Editorial

Issue 66 *June 2017*

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Twenty-five years ago on 3 June 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was opened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil by Canadian businessman and diplomat Maurice F. Strong in his role as Secretary-General of the so-called Earth Summit. Rio brought unparalleled media attention to a host of interrelated global issues: biodiversity, climate change, consumption patterns, deforestation, fragile ecosystems, hazardous waste, indigenous knowledge, poverty, responsible entrepreneurship and the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

At the heart of Strong's Opening Statement was a wake-up call about "unsustainable development" to the 178 countries represented, including 117 government leaders, 2,400 non-state actors, 10,000 on-site journalists, among numerous other Summit participants:

> Central to the issues we are going to have to deal with are: patterns of production and consumption in the industrial world that are undermining the Earth's life-support systems; the explosive increase in population, largely in the developing world ... deepening disparities between rich and poor ... and an

economic system that takes no account of ecological costs or damage—one which views unfettered growth as progress. We have been the most successful species ever; we are now a species out of control. Our very success is leading us to a dangerous future ... [And] like it or not, from here on in, we're in this together: rich, poor, North, South, East and West. It is an exhilarating challenge to erase the barriers that have separated us in the past, to join in the global partnership that will enable us to survive in a more secure and hospitable world (Strong, 1992).

Although some of the specifics of Strong's core message in Rio have changed over the past two and half decades, much of what was said back in 1992 remains relevant and urgent today as the new UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted in his first address to the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2017 where he echoed Strong's emphasis on partnership for sustainable development:

> Even if one looks at the amazing results of globalization and technological progress ... the truth is that inequalities have also terribly increased and that has created,

especially because of the globalization of communication ... a huge frustration in many sectors of the population, frustration that leads to the divorce between public opinion, societies and not only political establishments but also international organizations even like the UN ... Absolutely crucial is the enhancement of a new generation of partnerships ... creating the conditions for an inclusive and sustainable development—the best way to prevent crises and conflicts in today's world (Guterres, 2017).

Twenty-five years from Rio to Davos and most political, business and NGO leaders continue to advocate partnerships as being essential for both human security and sustainable development. However, there is growing evidence that Strong's 1992 call for a "new global partnership to ensure our common future" has failed to materialise. Even as the current UN Secretary-General insisted at Davos in 2017 that there is "an opportunity for a new platform of partnership, at a higher level", he acknowledged that "we live in a dangerous world ... [where] conflicts are becoming more and more interlinked, more linked with the new threat of global terrorism". Guterres may continue to argue for stronger "dialogue and partnership between governments, international organizations and the private sector", yet on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit surely the time has come for us to take stock of the global partnership for sustainable development.

In his Turning Point for this open issue of *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* (*JCC*), Professor Jem Bendell of the Institute for Leadership and Sustainability (IFLAS), University of Cumbria, offers a critical review of cross-sector partnerships as he reflects on the 20 years of practice and scholarship since the publication in June 1997 of our first book, *In the Company of Partners* (Murphy and Bendell, 1997). While Bendell acknowledges that this kind of partnering has become "an established field of practice and research", he laments the loss of "revolutionary spirit" that "encouraged innovation" in some of the pioneering cross-sector partnerships that we investigated in 1997. Bendell's alternative collaboration paradigm for 2017 and beyond brings together informal community networks and entrepreneurial start-ups to lead "a revolution in the domain of partnering ... that could radically transform today's form of capitalism".

What might the other contributors to *JCC* 66 be able to offer in the way of insights about progress on multi-stakeholder collaboration for sustainable development and the implementation of related initiatives on sustainability, corporate social responsibility (CSR), business ethics and indeed corporate citizenship itself? Building on Bendell's thought-provoking Turning Point, the other four contributors to this open issue include articles that cover a wider spectrum from the development of concepts and theories to a series of empirical studies in diverse cultural and geographic contexts—investigating different dimensions of responsible business practice using a range of methods and approaches.

