Guest Editorial

Future Directions for Issues Management*

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ABSTRACT

Issues management as a corporate activity lies at the heart of reputation management, public affairs, and corporate communication. Yet its dual position as a professional field and a topic of scientific study is highly fragile. From the practitioner side, the legitimacy of issues management is under constant attack by both stakeholder groups and skeptic public affairs officials. From the academic side, the community of researchers with an interest in issues management is frighteningly small and widely dispersed over business and journalism schools on several continents. To make the case for the preservation of issues management as a significant managerial task, this paper proposes three future directions for research and practice: (1) infusing orthodox issues life cycle research with theories from other social sciences; (2) seeking cross-fertilization with research in the stakeholder management tradition; and (3) integrating issues management research more strongly with the

burgeoning literature on the management of corporate reputation.

AIMS OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Welcome to this *Corporate Reputation Review* special issue on issues management! The issue contains six articles covering a wide variety of conceptual approaches to the study of issues and their management – ranging from agenda-setting frameworks through stakeholder theory to discourse analysis.¹ We believe that this collection of articles will be of profound interest to scholars already working in the area of issues management, and we hope that it will inspire others to join us in the study of this exciting topic. At the same time, we are confident that the work reported here will also appeal to the critical practitioner, as the articles suggest new ways of analyzing and addressing social issues.

Before we proceed by introducing the contents of this special issue, however, we will reveal just a little of how this project came about and restate our initial goals for this venture. We first discussed the idea of a special issue on issues management amongst ourselves when we attended a small conference on Public Affairs and Issues Management in the state of Maine, in the spring of 2001.² No one could have watched our fellow attendees present and discuss their work without being captured

* A previous version of this paper has been presented at the 13th annual meeting of the International Association for Business and Society, June 27 – 30, 2002, Victoria, BC, Canada. We thank our session participants for the valuable discussion afterwards. This paper has also benefited from a conversation on the future of issues management between Bryan Husted and the second author at the 2002 Academy of Management Meeting in Denver, Colorado, USA. The usual disclaimers apply.

by the obvious vibrancy and enthusiasm of the international issues management community. At the same time, everyone who was present at this meeting also must have felt alarmed by the fragility of this group, due to its sheer lack of critical mass.

As we were reflecting on our joint experiences after the first day of the conference, we realized that a successful special issue on issues management would have to meet at least three goals. First, we wanted to show just how vibrant the issues management community really is by reporting some of its most innovative and refreshing research findings. Secondly, because the inner circle of issues management researchers is so small, we were very eager to involve new people in the dialogue and make new voices heard. Thirdly, for reasons which we will explain below, we deemed it expedient to draw up some preliminary sketches for the future of issues management practice and research in this editorial essay.

BEYOND ADOLESCENCE ...

Before discussing some of the challenges facing the issues management field today, it is important to recognize that the international issues management community – both the professional and academic sides of it – can look back on some remarkable accomplishments. The phrase ‘issue management’ was only coined by Howard Chase, a veteran public affairs practitioner, in April of 1976. But interestingly enough, the term was already widely adopted in both the business world and in academic circles in the first decade thereafter. Important books published in those first ten years that already fully embraced the issues management logic include, for example, *Management Response to Public Issues* (Buchholz, Evans, and Wagley, 1985), *Social Change and Corporate Strategy* (Gollner, 1983), *Managing Public Relations* (Grunig and Hunt, 1984), *Managing External Issues*

(Stanley, 1985), and *Issues Management* (Heath and Nelson, 1986).

This almost instantaneous adoption at least suggests that Chase’s term did not really describe a completely new phenomenon, but rather provided a catchword for a preexisting yet dormant trend in the corporate world. The public affairs field had quietly been professionalizing for decades, but a new term like issues management finally provided public affairs professionals with a label they could use to describe and legitimize their activities. Now, less than thirty years after its inception, issues management has evolved into a widely adopted and endorsed corporate activity as well as a legitimate object of academic study. Few social phenomena can claim to have accomplished so much in so little time. Below we will discuss some of these major professional and scholarly accomplishments in more detail.

