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# Editorial

Issue 26 Summer 2007

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## The Great Transformation: Sustainable Enterprise and the Corporate Contribution to a Sustainable Future

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Much of the writing in *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* over the last few years has been concerned with stakeholder engagement, social partnership building, accountability, and reporting—the heart of what concerned Karl Polanyi in ‘Freedom in a Complex World’, the final chapter in his seminal book *The Great Transformation* (1944). To date, however, there has been little discussion of what comes next in potential transformational efforts to build a more secure, peaceful and ecologically sustainable world—or the corporate roles in building that world. It was our hope that this issue of *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* would begin filling in that gap; and we believe that the collection of papers included in this issue certainly start the conversation.

In this special issue we asked the question: What is the role of business in contributing to global peace and security over

the long haul? As can readily be seen by the variety of papers and topics in the issue, the answer to that question is far from easy or simple, and each person who approaches the topic does so from a different perspective. Nonetheless, a brief overview (see Tim Fort’s Introduction) of these papers suggests that there are common threads and themes that arise when we begin thinking seriously about how businesses can contribute to peace and security and to what we are calling, after Polanyi, the next great transformation. Clearly, there are significant signs that transformation is needed in the world today.

Questions of ecological—not to mention social—sustainability and stability saturate the daily press. Instabilities and conflicts abound around the world. The war in Iraq, the genocide in Darfur, the growing inequities between rich and poor

in all parts of the world, the melting of glaciers and increasingly severe weather patterns are symptomatic of the difficult kinds of troubles we face in this world. These issues, as complex and disturbing as they are, only begin to scratch the surface of the changes that are needed to bring about a more peaceful and sustainable world.

It is our hope that the papers in this issue can shed some new light on the ways in which businesses can interact with other sectors, either through new arrangements and institutions such as the UN Global Compact (see the Teller and Ziegler papers), new learning that comes from viewing the traditional sectors through new lenses (the Waddell paper), or new ways of protecting society's interests (the Turner paper). The conceptual link to necessary new ways of framing critical societal relationships is implicit and sometimes explicit in a number of the papers as well (Boyle and Boguslaw; Boutilier; Roper and Weymes). New roles for businesses are explicitly articulated by authors of this special issue's Turning Points: Senge in looking at consumer issues, Derber in assessing how greater real democracy can be achieved, and Hall in evaluating the implications of CSR and corporate citizenship in the emerging markets. The interview with Allen White, one of the founders of the Global Reporting Initiative and a co-founder of *Corporation 20/20*, sheds insight on how social entrepreneurs can actually make the kinds of differences that are needed in the world.

Some of the themes that arise as we begin to consider a more peaceful, secure and sustainable future are the need for

greater democracy, reduction of poverty and more equity across societies, a need for more social capital that creates collective energy around themes that are important to humankind, and the need to develop new infrastructure and systemic approaches to change that take into account some of the planet's biggest needs and concerns. The transformations that are needed are difficult and they require big changes; old ways of doing things will not necessarily lead us in the direction of the types of changes that are needed. But these papers and Tim Fort's incisive analysis of their specific contributions to the special issue and to our understanding represent a good start.

This special edition of *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* is published to coincide with the meeting of the UN Global Compact Leaders Summit in Geneva in June 2007.

A Roundtable on Sustainable Enterprise composed of pioneers of change from corporate business, SMEs, sustainable and social enterprise practitioners, the UK government, UN agencies and academics has been meeting in London from January to June 2007. Their thoughts will be conveyed in a conference on 24–26 October 2007 to be held at the Eden Project in Cornwall, England, organised by the Applied Research Centre in Human Security (ARCHS), the UN Global Compact, Boston College and the Eden Project. The call for ideas, innovations, stories and papers went out in March this year; do join us for a conversation about the future, and some music and local food—not forgetting the fantastic biomes and the regeneration in action that is the Eden Project.





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