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Abstract

The state of the planet option of markedly better environmental and social practices. The objective of this symposium is to better understand the role of corporations in promoting such systemic change. We present four case studies—representing diverse industries and change mechanisms—-to investigate corporate leadership in sustainability transitions. The cases examine a wide range of mechanisms used by corporations to progress toward sustainability, such as political coalition building and information strategies through eco-labels, socially responsible investing, and the public statements of CEOs. In this introduction, we discuss the challenges associated with both achieving and studying systemic change, explain the rationale for a case study approach, describe the findings from the case studies, and draw some general conclusions on the mechanisms by which firms may be able to lead, or at least participate in, systemic change in the different phases of sustainability transitions.

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Biographies

Magali A. Delmas is a professor of Management at the UCLA Anderson School of Management, and the Institute of the Environment & Sustainability. She is the director of the UCLA Center for Corporate Environmental Performance. She conducts research in Corporate Sustainability on the role of information strategies to promote conservation behavior. Her latest book: "*The Green Bundle: Pairing the Market with the Planet*," is published at Stanford Press.

Thomas P. Lyon holds the Dow Chair of Sustainable Science, Technology and Commerce at the University of Michigan, with appointments in both the Ross School of Business and the School of Environment and Sustainability. He is president of the Alliance for Research on Corporate Sustainability, and his research uses economics to understand how corporate environmental performance responds to government regulations, activists, and consumer demands.

John W. