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Editorial

Design-Inspired Corporate Citizenship

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IMAGINE THE PULSATING ENERGY AND collaborative creativity at some of world's most renowned design studios: for example, the iPhone studio at Apple; or the design studio of an inspired architect such as Jørn Utzon (designer of the Sydney Opera House); or the rapid prototyping studio at the award-winning product design firm IDEO. Contrast this now with most corporate citizenship offices: the obsessive focus on risk reduction and response to external critics, the bureaucratic tools of standard operating procedure, the regulatory rulebook and legal-rational constraint of the law, and the moral argumentation—indeed ceaseless persuasion—with managers, supervisors and executives to raise the profile of CSR and to elevate the citizenship agenda to the level of strategic centrality.

Let's face it: corporate citizenship is not normally the 'go to' discipline for those leaders aiming to inspire, delight, re-frame the game and generate business-uplifting innovation. But all of that may be changing, say the authors of this special issue of the *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, as business is embracing **design thinking** as

the next frontier in competitive advantage (see Boland and Collopy 2004; Martin 2009) and as corporate citizenship is rapidly emerging as a catalyst for unexpected, disruptive business innovation (Laszlo 2008; Cooperrider 2008).

How might the discipline of corporate citizenship be enriched, empowered and elevated through an intimate understanding and engagement with the field of design? What if everyone in corporate citizenship practice learned the language and the tools of design and placed what we call **design-inspired corporate citizenship** alongside the practice of more traditional risk-reduction forms, showing how the two don't have to be at odds?

The first Turning Point in this special issue sets the stage for what we hope is the beginning of a long and fruitful exploration. In it David Cooperrider shares the thematic logic and the astonishing response to the call for papers from the Second Global Forum for Business as an Agent of World Benefit, titled *Manage by Designing in an Era of Massive Innovation*, 2–5 June 2009. This special issue of *JCC* is one direct offspring of that event. Host-

ed at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management in partnership with the UN Global Compact and the OD Division of the Academy of Management, the conference featured world-renowned design thinkers such as Bruce Mau (author of *Massive Change* [2004]), Peter Coughlan (head of organisational transformation at IDEO), Nancy Adler (artist and management professor at McGill University), Craig Wynett (VP of innovation at Procter & Gamble), Richard Buchanan (former dean of the design school at Carnegie Mellon and co-author of *The Idea of Design* [Margolin and Buchanan 1996]) and Janine Benyus (author of *Biomimicry* [1997]).

Over 1,000 people participated in the event and some 300 papers were submitted for presentation. The energy and sense of opportunity for the fusion of the fields of corporate citizenship and design was palpable. One long-term observer and widely respected academic of the corporate citizenship movement, Sandra Waddock, declared that 'This worked. Bringing the design field into our exploration of the next phase of corporate citizenship made this into one of the best conferences of its kind I have ever been to.' So exactly what was it all about? The first Turning Point by David Cooperrider explores this, the big-picture call: it explores the primacy and potency of **design thinking** as the vortex for creating a new breed of industry-leading stars, showing how the creative design attitude can transform 21st-century corporate citizenship into a source of business opportunity and world-benefiting innovation. It is a call to cross-fertilisation based on the belief that design is too important to leave to designers—we all need a bit of design thinking capability.

As the reader will see, it's easy, even infectious, to fall in love with the design attitude: everything seems possible to designers, artists and architects, and the like. The head of *Harvard Business Review* recently penned an article, 'Magic by Design', arguing that the design field has much to teach managers, especially those with the explicit goal of succeeding at

rapid, profuse innovation (Stewart 2008). However, along these lines, most managers feel an uneasy ambivalence. On the one hand there is a sense that the design field holds the secret to some silver bullet. So we are lured. But on the other hand, the magic of design seems frustratingly out of reach and actually out of touch with the 'realities' of bureaucratic, corporate life.

This is the puzzle that Rebecca Henn so clearly addresses in her article, 'Aftermarkets: The Messy Yet Refined Logic of Design'. For Henn the culture and magic of design is absolutely accessible, but it is not easy. One cannot superficially seek, for example, to fuse and combine the discipline of design with corporate citizenship work with a few crazy brainstorming techniques. For many, shows Henn, the logic of design remains behind a fortress of architectural and design cultures with walls constructed of linguistic, cultural, temporal and economic barriers. So before we romanticise design we need to 'go native' in it, much like an anthropologist participant-observer. We need to immerse ourselves in design's institutional logic, its visual and spatial medium, and its love for complexity, messy mashup, flattened hierarchies and, most important, 'the language of design'. Yes, the key tools of design thinkers are being made available to every one of us—things such as observation, ideation and rapid prototyping—and the vast vistas that open up for energising a new era for corporate citizenship are huge.

Indeed, the changes rippling across the fields of design, sustainability and business citizenship are nothing short of revolutionary. However, it is increasingly clear that we're no longer lacking in isolated product exemplars or surprising business-driven sustainability solutions. Today's greater challenge, argue our next set of authors, lies in **system-wide design**.

This is the task, suggests IDEO's Peter Coughlan, of discovering ways of overcoming the systemic challenges of collaborative innovation and applied human creativity not only in large multinational

corporations, but across multi-stakeholder supply chains, whole bio-regions, entire industries and professions, and across economies and geographies where billions are locked in debilitating poverty. After working with the designers at Pixar, Coughlan identifies a replicable set of exciting design tools for addressing the larger systemic issues that corporate citizenship, almost by definition, must grapple with. In this same vein, Jason Pearson, in his *Turning Point*, provides a voice of caution and genuine concern for all the greenwashing that might happen through bad design. He is also cited in Cooper-rider's article for his work at GreenBlue, providing the whole field with a valuable typology of systemic and complex collective action design issues—all dealing with ways of achieving positive collective action across large stakeholder boundaries—once again showing how designers can inform and inspire fresh, new approaches to corporate citizenship. And while much has been made of the so-called 'tragedy of the commons' dynamic—where it seems near impossible to create positive sum dynamics and to do good and do well at the level of the whole—there *are* powerful exemplars of common good successes, inspired by design thinkers and executives alike.

For those who like case studies, you will love the one written by the former CEO of Patagonia, Michael Crooke, and strategy thinker, Vijay Sathe, from the Drucker School of Management. It's all about the tipping point happening right now in the organic cotton industry, and the cooperation happening across companies such as Patagonia and Wal-Mart. It's about the design not of a single new product or single company, but of an entire industry. It shows the wide-angle lens of today's corporate citizenship.

As a discussion of how appreciative enquiry can facilitate 'triple-loop learning'—learning that questions deeply held assumptions—and lead to 'transformational awareness', we direct you to Elizabeth Johnston and Anthony Kortens' paper on 'Appreciative Surprise'.

Finally, there is the question of sustaining design-inspired corporate citizenship. We all know things come and go, and perhaps **managing as designing** is simply the latest rage. In our final paper of this special issue Nina Terrey takes a look at a long-term, design-inspired approach in a very large Australian organisation. Her article, 'What Might Corporate Citizenship Look Like in a Government Organisation?', provides us with an evidence-based case not only on the power and promise of design thinking, but also on the traction that design approaches can and do achieve.

Yes, design is inspiring. But it is also effective; it is, we believe, the most intriguing and humanly significant core competence for the next great juncture of corporate citizenship as an innovation-generating discipline.


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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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