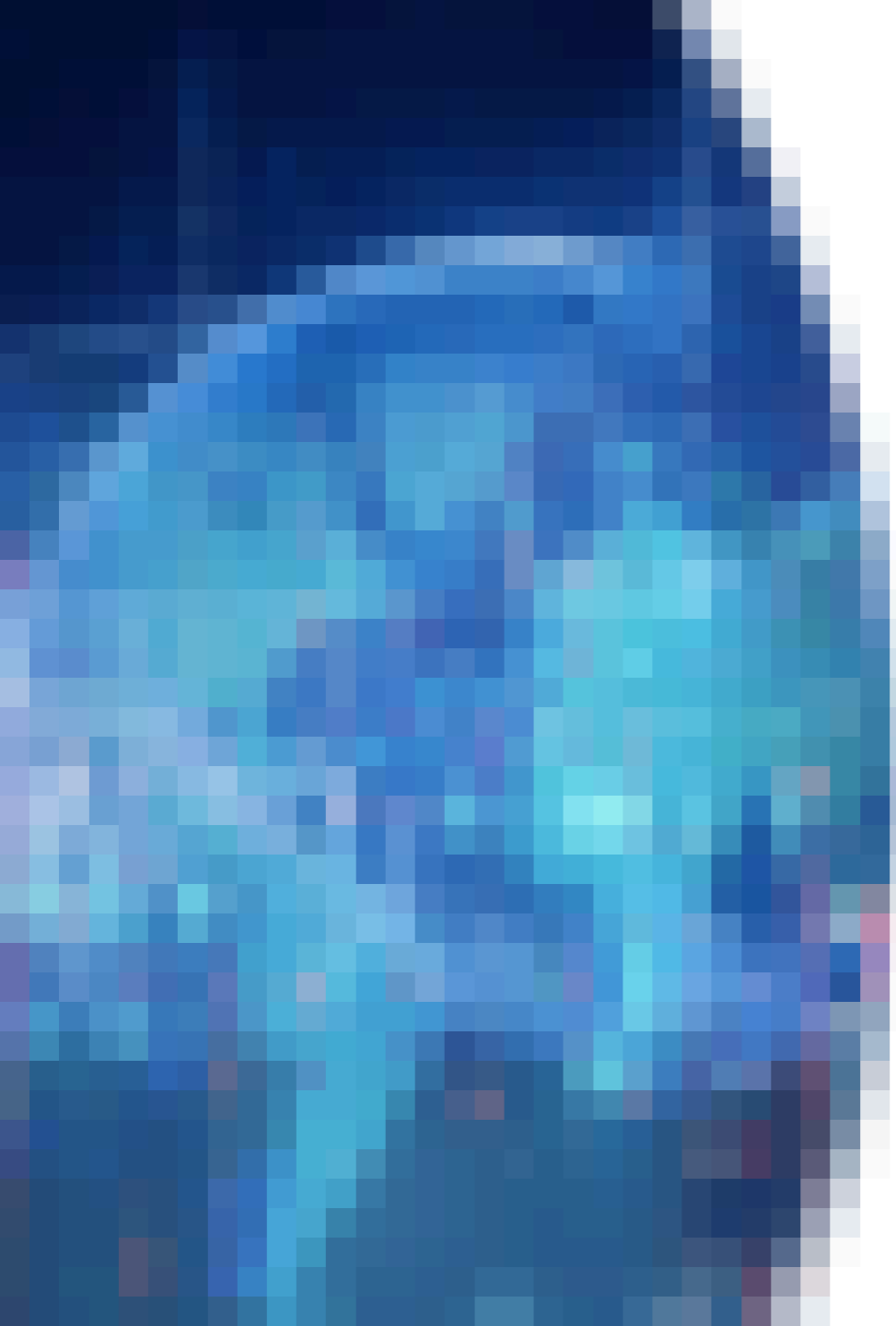
Drucken

Corporate Citoyens?!

- Business leaders are, even in a functionally differentiated society, also—or above all—citizens of a republican state. As such, they can be expected to speak up. Citizens must raise their voices in awareness of the great privilege of living in a democracy. Democracies require vigilant citizens who remain alert and make themselves heard when a crisis of liberal democracy emerges. Without resilient democrats, democracy cannot be sustained.”
- (Scholz, 2024)

Let's take one
step back:
It won't be that
bad.
Or will it?





6 reasons why this issue will become even more important.

1. Economic situation

- The rise of populist movements is closely correlated with economic insecurity. Economic inequality, structural transformation, and perceived status losses undermine trust in established institutions and increase susceptibility to simplified political narratives.

2. Geopolitical context

- Increasing international instability, marked by the rise of authoritarian regimes, geopolitical power shifts, and ongoing as well as emerging military conflicts.

3. Political developments within and beyond Europe

- The strengthening of right- and left-wing populism in many democracies, accompanied by a fundamental questioning of liberal-democratic institutions and procedures.

6 reasons why this issue will become even more important.

4. Role of social media

Almost immediate polarization of public debate through social media, intensification of tribal dynamics, emotionalization of political communication, and accelerated erosion of deliberative discourse.