Professional Accomplishments

Adoption by major corporations

One of the ‘vital signs’ for any management function is the extent to which leading corporations have embraced that function and have appointed individuals in their hierarchies for actively managing it. According to this criterion, issues management is as alive and kicking today as any other imaginable organizational task. Table 1 shows a listing of corporations that presently have issues managers on their payrolls – and it should be kept in mind that this listing is meant as an illustration only and is by no means exhaustive.

Widespread adoption

Another buoyancy indicator for a specific managerial function is the proportion of companies that have chosen to actively embrace it, expressed as a percentage of the wider population of relevant business organizations. A 1999 study by the Foundation

Table 1: Leading Adopters of Issues Management

ABB	Daimler-Chrysler	Johnson & Johnson
Alcan	Deere & Company	KPMG
Anheuser-Busch	Dow Chemical	Labatt Brewing
Aventis	DuPont	Lockheed Martin
Avon	Eastman Kodak	3M
BASF	Eli Lilly	Merck & Co
Bell Canada	Ericsson	Microsoft
Boeing	ExxonMobil	Novartis
BP	FedEx	Northrop Grumman
Cargill	Fortis	PepsiCo
Caterpillar	Goodyear Corporation	Pfizer
ChevronTexaco	Heinz	Procter & Gamble
Citigroup	Hoffman-La Roche	Shell
Coca-Cola	IBM	Texas Instruments
Coors	Intel	Unilever

for Public Affairs found that 83% of all US companies with a public affairs department recognize issues management as a vital activity. This puts issues management ahead of even such ubiquitous and widely regarded activities as Political Action Committees (75%), Public Relations (54%), Regulatory Affairs (53%), Employee Communications (49%), Environmental Affairs (22%), and Institutional Investor Relations (13%).

Emerging best practices

Another supportive sign for the applied side of issues management is that after almost three decades of 'beta testing,' a strong set of best practices has emerged to guide the practitioner. More importantly even, the gamut of best practices appears to be converging. Most commentators now agree that issues management excellence requires the proficient execution of three interrelated activities. The first of these is environmental scanning (Aguilar, 1967; Fleming, 1981), which involves mapping the business environment for weak signals appearing on the corporate radar. The second activity is issue interpretation

(Dutton, 1993; Gioia and Thomas, 1996), which corresponds to keeping a close eye on previously detected issues to see whether they evolve into something requiring significant managerial attention. As a third activity, organizations must select an issue response pattern through which they actively address the most urgent and threatening of the previously identified and monitored issues (Ackerman, 1975; Greening and Gray, 1994). In combination, these three activities form the core of most issues management systems that are in use today.

Professional membership organizations

Another indicator for the viability of a professional activity is whether or not dedicated membership organizations exist to actively help shape and promote that activity as a legitimate career option. In 1956, the first Eisenhower Administration urged the establishment of the Public Affairs Council (www.pac.org) in the US to put an end to the polarization politics between Big Labor and Big Business. Its original mission was to train and stimulate business executives to become active and effective

in politics, but the organization soon became a professional association for public affairs officers and issues managers. In 1988, the more focused Issue Management Council (www.issuemanagement.org) was founded to serve the interests of people 'whose work is effectively and ethically managing issues.' Today, the Council's membership involves individuals from close to 200 companies around the world.

Scholarly Accomplishments

Receptiveness of top journals

A key indicator for the legitimacy of any professional activity as an object of scholarly research is the extent to which academic work on the topic siphons through to the top journals in the field. The top journals in the management field are typically general management journals, and many areas of scholarly investigation never make it to the academic Olympus because editors and reviewers perceive of them as being too obscure to be of interest to the community of management scholars as a whole. Not so with issues management. The traditional top journals in the management field (which are widely believed to be *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *Strategic Management Journal*) have all published at least five studies on issues management over the last twenty years – and that is a very conservative estimate.

Emergence of dedicated journals

Another indicator of academic legitimacy for any topic of study is the extent to which journals dedicated to that subject have emerged. At present, there is no such thing as the *Journal of Issues Management*. Yet over the past decade we have witnessed the emergence of two journals – *Corporate Reputation Review* and *Journal of Public Affairs* – that can be thought of as

natural outlets for issues management research.³ Furthermore, issues management papers have always been published in the dedicated journals of the Business and Society field, such as *Business & Society*, *Business and Society Review*, *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, and *Journal of Business Ethics*.

Academic membership organizations

For the longest time, issues management scholars have found a home in the Social Issues in Management (SIM) Division of the Academy of Management (www.aom.pace.edu). There are clear benefits to being part of a larger organization, such as visibility, legitimacy, and accountability. The obvious downside of being associated with a Moloch like the Academy (which had 24 divisions and interest groups and 12,377 members when we wrote this introduction in November 2002) is that the voice of a relatively small division like SIM (which had 852 members in November 2002) easily gets lost in the turmoil. In 1989, a group of sixteen SIM 'mutineers' therefore decided to found IABS, the International Association for Business and Society (www.iabs.net). Over the years, IABS has evolved into a more human-scaled organization, with little over three hundred members, which is devoted to research and teaching about the relationships between business, government, and society.

... BUT NOT YET OUT OF THE WOODS

It would be relatively easy for issues management professionals and scholars to cherish these successes and to compliment themselves on their accomplishments of the last three decades. But it seems that it would be a little premature to engage in celebrations of this kind. Both the professional and the scholarly sides of the international issues management community presently face a wide array of pressing issues and find themselves under constant

attack by a broad range of stakeholders. Some of the more pressing professional and scholarly challenges facing the field are reported below.

Professional Concerns

Proprietary knowledge

There are literally hundreds of *bona fide* firms that offer issues management consultancy services, or that specialize in closely related fields like public affairs management, risk management, government relations, vulnerability audits, political strategy development, and corporate communication. This small army of professional service firms interacts regularly with thousands of corporate clients. Furthermore, many of these consultants conduct fascinating issues management research under the banners of continuous capability enhancement and product development. Taking into account that the number of academic researchers with an interest in issues management is relatively limited, it seems fair to state that the cutting edge of issues management research is presently to be found in the world of practice, and not in academia.

This is a laudable achievement on the one hand, but there is also a significant problem associated with this development – the one-sided appropriation of knowledge. On the one hand, academic morays strongly stimulate the dissemination of research outcomes, as compensation in the academic world is strongly and positively correlated with publishing articles in reputable journals and books with prestigious publishers. This implies that the fruits of academic research will usually be available to all through publicly accessible outlets, albeit usually with a certain time lag. On the other hand, the business model of the consultancy profession forbids the sharing of research outcomes, as the incentive structure in this industry is biased towards

protecting brand names, preventing product offerings from imitation, and hiding competitively valuable capabilities from competitors. In other words, many of the most exciting research outcomes in issues management are presently ‘locked up’ in consultancy firms rather than shared with the wider community.

Staff function

Practicing issues managers often point out that their biggest foe in life is their position in the organizational structure. In many business firms, issues management is organized as a staff function (Greening and Gray, 1994). This comes with certain benefits, as issues managers usually get to report directly to the board of directors, work with considerable budgets, and enjoy considerable autonomy in the design and execution of their jobs. Yet managers working in staff functions are also subjected to a number of typical drawbacks: they have little or no direct influence on officials operating in line functions, are exceptionally vulnerable to budget cuts during downturns of the business cycle, and their reports tend to end up in the bottom drawer of the filing cabinet of the CEO if their contents are perceived of as unfavorable to the corporation or its administrators. Hence, the effectiveness of the issues management function wanes as long as it does not become an integral part of essential line functions such as product development, facilities planning, and marketing (Marx, 1986).

Legitimacy threats

Almost thirty years after its inception, issues management never fully succeeded at obtaining the endorsement and approval of a wide variety of critical constituencies. Social, political, and environmental stakeholders continue to look upon issues management with suspicion, regarding the activity itself as window-dressing, corpo-

rate propaganda, or even outright deception of the public. Even public affairs and corporate communication practitioners themselves sometimes criticize issues management 'from the inside out.' Some professional commentators go as far as insinuating that 'the business of issues is the business of support functions grappling for a stronger hook to the bottom line. Issues identification and issues management are 100 percent purebred buzzword' (Jensen, 1997: 28). In other words, scholars and practitioners alike will somehow have to come to terms with the fact that issues management will never be looked upon as a perfectly normal and legitimate corporate function. Issues managers can therefore not afford themselves to devote all the discretionary resources at their disposal to their core business, but must instead spend at least a proportion of those resources on 'domain maintenance' – the legitimization of the issues management function in the eyes of their superiors and in those of critical external constituencies.

Scholarly Concerns

Number of academic publications

One of the greatest concerns from the academic point of view is that the number of scholarly publications on issues management has steadily been declining over the last decade (Mahon and Heugens, 2002). After the early years of the 1970s, the number of publications on issues management surged in the early 1980s, peaked towards the end of the decade, and started to decline after the early 1990s. In the late 1980's, the combined issues management community easily racked up more than forty scientific articles per annum in peer-reviewed journals. In 2001 and 2002, the number had dropped to about fifteen to twenty articles per year. Even these numbers are a little inflated, however, due to two reasons. First, the *Journal of Public*

Affairs has published two special issues on issues management in these two years, which resulted in above-normal output levels. Secondly, the raw numbers conceal the fact that the issues management field is home to a small number of exceptionally prolific people (e.g., Jane Dutton from the University of Michigan, Craig Fleisher from the University of Windsor, Robert Heath from the University of Houston, John Mahon from the University of Maine, and Richard Nelson from Louisiana State University), which tends to skew the publications-per-capita variable significantly.

Small research community

A second issue of concern is that the issues management research community is frighteningly small. We estimate that within the Business and Society community, the number of people who would define issues management as one of their core research interests is not greater than ten. Another fifteen Business and Society scholars will occasionally engage in an issues management study. Equal numbers of core and peripheral issues management researchers can be found in the Public Relations/Public Affairs field. Finally, in the Organizational Behavior field there are up to five core issues management researchers, with about ten to fifteen other individuals operating on the periphery. What is more, the demographics of these small communities look rather gloomy, as they are characterized by a very limited inflow of junior researchers. The one exception defying this trend is perhaps the small but growing community of issues management scholars in the Organizational Behavior field, where Susan Ashford and Jane Dutton's research in managerial issues selling behavior is drawing the attention of an increasing stream of talented young researchers.

Scholarly migration

A final alarming sign is that the interna-

tional Business and Society community is slowly but surely migrating away into other areas of scholarly interest. Issues management was once so dominant in this community that when it had to pick a name for its representative division in the Academy of Management, it simply called it 'Social Issues in Management.' If the division would have had to pick a name for itself in 2003, however, it is highly unlikely that it would have made the same choice. In the early 1980s, many former issues management scholars converted to the study of Corporate Social Responsiveness and Corporate Social Responsibility. In the 1990s, the field moved forward under the banners of Stakeholder Management and – albeit a bit later – Corporate Citizenship. The popularity of these new epitaphs not only signals the resettlement of issues management researchers in new research traditions; it also demonstrates that issues management theory is losing ground as a premier analytical framework for the analysis of social problems.

THREE FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We have tried to provide a balanced and realistic account of the *status quo* of the issues management field by stressing its remarkable accomplishments as well as the notable concerns it faces. Yet, we feel that presenting a balanced analysis of the problem alone would be insufficient, and that it is necessary to suggest solutions to these predicaments before the window of opportunity for addressing them closes. We therefore will suggest three future directions for issues management, in the form of three avenues for prospective research. Our explicit aims are to involve new researchers in the dialogue and to provide them with some conceptual suggestions for developing their own research agendas in the field of issues management. At first glance, it seems as if these three future directions are primarily oriented towards academics. Nevertheless, we believe

that they can also serve the issues management professional by offering new ways of analyzing and responding to societal dilemmas. The three future directions we propose are: (1) infusing orthodox issues life cycle research with theories from other social sciences; (2) seeking cross-fertilization with research in the stakeholder management tradition; and (3) integrating issues management research more strongly with the burgeoning literature on the management of corporate reputation.

