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POSITIVE DESIGN AND APPRECIATIVE CONSTRUCTION: FROM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO SUSTAINABLE VALUE

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INTRODUCTION TO POSITIVE DESIGN AND APPRECIATIVE CONSTRUCTION: FROM SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO SUSTAINABLE VALUE

Tojo Thatchenkery, Michel Avital and David L. Cooperrider

Positive Design and Appreciative Construction: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Value draws on the power of Appreciative Inquiry to reframe our conceptions and approaches to designing and reinforcing systems and environments that promote sustainable value across the board. Rarely in recent history have there been times when one can say that a new consciousness about a global issue has suddenly surfaced. The quest for sustainability is one in that category. It is at the top of social and political agenda for most countries. The scientific evidence of the need for a radical shift in preserving the planet for future generations has been accumulated for a long time, despite the occasional challenges of its validity by diehards who believe otherwise. Yet only recently has the awareness of sustainability shot up to the level of a common ground and a collective political will across diverse ideologies and at a global level. However, a multitude of somewhat
conflicting approaches are offered to prescribe and maintain sustainability. Some are reactive in the form of regulations and international treaties, and others are based on free market models, such as trading in CO\textsubscript{2} emission quotas or varied pricing schemes based on energy source. In this volume, we propose a shift: a call for moving from sustainable development to sustainable value. The former is primarily a mechanistic approach that is embedded in the development paradigm, and promotes progress, growth and consumption in an ecologically friendly way. In contrast, sustainable value is holistic and embraces a universal value stance that caters for all stakeholders.

Sustainable value encompasses the shareholder value as well as stakeholder value. Until recently, shareholder value and stakeholder value were perceived as generally incompatible. The desire to make a profit was often seen as being at loggerheads with the will to create sustainable value. In other words, there was much agreement that organizations are virtually incapable of creating value for all of their stakeholders simultaneously (Hart & Milstein, 2003). This dichotomy has changed, as we hope to demonstrate in this volume.

A growing number of socially responsive investment funds have shown that it is possible to do good for both society and the shareholder at the same time. Socially responsible investing (SRI) not only strives to enhance the bottom lines of the companies they have invested in, but also to build a more sustainable world. Socially responsible investments encompassed an estimated $2.71 trillion out of $25.1 trillion in the U.S. investment marketplace in 2007. SRI has entered the mainstream discourse and terms such as mission investing, responsible investing, double or triple bottom line investing, ethical investing, sustainable investing, or green investing have become common. Not surprisingly, SRI has gained much popularity and is supported by individuals as well as corporations, universities, foundations, public and private pension funds, and nonprofit organizations. In the long term, it performs as well or better than non-SRI investments. Subsequently, institutional investors represent the largest and fastest growing segment of the SRI world (http://www.socialinvest.org/resources/sriguide/srifacts.cfm).

Related to SRI are the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes. Launched in 1999, the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes are the first global indexes tracking the financial performance of the leading sustainability-driven companies worldwide. More than 70 DJSI licenses are held by money managers in 16 countries. Owners of DJSI see corporate sustainability as a business approach that creates long-term shareholder value by harnessing the market’s potential for sustainability products and services while at the
same time successfully reducing sustainability costs and risks (http://www.sustainability-index.com/default.html).

It is generally recognized that a major issue in the creation of sustainable value is the need to satisfy the organizational stakeholders in the process of the delivery. As portrayed by Charter (1998, p. 57), “Customers may be satisfied but if employees and suppliers are poorly treated, new ideas and improved productivity will not be generated, and the company may fail, therefore reducing benefits for stakeholders.” Therefore, improving the benefits of all stakeholders is critical. Sustainable value “creating shareholder wealth that simultaneously drives us toward a more sustainable world” (Hart & Milstein, 2003, p. 65) has thus become a visible business strategy driven by a convergence of factors such as sustainability-driven customer expectations, new technology developments in the market place including those of the competitors, and governmental incentives (Park, 2009). A sustainable company increases stakeholder value through the application of sustainable practices throughout the entire line of the business operation, management, and governance.

The history of sustainable development as a concept deserves further elaboration in the context of this volume. The term “sustainable development” was first used in the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) 1980 World Conservation Strategy Report. Then the World Commission on Environment and Development report “Our Common Future” (Brundtland, 1987) brought more prominence to the concept. It defines sustainable development as “a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations ... Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43). Five years later, in the Rio Declaration (1992), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) articulated 27 sustainable development principles, followed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which recognized that alleviating poverty should be the top goal in sustainable development.

