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[What is This?](#)

Sanjay Sharma and Mark Starik (Eds.). *Research in Corporate Sustainability: The Evolving Theory and Practice of Organizations in the Natural Environment*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2002.

During the past 15 years, sustainable development has become an important political and social issue. Many definitions have been coined, and its scope, dimensions, and measurability still are issues for debate (Bebbington & Gray, 2001; L  l  , 1991). The role of business in sustainable development remains important in these discussions, showing that dealing with sustainable development is a significant yet difficult activity for firms. Studying sustainability in a corporate context therefore is relevant. It is exactly at this type of research that this volume, edited by Sanjay Sharma and Mark Starik, is aimed. Both editors are actively involved in the Academy of Management's Organization and the Natural Environment interest group (ONE), and this volume largely draws on research presented within the context of that group. This volume contains 12 chapters; it opens and closes with 2 review essays on the state of research in the field of ONE and on suggested directions for future research. The chapters in between discuss a range of different organizational issues relating to corporate sustainability. In this review, I will first briefly sketch out these 10 chapters and then return to the 2 review essays.

The 10 chapters were selected from papers accepted for the ONE sessions at the 2000 (one) and 2001 (nine) Academy of Management meetings. This origin of the chapters gives an indication of what type of research is currently considered fruitful in a wider management research context concerning the organization-environment interface. The specific background of the chapters also means that most of them focus on the North American situation and that they have been developed in isolation. Yet many chapters report on findings that could hold in other parts of the world as well, and several connections between the different chapters can be observed. As Sharma notes in the introductory essay, 7 chapters focus mainly on pollution control and prevention studies, whereas 3 chapters take on the field of sustainability. He categorizes the different contributions, pointing at the many different levels of analysis applied. In particular, chapters address global, community, institutional, interorganizational, organizational, and individual levels of analysis. For this review, I have grouped the chapters in three clusters. In 4 of the chapters that focus predominantly on prevention control and pollution, more of an internal focus is applied, whereas the other 3 incorporate a more external approach to organizations. The 3 remaining chapters delve deeper into specific issues of sustainability. I will now characterize these three clusters somewhat further.

The first cluster emphasizes a variety of issues of capability building, focusing on ways the management function within business organizations could deal with environmental issues or could learn to do so by developing the required capabilities. The 4 chapters in this cluster deal with this issue in different ways. In one chapter, the objective is to develop propositions concerning the factors that influence changes in environmental management capabilities during acquisition integration processes within an organization (Ellis, Cordano, & Lamont, chapter 7). This chapter makes an important point by looking at how managerial decisions could affect environmental capability building and maintenance in newly combined firms following acquisitions. The frequent abundance of acquisitions makes this type of research quite interesting, especially if these acquisitions have an effect on the product chain (e.g., vertical integration). Empirical testing of the propositions therefore would be a valuable next step. Next, Egri and Hornal (chapter 8) test

hypotheses on the relevance of “strategic environmental human resource management” to secure organizational support for corporate environmental management. Their findings suggest that such an approach to human resource management is conducive to achieving both environmental and corporate objectives. The third chapter in this cluster provides information on the effect of exposure of business students to detailed information on environmental impacts (Cordano & Frieze, chapter 11). As Sharma summarizes, this is “a study that addresses two important areas of research identified by ONE scholars: changing individual attitudes and integrating environmental management into business education” (pp. 23-24). Finally, Heller and Mroczko (chapter 9) portray two processes of information disclosure (and nondisclosure) in corporate environmental policy, suggesting several mechanisms through which corporate environmental management and information disclosure are mediated. All together, the research in this cluster thus is relevant to understanding the difficulties of incorporating environmental management and corporate sustainability issues within daily management practices. Yet looking at these organizational processes alone would result in too narrow a view of organizations and the environment.

Therefore, the second cluster brings in the organizational environment more prominently. Darnall (chapter 5) studies why different types of U.S. firms participate in voluntary environmental initiatives. She explores internal and external factors in decision-making processes on participation within publicly traded, privately owned, and government enterprises. The different organizational contexts of these types of firms are examined and linked to their respective internal capabilities. This chapter thus integrates institutional theory and the resource-based view of the firm—and addresses the calls for comparative studies among different types of organizations. The next chapter aims at determining how management perceptions of external environmental pressures, especially those exerted by dominant stakeholders and strengthened by critical environmental events, drive environmental change in manufacturing (Angell & Rands, chapter 6). It is suggested that types of stakeholder pressures and critical event developments that managers face influence the implementation and success level of environmental initiatives. This chapter thus, is another example of combining internal and external factors. Finally, Branzei and Vertinsky (chapter 4) selected an institutional perspective to examine the impact of firms’ national contexts on their responses to environmental management. They tested influences of societal and organizational fields on Chinese and Japanese firms’ eco-sustainability orientation. Their findings suggested that the effectiveness of institutions depends on a country’s degree of socioeconomic development. Such research is important because it brings in developmental issues—an important notion in discussions on sustainability. In that sense, this chapter also connects to the final cluster.