Direction One: Reinforcing the Issue Life Cycle

The issues manager's job is often an unenviable one, as it is all about foreseeing the unforeseeable and predicting the unpredictable. The fact that issues managers are continuously forced to work under conditions of high time pressure and environmental uncertainty (Dutton, 1993) probably explains the tremendous popularity of the so-called issue evolution or issue life cycle models (see, for example, Bigelow, Fahey, and Mahon, 1991; Logsdon, 1985; Post, 1978; and Zyglidopoulos, 2003). These models hold that many issues are not fundamentally unpredictable, but that they instead progress relatively unsurprisingly through a number of stages such as issue formation, issue politicization, legislative formalization, and regulation/litigation (Buchholz, 1990). In other words, issue life cycle models give issues managers something to go by, as they offer at least some analytical support in an otherwise unpredictable environment.

Many authors have pointed out that the issues life cycle models which are available today suffer from some serious shortcomings (for a review of this literature, see Lamertz, Martens, and Heugens, 2003). It is true that many of these models lack both descriptive accuracy and theoretical rigor. At the same time, we should be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Issues life cycle models have been around

at least since the early 1970s (e.g. see Downs, 1972), and they continue to be perceived of as useful tools to the present day (Fleisher and Bensoussan, 2003). So, rather than abandoning these models altogether, we propose to reinforce them theoretically by enriching them with concepts and insights from other branches of the social sciences. We believe that this will not only make the models conceptually more convincing, but that it will ultimately also create better tools for the practicing professional.

One well-known problem of evolutionary models, for example, is that they seldomly show how human agency and actor embeddedness influence the evolution of issues. We therefore propose a further integration between issue life cycle models on the one hand, and new institutional theory (Dimaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977) and theories of institutional design (Pettit, 1996) on the other. This new combination should enable researchers to shed more light on how groups or individuals actively try to shape issue evolution processes, while taking into account that involvement with social issues can also act as an institutional constraint limiting the number of behavioral options available to these actors. Another problem that has haunted the issue life cycle literature for decades is that these models have been silent about the underlying mechanisms that *cause* the sudden upswings and gradual downturns in the amount of public attention a particular issue receives. We therefore propose a further integration between issue evolution models and social networks theory, in order to produce better explanations of how social contagion processes influence the dissemination of a particular issue throughout populations of social actors (for an authoritative overview of the network literature, see Knoke, 1990). A final problem of the issue life cycle literature is that it neglects the role of social

movements in issue evolution. We therefore suggest a strengthening of the ties between issue evolution and new social movements theory (for a recent overview, see Mattingly and Greening, 2003), in order to produce an account of how goal-oriented collectives strive to influence public attention in order to influence social and political agenda-building processes.

Direction Two: Embracing Stakeholder Theory

The issues management community has ample reasons to be envious of the recent success of stakeholder theory. First of all, major general management journals like *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Science*, *Organization Studies*, and *Journal of Management Studies* now publish stakeholder-management-related articles with great regularity. Meanwhile, the issues management community's grip on these outlets appears to be slipping. Secondly, whereas the adoption of the concept of issues management has always been more or less confined to the Business and Society and Public Affairs communities, the stakeholder management concept has successfully been exported to fields as diverse as marketing management, corporate governance, business policy, and corporate finance (Heugens and van Oosterhout, 2002). Finally, in many continental European countries (where English is not the first language), the word 'stakeholder' has entered the standard managerial vocabulary in the late 1990s. In other words, it is now perfectly possible to use stakeholder terminology in conversations with, say, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Swiss, Dutch, or German managers, whereas issues management is still a term that requires substantial explanation.