Attempts to explain sustainable development are based on theories from neoclassical economics, ecological economics, and complexity theory (Sabau, 2010). The neoclassical approach builds on the free market model and hypothesizes markets as autonomous self-regulating systems capable of optimizing the needs of various constituents on a cost-benefit analysis
(CBA) basis. Ecological economics takes a broader perspective and places economic activity in the context of the biological and physical systems that support all forms of life. For the neoclassical economists, sustainable development is a never-ending part of economic growth whereas for the ecological economists growth cannot be infinite. In contrast to the market-based treatment of sustainability, explanations that build on complexity theories take the system approach and focus on self-organization and resilience. Understanding the capacity of any large-scale system to self-organize is crucial because self-organization is a key characteristic of any sustainable complex system. Building on multidisciplinary insights, complexity theories reveal the dynamics of long-term sustainability and replace the myopic command and control strategies. Understanding self-organization is the key for nurturing sustainability.

Yet another way to think about sustainable development is through the language of weak sustainable development (WSD) versus strong sustainable development (SSD). Overall, WSD is embedded in the neoclassical economic paradigm, and SSD draws its power from the ecological economics, circulation economics, as well as other more radical versions of environmental management and corporate social responsibility. Whereas for proponents of SSD the interests of humans are not above the interests of nature, for proponents of WSD human utility is a primary and non-negotiable utility.

In short, sustainable development “is a process of achieving human development ... in an inclusive, connected, equitable, prudent, and secure manner” (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995). A sustainable enterprise, therefore, is one that contributes to sustainable development by delivering simultaneously economic, social, and environmental benefits – the so-called triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997). In the business context, sustainability refers to meeting the current organizational needs, including shareholders’ value, employees’ benefits, clients’ requirements, community well-being, and the like, without compromising its ability to generate value and meet the needs of future stakeholders as well. Business organizations can attain this goal and become sustainable by developing and nurturing their economic, social, and environmental capital base. The most apparent departure of the sustainability concept from traditional management theory relates to the motto that economic sustainability alone is an insufficient condition for the overall sustainability of an organization, and that an integrated approach to economic, environmental, and social issues is required.

The energy and momentum needed for creating sustainable value is massive. The process is akin to a paradigm change and needs the concerted
efforts of policy makers, business leaders, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. What needs to happen for sustainable value to become accepted as universal as profit value? We believe a generative approach to sustainability may pave the way. We believe that enhancement of sustainable value can be achieved by building on positive design principles inherent in Appreciative Inquiry methodology.

THE SPIRIT OF THIS VOLUME

In this volume of Advances in Appreciative Inquiry, leading scholars from the fields of management, organization development, information technology, and education come together to chart new directions in Appreciative Inquiry theory and research as well as new intervention practices and opportunities for design in organizations. While diverse in topic and discipline, each of the following original chapters treats the reader to a view of Appreciative Inquiry’s revolutionary way of approaching familiar questions of management, organization design, and sustainability.

PART I: ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES

Sustainability has become a widespread aspiration in all walks of life and has naturally also become an issue of concern for organizations, irrespective of size and industry. We are in a time in which consumers, employees, and investors share a passion for companies that do well by doing good. This strategic shift suggests that companies have an important role to play beyond excellence in their domain of expertise. They have an opportunity to become a driving force in the global effort to create a positive and healthy relationship between individuals, their communities, and their natural environment. We experience a political and social climate in which commercial entities are expected to become active participants in the search for solutions to the social, economic, and ecological challenges of our time. Under these conditions, sustainability becomes a strategic asset that should be nurtured and managed. It introduced a new logic and new considerations that touch upon social, technical, economic, and environmental aspects of life at every level. While there is a consensus around the overall need for sustainability, a plurality of somewhat conflicting approaches is offered to address it. Chapters in this section focus on organizational and strategic issues of sustainability.
The first chapter in the volume, *Creating Sustainable Value: A Strength-Based Whole System Approach* by Chris Laszlo and David Cooperrider, lays the overall foundation for positive design and Appreciative Intelligence. They begin with a survey of perceptions about the meaning of sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). True to the spirit of Appreciative Intelligence, Laszlo and Cooperrider reframe the confusion they have observed among the participants regarding the concepts, as an opportunity for thoughtful leaders to differentiate themselves by embracing innovation driven by sustainable value and business acumen. To illustrate such possibilities, they provide seven steps for integrating sustainability into business strategy and operations, using a strength-based whole system approach. The seven-step process allows senior managers to reframe sustainability as a source of value creation using a life cycle collaborative approach to innovation, and to compress the time and resources required to achieve the desired results.