In the third cluster, three papers go beyond the pollution control and prevention focus, looking at different aspects of (corporate) sustainability. Ostland, Dhanda, and Yuthas (chapter 2) use the Natural Step framework to systematically review the implications of globalization on environmental sustainability. They conclude that this impact is mixed but that effects of globalization on the environment are predominantly negative. Another chapter (Stead, Stead, & Shemwell, chapter 3) investigates the concept of community sustainability, in which synergy among a community’s economic, environmental, and social-cultural systems is striven for. This study reports on such an attempt in a remote U.S. community, identifies a split among the community’s citizens (“the two-worlds hypothesis”), and provides rec-

ommendations for consensus building. Finally, an alternative approach to accounting is presented (Sherman, Steingard, & Fitzgibbons, chapter 10) to also address the environmental and social impacts of firms' activities. Such "sustainable stakeholder accounting" focuses on long-term profit for sustainable operations but requires a paradigm shift, moving firms away from mere compliance toward embracing sustainability. This cluster thus is looking for ways to tackle aspects of sustainability beyond an environmental focus.

The range of different approaches, foci, and objectives in corporate sustainability research that is shown in this volume is one of its merits; it provides the reader with a sense for the breadth of issues involved in corporate sustainability. The 2 editorial chapters provide a context to the 10 chapters. This context is partly based on a survey the editors conducted among a sample of ONE scholars to get an overview of extant research on ONE-related issues, gaps identified, and directions for future research. Hence, next to presenting the 10 chapters, in the first chapter Sharma portrays ONE research as a gathering of theoretical streams that could be explored in greater depth. Empirical research he identifies includes work on typologies of environmental strategies, on motivations to engage in such strategies, and on the rewards of doing so ("Does it pay to be green?"). He then provides the earlier mentioned classification of ONE research based on levels of analysis. Finally, focusing specifically on corporate sustainability, Sharma wonders whether "we [can] construct unique theories of sustainable corporations or does sustainable development provide a context for gaining new insights into existing theoretical frameworks and perhaps challenging them?" (p. 14). Important issues include such definitional matters, addressing the role of corporations in global sustainable development, considering community and network perspectives, and establishing links with competitive advantage.

In the final chapter, Starik refers to the subtitle of the volume, *The Evolving Theory and Practice of Organizations in the Natural Environment*, presenting suggestions for the evolving field of ONE, looking at both research contexts and processes, and research content. This results in an assessment of several related subfields. The chapter is aimed "to spark the researcher-reader's imagination into broadening his or her perspectives" (p. 319). Many possible future directions are presented based on the survey among ONE scholars. Directions range from broadening the perspective beyond businesses, applying different research methods (longitudinal, multilevel, grounded theory) to expanding application contexts and developing sustainability-oriented organizational objectives, to name a few. So this volume closes with ideas for further development of this field of research.

Looking back at the volume, the fact that 7 out of 10 chapters focus on pollution control and prevention shows that a lot of work still can be done on investigating further aspects of corporate sustainability, even though these first two clusters certainly demonstrate relevant issues. Hart (1995), for instance, distinguished between three interconnected strategies: pollution prevention (reducing pollution during production processes), product stewardship (integrating environmental concerns in product development), and ultimately, sustainable development. What this volume shows is how insights from a variety of studies on organizations and the environment are gradually contributing to our understanding of the implications of corporate sustainability. Many of the insights presented in this volume might eventually be extrapolated from a (narrow) focus on environmental issues to a (broader) focus on corporate sustainability. Yet in the current volume, links to sustainability sometimes are somewhat hidden or ecological aspects of sustain-

ability are emphasized. These observations leave plenty of room for consecutive volumes in this series. After all, focusing on environmental management and more broadly, corporate sustainability provides researchers with an intriguing empirical context in which many different theoretical perspectives could be applied. Research on corporate sustainability therefore not only could deliver answers to questions about corporate sustainability as such—which is a worthy objective in its own right—but also help in further developing organizational theory.

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Philip Kotler, Ned Roberto, and Nancy Lee. *Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002.

If the success or failure of this planet and of human beings depended on how I am and what I do, how would I be? What would I do?

—R. Buckminster Fuller (p. 371)

If the objective of traditional marketing efforts by for-profit corporations is to foster greater consumption of products to the potential detriment of society and the environment, then social marketing is the counterbalancing force designed to support organized efforts to improve our quality of life. *Social Marketing: Improving the Quality of Life* by Kotler, Roberto, and Lee, is a handbook for students and professionals that synthesizes the writings and thinking of experts in the field of social marketing. Its goal is to provide a tool to plan and effectively execute a campaign for a cause in the areas of health, safety, environment, or community involvement. Although the purpose of the book is more applied, it raises questions and concerns about behavior change that lend themselves to further theoretical exploration by researchers.

As the authors point out, the statistics for detrimental behavior to self or society portray a grim reality. Each day in the United States, for example, more than 4,000 youths aged 11 to 17 try their first cigarette. Four million tons of paper are thrown in the garbage by American office workers, and 3.4 trillion nonbiodegradable cigarette butts are littered worldwide. Social marketing is one strategy for addressing these critical issues as well as many others. It has become an indispensable tool for the thousands of nonprofit and public sector organizations who work to alleviate