At the same time, we believe that there is no reason for issues management scholars to feel uneasy about or even threatened by the success of stakeholder theory. At the

very least, the stakeholder management movement functions as an ambassador to the business and society field, as it is introducing many scholars and professionals to a more balanced and responsible view of the relationship between business firms and their internal and external constituencies. At best, the rapidly unfolding stakeholder management literature will prove to be a valuable bridgehead for the issues management community, which it can use to create valuable new research opportunities. After all, for many societal predicaments, stakeholders and issues represent two complementary sides of the same coin (Mahon and Heugens, 2002).⁴

Stakeholders tend to organize around 'hot' issues, and issues are typically associated with certain vocal stakeholder groups. Issues management scholars can therefore explore how issues management requires stakeholder prioritization, and how stakeholder management gets facilitated when managers have deep knowledge of stakeholders' issue agendas. Earlier research also suggests that whether or not stakeholders decide to get involved with certain issues has a profound influence on issue evolution, and so do the timing and extent of their involvement (Bigelow, Fahey, and Mahon, 1991; 1993). In other words, we see plentiful research prospects for the issues management community, as long as it is willing to reach out to its colleagues in stakeholder management and explore the complementarity between the two perspectives.

Direction Three: Seeking Integration with Reputation Management

Like stakeholder management, corporate reputation is a concept on the rise. From the professional side of things, the interest in phenomena like corporate reputation and intra-industry stratification has never been greater. Managers, investors, employees and other constituencies appear to be

feeling a deep inner urge to know how well 'their' companies are doing in comparison with their peers. This need has prompted the development of a true avalanche of reputational rankings, of which Fortune Magazine's *Most Admired* listing is by far the most widely known and used (Wartick, 2002). Other rankings which are now available include the Reputation Institute's *Reputation Quotient*, the Financial Times' *Europe's Most Respected*, and the Far Eastern Economic Review's *Review 200* (Fombrun, 1998). A further indicator of the concept's increasing popularity is the fact that the reputation community has its very own academic journal – *Corporate Reputation Review* – and that this publication is currently already in its sixth volume and is estimated to have more than 500 subscribers. Also, the annual conference of the Reputation Institute (www.reputation-institute.com) historically draws over 150 attendees. Finally, specialized mini conferences on corporate reputation are beginning to emerge, like the *Conversazione III* meeting, which was organized by Jeanne Logsdon and Donna Wood and was held in June 2002 in Santa Fé, New Mexico, USA.⁵

Again, we would like to stress the potential for positive symbiosis between issues management and the unfolding reputation management perspective. On the one hand, reputation scholars might learn a thing or two from issues management scholars on how proactive environmental scanning, issues monitoring, and the crafting of responses can protect corporate reputations in times when crises loom large. On the other hand, corporate reputation appears to be a perfect dependent variable for business and society studies in general and issues management research in particular (Heugens, 2002). The published history of the business and society field is largely an evolving story of how researchers have tried for decades to link issues

management activities and corporate social responsibility behaviors to corporate financial performance, and of how many of these attempts have failed (Hillman, 2002). We believe that corporate reputation may very well prove to be a variable that is more responsive to companies' attempts to act responsibly or manage issues professionally than their financial performance.

THE PAPERS IN THIS ISSUE

In response to our call for papers, we received a substantial number of high-quality contributions, many of which reflected one or several of the three themes for future research we alluded to in the preceding sections of this essay. We therefore feel that the papers in this issue are not only of high quality and interesting to read, but also that they are representative of the exciting trends that are presently shaping the future of the issues management field. Table 2 presents a matrix in which the six papers that emerged from the peer review process as the strongest submissions are juxtaposed with the future directions for issues management we envisage.

This special issue heads off with a paper entitled: 'Dealing with Stakeholders: How Reputation, Credibility and Framing Influence the Game', by John Mahon and Steve Wartick. The article connects the stakeholder and reputation themes by showing that (a) under certain conditions, issues management and stakeholder management

are synonymous; and (b) reputation can be seen as a useful issues management tool, because it acts as a deterrent that shapes and restrains the behavioral options of the stakeholders associated with a certain issue.

