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# A Journal That Makes a Difference

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**Announcing the tenureship as General Editors of David Cooperrider and Ronald Fry, who will take over from Malcolm McIntosh**

IN HER SCHOLARLY ANALYSIS OF THE corporate citizenship movement, Sandra Waddock celebrates and documents the lives of *The Difference Makers*—the courageous leading-edge innovators who, starting largely in the last decades of the 20th century and early part of the 21st, created the emerging infrastructures aimed at advancing corporate citizenship, accountability and transparency. ‘It is not often that we have the opportunity to hear from the founders and early pioneers of a social movement about how it grew and evolved,’ says Sandra. But that is exactly what she goes on to do in her well-researched and timely book.

As the story unfolds, one of the pioneering figures is Malcolm McIntosh—the founder and first general editor of this, the *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*. Of course, Sandra’s account of the creation of the journal and its widespread impact focuses on the journal’s mission, its growth and its content. But it also speaks to the personal motivations and passions behind the corporate citizenship movement. Sandra’s interview with Malcolm gives us a glimpse of what matters most, and why he worked so tirelessly on behalf of JCC:

It’s most definitely about seeing the planet as one space. It’s about connecting economic, social and

environmental issues and impact and performance around the idea that we share one planetary space connected back to the human world of people, making the world a peaceful and socially just place for everybody. That’s absolutely fundamental.

With this edition of the journal we want to introduce ourselves and extend our deepest appreciation for Malcolm’s special leadership and his two tenures of editorship of the JCC. At the same time we would like to acknowledge the sterling work of both Sandra Waddock and David Birch, who both served as general editor for a two-year term, and helped it to continue to develop and grow. As we now step into the role, we want to say this to Malcolm: the JCC will continue to focus centrally not only on its mission of integrating theory about corporate citizenship with management practice, but it will carry forward the spirit of your work. Like you, our knowledge-interest is in ‘making the world a peaceful and socially just place for everybody’ and ‘seeing the planet as one space’.

In this brief editorial, therefore, we wish not only to reaffirm the enduring purpose and aim of this journal but also to share several reflections on our special moment in history—and a sense of an

inflection point, both for the corporate citizenship domain as well as this vital and dynamic journal.

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### Extraordinary times require more than ordinary journals

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When judged against the needs of our times—the worst worldwide economic recession since the 1930s, the public’s plummeting trust in business, deep conceptual and practical questions about responsible capitalism, as well the mounting severity of global climate change issues, poverty, the oil endgame, soaring unemployment, and many other connected complexities—it’s clear that the mission of the *JCC* is not only relevant but it’s increasingly at the centre of a huge conversation that matters. Ours is an extraordinary time and extraordinary times require more than ordinary conversations. Extraordinary times require penetrating insight, the creative framing of powerful questions and field-shaping forums for the exchange of informed new possibilities for bridging theory and practice. When we were asked to take on the task of editing this journal we were attracted primarily by two things: (1) the *JCC* aims to be the premier journal to publish articles on corporate citizenship that accomplish the integration of theory and managerial practice, and (2) the vision that ‘we want the journal to be read as much by executives leading corporate citizenship as it is by academics seeking sound research and scholarship’.

Obviously, this is a tall order but it strikes us that this aim is more critical than ever. Speaking at the most recent World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab argued that we are now in the midst of a ‘transformational crisis’ the likes of which will challenge every executive, where leaders in every sphere need to ‘first help manage the crisis and second to shape the post-crisis world’. For purposes here we can build on this thought and amplify the very real questions of relevance we hope per-

meates every page of this journal: *How might the theories, practices and values of corporate citizenship more powerfully than ever before help managers navigate their organisations during these destabilised times? And, How might the lens of corporate citizenship help all of us shape the post-crisis world—including questions related to the fundamental purpose of the firm as well as solution-focused scenarios, future images, and visions of the sustainable enterprise economy of the future?*

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### High-priority questions of ‘how’

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Our own interest in corporate citizenship mushroomed in 2004 when we were asked by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Georg Kell of the Global Compact to help design and facilitate the Leaders Summit at the UN. It was the largest multi-stakeholder meeting of its kind ever held at the UN and it catalysed a huge period of growth for the Global Compact. At the time the Global Compact was comprised of some 1,500 companies. By the next meeting—the Leaders Summit in Geneva Switzerland in 2007—there were more than 5,000 corporations, from Unilever to the Coca-Cola Company and from Tata Industries to Royal Dutch Shell. Likewise, the discourse on corporate citizenship, we observed, was spreading in viral fashion everywhere, moving from the margins to mainstream, and from the periphery of CEO work to the heart of strategy. Scholars introduced the language of ‘next-generation citizenship’ (Googins *et al.* 2007) tracing the movement from forms of ethical compliance and disclosure to strategic philanthropy, and from sustainability’s triple-bottom-line focus on ‘doing less harm’ to a new kind of revolutionary renewal: that is, harnessing the power of markets and strengths of good enterprise to build a better society and enrich our ecosystems (see Bright *et al.* 2007).

Can we really say that the field of corporate citizenship is at an inflection point?

Again we would like to draw on our own experience and share the observation that we are indeed quickly moving into a phase where a subtle yet tectonic shift is happening. It's a moment not unlike the launch of the human genome project. It's a moment not unlike the time when the world decided to eradicate smallpox from the planet. In each of these cases, two things were happening. There was an unusually widespread and powerful vision of the 'what' (for example, 'to eradicate smallpox from the planet' or 'to identify all the 20,000–25,000 genes in human DNA and determine the sequences of the 3 billion chemical base pairs that make up human DNA') which enabled a huge shift in attention to the 'how'. Might it be that we are witnessing a similar phenomenon in the corporate citizenship movement? Might it be that the central question is shifting from the 'why' and the 'what' to 'how'?

While it is beyond the scope of this editorial to trace it adequately, we have come to believe that there is an unprecedented and increasingly shared global vision around corporate citizenship, one that is uncoordinated but emerging everywhere. In our research and at our Global Forum for *Business as an Agent of World Benefit*, we have asked over 5,000 CEOs and civil-society leaders to step beyond today's innovations and to imagine their desired 2020 future in economic, social and ecological terms (Cooperrider 2008). What we see is a remarkably clear and consistent set of responses. Envisioned is a sustainable enterprise economy and a world that:

- ▶ Has created a bright-green restorative economy that purifies the air we breathe
- ▶ Has eliminated waste and toxic by-products
- ▶ Has eradicated extreme poverty and preventable disease
- ▶ Is powered through renewable energy innovations
- ▶ Has made empowered prosperity accessible to everyone in the world

- ▶ Is supported by positive market incentives aligned with the long-term social good
- ▶ Has eliminated 'perverse incentives' that work against not just society but business itself
- ▶ Has inspired a next-generation corporate citizenship movement, which in turn has united sustainable design and business strategy into a positive race to the top
- ▶ Is a globally inclusive system that respects and replenishes the health of people, diverse communities, and the wealth of nature
- ▶ Has built its economy on a network of institutions that are trusted to elevate, magnify and refract our highest human strengths into the world

In each of our seminars and multi-stakeholder dialogues we now ask senior executives, MBA students and civil-society leaders to reflect on and improve this 2020 scenario. Invariably, people spontaneously shift their attention from the question of 'What do we want?' to 'How do we do it? How do we turn the social and global issues of our day into opportunities to create sustainable value?'

In our view this question—especially as we see it emerging as the high-priority question of business executives and the kinds of practising managers and leaders reading *this* journal—is a new emphasis. And it is a provocative one. It suggests that adopting sustainable citizenship practice is not simply an ethical obligation for businesses—it's a contemporary differentiator, a foundation for success. It promises to lead business to surprising new discoveries, stronger performance and greater significance to their owners, their members and to society.

As we move into the task of serving as editors for this great journal, we have been asked to share our point of view. What is that point of view? Put most simply, it is that *corporate citizenship is on the eve of its most important pragmatic era, and that sus-*

*tainability is truly emerging as the business opportunity of the 21st century.* It is an innovation engine. And it is a lens that will dominate the management agenda for the next thirty or more years. Even more important, the outcomes will define the next episode in stakeholder capitalism and ultimately will determine the well-being of our imperilled planet.

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**David Cooperrider's** interests include the theory and practice of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as applied to corporate strategy, change leadership and positive organisational scholarship. In addition, David is pioneering new horizons in the AI Summit method—a large-group and network-based approach—for advancing business innovation and creative design. David's most recent passion is an inquiry into 'Business as an Agent of World Benefit', where he believes that sustainable design has become the biggest business opportunity of the 21st century. David has published 14 books, authored over 50 articles, and has received numerous awards.



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**Ronald Fry's** research interests focus on the factors and dynamics that foster system-wide, positive change. As a co-creator of the Appreciative Inquiry theory and method, he works with groups, organisations and institutions around the world to increase their cooperative capacity in order to engage the whole system in strategic thinking, planning and change. Through his research, he continues to develop insights on large-group dynamics, appreciative leadership, multi-stakeholder strategic planning, and business as an agent for world benefit.



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