The theme of corporate social responsibility is further explored as a driver for sustainable value by Mary Jo Hatch and Philip Mirvis in the next chapter, *Designing a Positive Image: Corporate Branding and CSR*. The chapter examines the connections between corporate branding and CSR and how design thinking can be applied to join the two. Examples of several global companies linking the two to rebrand their relationship to society or to repurpose their CSR efforts are then described. Hatch and Mirvis note that all the firms that they have studied have taken serious brand-driven moves to create sustainable value for their businesses and society. The chapter concludes with a few prospective scenarios regarding the way in which corporate branding and CSR can be applied to sustainable value creation, positive organization design, and product innovation.

The opportunities that have become available in the “brave new world” driven by sustainable values can be better utilized by bridging design thinking and design management. A solid attempt in that direction is made by University of Gothenburg scholars Ulla Johansson and Jill Woodilla in the next chapter, *Bridging Design and Management for Sustainability: Epistemological Problems and Possibilities*. Johansson and Woodilla analyze the epistemologies of design management, design thinking, and Appreciative Inquiry, identify common elements among them, and discuss problems and opportunities in combining discourses from multiple paradigms. In the end, they have chosen to focus more on the opportunities by providing examples from three projects led by designers, and comment on the different ways the discourses understand the concept of sustainability, and ways in which practitioners create sustainable value.
The chapter that follows, *A Whole New Value: Driving Innovation, Sustainability and Prosperity through Appreciative Inquiry*, by Nadya Zhexembayeva, provides several examples of business leaders embracing sustainable value with or without the type of creative reframing that Johansson and Woodilla had narrated earlier. Zhexembayeva correctly points out that at the espoused value level, business leaders have no trouble subscribing to sustainable value. Transforming it into an operational value requires hard work, persistence, irrepressible resilience, and comfort with ambiguity – all qualities of Appreciative Intelligence. The chapter analyses the practices of companies that have figured out how to embrace sustainable value that benefits all stakeholders while at the same time making profits that are sought by shareholders. She lists specific practices that are essential for the creation of this win–win situation between the shareholders and stakeholders. They include understanding the value shift emerging in the global economy, discovering new ways to achieve profit goals with new sustainable value-based strategies, and engaging the positive generative capabilities of the whole organization.

**PART II: POSITIVE DESIGN PERSPECTIVES**

Design thinking offers a process-oriented approach that complements the static view inherent in the managerial and strategic approaches to sustainability. Management is not only an act of decision-making between a given set of alternatives; it is also the active, ongoing shaping and designing of organizations and their stakeholders’ experiences. Taking a design stance encourages a constructive, divergent behavior that protects managers from premature closure in decisions and actions. An emphasis on designing thus has the potential to invigorate management scholarship and extend it beyond the traditional boundaries of default economic solutions, to default economic problems. It allows us to ask legitimately not only how things work in an organization, but also what managers should do to make things work in a more humanly desirable way, and to question why we should be doing familiar things at all. Design is about reframing ideas and shaping alternative courses of action. This section is focused on how designers can generate a new discourse and evoke desirable action with respect to sustainable value. The design approach is concerned with how things ought to be and how we can get there. Chapters in this section are concerned with questions such as: how can we use the potential of the design attitude in a generative way? How can sociotechnical design configurations
enhance sustainable value? Combining a positive lens on organizing with the transformative power of design thinking opens new horizons for creating organizational processes, contexts, and associated informing practices that can create sustainable value.