5. Current opinion climate and institutional hegemonies

- Still comparatively clear normative majorities among key decision-makers in political parties, public authorities, universities, and journalistic institutions.

6. Neutrality is increasingly interpreted **as silent complicity.**

If you don't want to end like Tim Cook and if you want to prevent...

- Acknowledge the threat
- Do not rely on “self-disillusionment”
- Avoid elite cues
 - CEO-Activism? Council-Activism?
- Anchor values (supervisory board issue)
- Build alliances, pursue collective action, counter isolation
- Manage Corporate Democratic Action
- Avoid cheap talk — invest in and manage CDA

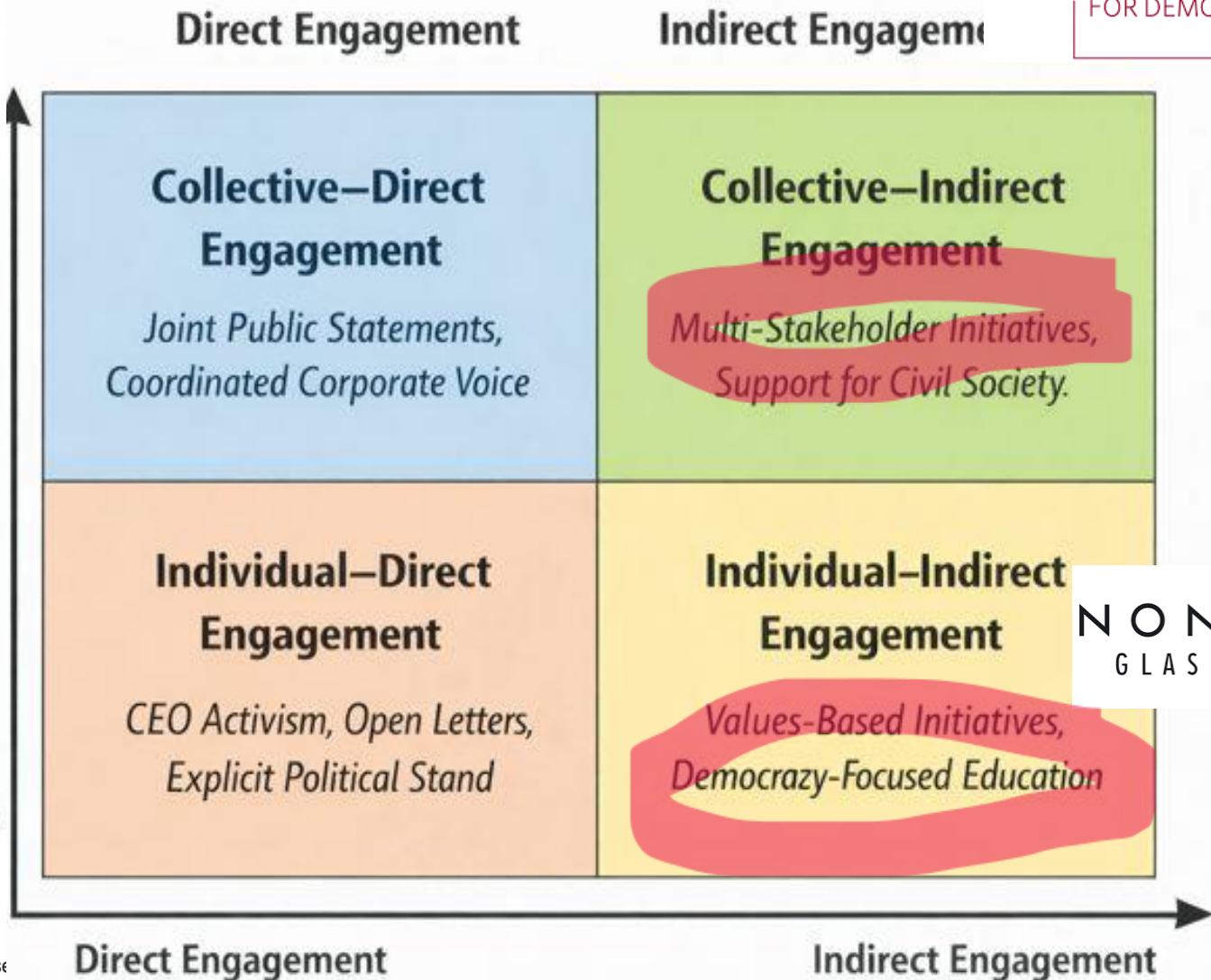
Corporate Democratic Action can be managed

#BC4D
BUSINESS COUNCIL
FOR DEMOCRACY



Level
of engagement

Individual
Engagement



NOMOS
GLASHÜTTE



Joe Kaeser
@JoeKaeser

Lieber „Kopftuch-Mädel“ als „Bund Deutscher Mädel“.
Frau Weidel schadet mit ihrem Nationalismus dem Ansehen uns
Landes in der Welt. Da, wo die Haupt-Quelle des deutschen Woh
liegt. #Bundestag #Bundesregierung #steffenseibert



**Thank you for your
attention.
Let's stay connected.**



Chair for Business Management, especially Responsible Management



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