The second paper presented here, 'Agenda-setting Effects of Business News on the Public's Images and Opinions about Major Corporations', was written by Craig Carroll and Max McCombs. This contribution elaborates on the reputation theme by presenting us with a primer: for the first time ever the widely regarded agenda-setting theory is used as a tool to explore how the mass media influence the reputations of the companies about which they report.

The third paper included in this volume, 'The Public Discourse of the Corporate Citizen', was written by David Saiia and Dale Cyphert. Professors Saiia and Cyphert emphasize the stakeholder theme by showing how criteria taken from discourse theory can be used to guarantee that more corporate constituencies get to have a say in how issues are identified, diagnosed, and eventually resolved.

The fourth paper in the issue, 'A Theoretical Exploration of Expectational Gaps in the Corporate Issue Construct', comes to us from Joel Reichart. In this concise but insightful conceptual contribution, Professor Reichart combines insights from the issues evolution and stakeholder management literatures. We find the typology of stakeholder judgments he has constructed

TABLE 2: The Articles in this Issue

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Issue evolution</i>	<i>Stakeholders</i>	<i>Reputation</i>
Mahon and Wartick		X	X
Carroll & McCombs			X
Saiia & Cyphert		X	
Reichart	X	X	
Zyglidopoulos	X		X
Lamertz, Martens, & Heugens	X		

to be a useful analytical tool which helps us understand the types of deliberations company stakeholders go through before choosing sides on an issue.

The fifth paper, 'The Issue Life Cycle: Implications for Reputation for Social Performance and Organizational Legitimacy', was contributed by Stelios Zyglidopoulos. In his very useful analysis, Professor Zyglidopoulos builds on the issue evolution and corporate reputation literatures to show how companies can influence their relative standings vis-à-vis their peers by adopting responses to issues that either lead or lag societal expectations of what constitutes desirable behavior.

The sixth and final paper, 'Issue Evolution: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective', was contributed by Kai Lamertz, Martin Martens, and Pursey Heugens. The article embraces the issue evolution theme by showing how a dominant sociological perspective on social interaction and exchange can offer a novel and complementary take on preexisting issue life cycle theories.

We believe that these six contributions represent a broad variety of refreshing conceptual insights, and that they are representative of what is yet to come in the issues management field. We hope that you will enjoy reading them as much as we did!

NOTES

- 1 An oft-quoted definition of issues management is: 'the capacity to understand, mobilize, coordinate, and direct all strategic and policy planning functions, and all public affairs/public relations skills, toward the achievement of one objective: meaningful participation in creation of public policy that affects personal and institutional destiny' (Chase, 1982: 1–2). Offering a review of the received issues management literature would take us beyond the scope of this essay, but some interesting suggestions for further reading are: Ansoff (1975); Bartha (1983); Nigh and Cochran (1987); Johnson (1983); and Wartick and Mahon (1994).
- 2 The conference was called *Conversazione II*, organized by John Mahon and Steve Wartick, and held in the state of Maine, USA. The papers pre-

sented at this conference by Professors Kathy Getz, Gerry Keim, Doug Schuler, and Duane Windsor, can be found in a special issue of the *Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 1/2 (2002), Issue 4/1.

- 3 As evidenced by the present *Corporate Reputation Review* special issue, but also by the very recent *Journal of Public Affairs* special issue dedicated to issues management, edited by Robert Heath: Vol. 2 (2002), Issue 4.
- 4 In a personal conversation with the second author, Bryan Husted suggested an interesting analogy for the issues stakeholder dichotomy, notably: the centuries-old debate in physics concerning the nature of light. Physicists have found that under certain conditions light behaves as if it were a wave-type of phenomenon. Other experiments reveal the particle-type qualities of light. The same can be said of societal predicaments: they appear to be stakeholder-driven phenomena in some circumstances, whereas their issue side prevails in other situations.
- 5 The papers presented at this mini conference have been published as a special issue of *Business & Society*, Vol. 41 (2002), Issue 4.

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