Amy Klemm Verbos and Shalei Simms begin with a conceptual exploration of ethical organizational identity (EOI) that draws upon "ordinary ideas about ethics" to propose

three EOI archetypes—just, caring and brave—that offer a framework for practitioners to apply in organizational settings and for academics to enhance their scholarship on EOIs. Verbos and Simms argue that business leaders who promote a more positive approach to ethical organizational identity may offer "a beacon for change towards a better way of doing business". *(The authors also help to fill a gap in knowledge about which ethical values may become embedded into an organization's DNA as an ethical organizational identity.)*

Next we move to an empirical study by Shalini Sarin Jain and Aseem Prakash of University of Washington (Tacoma and Seattle) that explores how ownership identity shapes social responsibility communication (SRC), drawing on an original dataset of India's largest 121 publicly listed companies. The study's main finding is that "ownership identity matters as it has a varying influence on firms' SRC priorities and areas of strategic focus". In addition to identifying significant managerial implications on how SRC can be used strategically to enhance legitimacy with multiple stakeholders, the study finds that global transparency norms are replacing and/or coexisting with traditional practices of modesty or non-disclosure in an emerging economy context. Jain and Prakash's research identifies new questions for future studies about CSR talk, its reporting and dissemination.

South Africa provides the setting for our third article which considers the association between female board representation and corporate citizenship actions, reporting and reputation. Drawing upon a sample of Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) listed companies, Suzette Viviers and Nadia Mans-Kemp of University of Stellenbosch identify significant positive relationships between board gender diversity and selected corporate citizenship actions, and additionally between female board representation and corporate citizenship reputation. The authors also note that their evidence suggests that enhanced board gender diversity may benefit a diverse range of stakeholders. To this end, Viviers and Mans-Kemp offer a number of recommendations for both South African companies and women managers with directorship ambitions to boost board gender diversity in the country.

Our fourth and final article by Carlos M. Parra, Monica Chiarini Tremblay, Karen Paul and Arturo Castellanos investigates corporate citizenship (CC) reporting in the American global business context. Using text data mining (TDM), the authors review the content of a series of CC reports by seven Dow Jones companies: Citi, Coca-Cola, ExxonMobil, General Motors, Intel, McDonald's and Microsoft. Applied to date in many different contexts, TDM enables researchers to categorise and analyse a set of documents "to uncover new patterns and relationships". The method of exploratory content analysis using TDM to examine the content of a document collection has the potential to help researchers and analysts "identify similarities/differences in CC reports". The practical benefits of the method for CC professionals and analysts include greater efficiency and effectiveness, and Parra, Tremblay, Paul and Castellanos suggest that these insights might lead in turn to the exploration of "collaboration opportunities around supply chains,

retraining programmes, and alternative risk mitigation strategies in terms of governance and compliance".

What does this all add up to? Twenty-five years on from the Rio Earth Summit, what has been actually achieved by state and non-state actors? To what extent has multi-stakeholder collaboration moved us closer to more sustainable forms of development? Is the "idea of business as an agent of change and a purveyor of positive values" really "gaining traction and legitimacy around the world" as Lise Kingo, Executive Director of the United Nations Global Compact, suggested in 2015?

Back in June 1997, Jem Bendell and I argued that the future of sustainable development needed global-local stakeholders "to manage diversity more competently and to search for solutions together" (Murphy and Bendell, 1997, p. 244). Two decades later, are cross-sector partnerships and other business responsibility and sustainability initiatives creating the solutions needed to respond to the global megatrends—population growth and movements of people, climate change, food insecurity, water scarcity—facing people and planet in 2017? Or is there still a fundamental misalignment between the core business objectives of the private sector and the strategic goals of the international community? Are more radical alternatives needed alongside incremental approaches? More unresolved questions than answers today as ever, and the various contributors to *JCC* 66 would appear both to agree and disagree.

So not yet "talkin' bout a revolution" in academia, but English folk musician and songwriter Nancy Kerr proclaims that "we can still smuggle some subversive, powerful, galvanising ideas through in [sic] music. And this may well be a time when people are wanting to hear them again" (Luxmoore and Ellis, 2016).

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June 2017

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