The first chapter in this section focuses on sociotechnical systems theory and sustainable innovation. In *The road to Sustainable Value: The Path-Dependent Construction of Sustainable Innovation as Sociomaterial Practices in the Car Industry*, Wietske van Osch and Michel Avital point out that sustainable innovation is not only about the design of radical “green” technologies, but is also about generating social and institutional support that complement and reinforce the adoption and diffusion of these technologies at large. Hence, treating the ecologically hazardous nature of the prevalent technologies alone is insufficient without complementary social change. Building on a longitudinal study of sustainable innovation in the car industry, the authors argue that the prevailing discourse that is centered on the creation of business value is unlikely to facilitate the widespread adoption of sustainable technologies. Furthermore, taking into consideration the sociomateriality of sustainable innovation, they suggest that a focus on creating social value is indispensable for triggering the desired change toward sustainable value. Building on an analysis of sustainable innovation in the car industry, they generate two relevant insights for sustainable value. First, they demonstrate the path-dependent nature of sustainable innovation, which is constrained and sustained by the materiality, social structures, and institutional frameworks that comprise the overall sociotechnical system in which innovation takes place. Second, they show that a successful diffusion of radical sustainable innovation requires both technological innovation and complementary social changes that together can disrupt the existing evolutionary path of technology and construct more sustainable alternatives. Overall, they argue that reframing the discourse around social value in lieu of monetary value can be leveraged by organizations for shaping alternative courses of action, creating innovative technologies, and developing novel practices that create sustainable value for all stakeholders in society.

Next, Anthony Smith takes the discussion of sociotechnical systems to a more personal level by giving examples from his experience in a few projects. In *Stewardship Design Principles: Learning from Living Systems (BIRDS) to Co-Design Fast-Forward Futures*, he notes that there is much to learn from living systems about the design and management of sustainable entities. The stewardship design principles – balance, interdependence, regeneration, diversity, and succession (B–I–R–D–S) – help sustainable design
practitioners move up from small-scale experiments to large-scale systems change. Smith provides case vignettes in the design of small-scale experiments, which show how stewardship design principles can enhance large systemic change at the regional and national levels.

The next two chapters focus on the relationship between information technology and sustainable value. The chapter *Forms of Government and Systemic Sustainability: A Positive Design Approach to the Design of Information Systems* by Kenneth Kendall and Julie Kendall examines forms of government and considers information systems (IS) sustainability as an instance of facilitative mechanism for a positive design approach. A sustainable IS system will create shareholder value as well as larger societal good. They realized that a system designer can adopt positive design and still develop a system that is not sustainable. In an effort to find the reasons for this anomaly, they looked at environmental factors such as the orientation, attitudes, and limits of various forms of governmental forms and indeed found a relationship: the type of government influences the sustainability of IS.

Finally, *The Generative Potential of Participatory Geographic Information Systems* by Dirk Hovorka and Nancy Auerbach describes the generative potential of participatory geographic information systems for creating sustainable value. The authors integrate learning from community-based geographic information systems (GIS) and show how such systems can empower communities to create Community Sustainable Value. According to them, this is accomplished by reducing information asymmetry, analyzing the history of decision-making, and monitoring the components of community sustainable value. Community-based and web-enabled GIS enable citizens to make the most efficient use of local data and present sustainable scenarios. Hovorka and Auerbach believe that the GIS design process itself represents an opportunity for situated social action for creating sustainable values.

**PART III: APPRECIATIVE INTELLIGENCE PERSPECTIVES**

Appreciative Intelligence is the ability to reframe and perceive the generative potential in challenging situations and to engage in purposive action to transform the potential to positive outcomes (Thatchenkery & Metzker, 2006). More than 20 years ago, David Cooperrider and his colleagues launched the *social innovations in global social change* research project (1987)
and studied organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the Hunger Project, and the ICA. By reframing global problems with an appreciative lens, each of these organizations was aiming for creating sustainable value even though the term was not in vogue a quarter of a century ago. Chapters in this section provide thoughtful case studies and lessons learned from businesses and nonprofit organizations that have embraced sustainable value as a core operational value through reframing. They have shown how a reframing from sustainable development to sustainable value has already occurred or could emerge, and to the extent possible, demonstrate the “business case” for sustainable value.

Creating sustainable value often requires reframing the constraints that are abundant in the environment, in organizations, and in the mind-set of stakeholders. Innovation is one of the most important aspects in the sustainable value creation process. Business as usual means producing more, consuming more, and doing whatever is economically feasible and convenient on the side for the sake of the environment. In the past, corporations have typically engaged in sustainability as an afterthought. Today, they are more proactive. They are thinking outside the box and constantly reframing. They no longer think that being sustainable implies being less profitable. On the contrary, as innovative business leaders such as Ray Anderson of Interface have discovered, corporations can be more profitable by mindfully developing sustainable business practices. Analysis of such cases reveals a high level of Appreciative Intelligence on the part of the leaders, as shown in the next four chapters.

If reading about the epistemologies of design thinking and design management has made your head heavy, the first chapter in this section by Theresa McNichol will certainly soothe your nerves. *A Charge to Wonder: The Art Museum as Laboratory for Re-Imagining a Sustainable Future* is a delightful example of how the author has used design thinking in teaching. She starts by pointing out that the ability to imagine our world being arranged along different lines is the first step to achieving sustainability. McNichol reminds us that this ability comes naturally to young people and to artists and designers who look for unexpected connections between facts and ideas. She examines her own role as a designer and teacher and has experimented with developing the Appreciative Intelligence of her students. Recognizing that museums offer the ideal settings and tools for opening eyes to seeing new possibilities, she has been encouraging students to create personal narratives of their experiences in art museums. In analyzing such stories, McNichol finds that students’ private, focused encounters with artifacts from other periods, and cultures have helped them see the world in refreshingly new ways. She believes that
providing opportunities for business leaders to replicate such experiences of artistic appreciation may help them develop innovative thinking, new insights, and embrace sustainable value creation in a mindful way.

The next chapter is by David Dunne who describes two inquiry-based approaches to sustainable value: positive design and integrative thinking. In *Two Inquiry-Based Approaches to Sustainable Value: Positive Design and Integrative Thinking*, Dunne points out that sustainable value is a “wicked problem” that evades definitive formulation and clear solutions, thanks to the multitude of stakeholders with often incompatible goals. According to Dunne, what might work is either positive design or integrative thinking because they have a holistic system focus and emphasize reflection and reframing, a component of Appreciative Intelligence. Design approach not only explores the users’ understanding but also initiates trial solutions as a means of framing the problem. Likewise, integrative thinking explores the mental models of stakeholders. The rest of the chapter is a case study of Tata Motors that analyses the company’s original decision to locate its plant for the manufacture of the common man’s car in the state of West Bengal, subsequent controversies, and the eventual decision to pull out of that state and relocate to another state that was more business friendly than West Bengal. Dunne sees the scenarios as a wicked problem because many stakeholders had contrasting goals and vested interests. He believes that the Tata organization could have benefited from using either positive design or integrative thinking.

Next, the case study, *Sustainability and Employee Engagement: Organizational Change in the Case of Streamline Manufacturing* by Hilary Bradbury-Huang, shows how a changed project led to positively impacting the natural and organizational environments as well as contributing to the financial health of the organization. In a case based on 30 interviews with participants in a leading North American manufacturer’s seven-year sustainability project, Huang lists the various innovative methods that the company used to increase nonexecutive employee engagement in technical innovation for sustainability. For example, eco-action learning had motivated many employees to persevere despite the challenges associated with long hours and time away from family. Huang shows that the Appreciative Intelligence of the employees and leaders helped them to reframe business, find meaning in day-to-day routine business tasks, and eventually create sustainable value.

In the fourth example, *Appreciative Intelligence in Action – A Case Study of Sustainable Value Creation by Irupana Organic Food of Bolivia*, Michael Metzger, Héctor Martinez, and Miguel Angel Lopez demonstrate how the leadership of the organization moved from dependency on international
NGOs to self-sufficiency by reframing in order to find what they had instead of what they did not have. Javier Hurtado and Martha Cordero, founders of Irupana Organic Foods located in the Bolivian Altiplano, became disillusioned with the cycle of international aid and set out to discover the unique potential in the harsh Bolivian landscape and the impoverished peasant farmers who live there. Through the framework of Appreciative Intelligence Metzger et al. share with us in this case study how the Hurtado and Cordero reframed their circumstances to bring out specific positive potentials within the Altiplano farming community and its unique natural resources, and create a sustainable organic foods company that created positive impact for the local citizens. According to them, the Irupana story illustrates how our destinies are shaped by our ability to discover that which is best within ourselves and the communities in which we live, and the impact that one individual’s application of Appreciative Intelligence can have on a community.

PART IV: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP PERSPECTIVES

Organizations such as Ashoka have demonstrated the power of massive social entrepreneurship. Changemaker, one of Ashoka’s recent initiatives, attempts to develop new models of social entrepreneurship among the university student population all over the world. Social entrepreneurship bridges the gap between established organizations such as the businesses and citizen initiatives. It has the greatest potential for validating sustainable value as a legitimate goal for organizations of all sorts. Contributions to this section extract lessons learned from high-impact social entrepreneurship, or conceptualize how this nascent movement with unbridled potential may contribute to the radical shift necessary for moving from sustainable development to sustainable value.

The first chapter in this section, Social Entrepreneurship: A Model for Sustainable Value Creation, is a case study by Michael Pirson who proposes social entrepreneurship for addressing corporate greed and the related focus on short-term profit. He shows how this nascent movement with unbridled potential may contribute to the radical shift necessary for moving from sustainable development to sustainable value. The evidence comes from Pirson’s case study of bracNet, a for-profit organization in Bangladesh attempting to provide digital connectivity to the poor and middle class. This entrepreneurial enterprise has made creative use of new business models and
cross-sectoral partnerships to implement a social and financial value creation strategy. For example, the for-profit bracNet shares ownership with BRAC, a nonprofit organization, VC’s, and hedge funds.

The second chapter in this category, *Sustainability and Impact of Microfinance Institutions* by Kokila Doshi, describes using a case study of ACCION San Diego (ACCION SD) and through the lens of Appreciative Intelligence, a framework relating to the way microfinance organizations create sustainable value. She develops an appreciative conceptual framework for sustainable microfinance and shows how it can be applied to ACCION SD. The case study reveals that ACCION SD is in the habit of continuously reframing, seeing new possibilities, and engaging in concrete actions to bring a vision of the future to reality, all of them components of Appreciative Intelligence. Kokila shows that the Appreciative Intelligence of its leadership has led to competitive advantage and sustainable value while that of its clients reinforces ACCION SD’s sustainability.

While the case study above covered South America, the next case study is about microenterprises in Africa. In *Positive Design and Construction of Mechanisms for the Sustainable Development of Microenterprises in Africa*, Carol Dalglish and Judy Matthews use semi-structured interviews, observation, and participatory action research to articulate a new approach for microenterprise development in developing countries, including the practices of microfinance and microcredit. Using a longitudinal study that lasted six years, Dalglish and Matthews examine the successes and failures of microentrepreneurs of Beira in Mozambique and suggest that a process of cocreation with local people based on sustainability principles will be most appropriate for enterprise development in developing economies.

Last but not least, *Creating Macro Actors for Sustainable Development* by Chester Warzynski and Alesia Krupenikava points out that several sustainability projects have failed due to the absence of approaches that could have elicited stakeholder support and aligned the change within social structure of the organization. They propose the actor-network theory (ANT) as the remedy, and describe a case study at a major research university, where ANT was used along with traditional empirical methods and Appreciative Inquiry to create social networks and sustainable value.

**CONCLUSION**

The 16 chapters in this volume signal an emerging shift from sustainable development to sustainable value. While this is a welcome development,
the human factor in building sustainable organizations cannot be underestimated. Building on related study by Pfeffer (2010), we found in Google Scholar 58,800 entries for the term, “environmental sustainability,” and only 14,100 for “social sustainability” (accessed May 3, 2010). Pfeffer (2010) points out that while Walmart has made significant strides in environmental sustainability, it paid its employees 15% less than other large retailers, and thanks to the lower pay, Walmart employees have made more frequent use of public assistance and welfare programs. He also cites British Petroleum, which has made headlines as a company visibly moving toward sustainability but paid a fine of $87 million for the explosion in their facilities in Texas City in 2005 and was responsible to the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. While environmental concerns are appreciated, the sustainable quest should not disregard the human side of the equation.

Sustainable value encompasses social, ecological, and environmental sustainability and treats them all as interlinked. In sustainable value-based living, plants, animals, humans, and the environment, all function as a living system drawing least amount of nonrenewable resources from one another and creating new ways of leaving this planet as more liveable than it is today. With this vision in mind, we invite you to read Volume 3 of Advances in Appreciative Inquiry and encourage you to apply its core ideas in your own context.

REFERENCES


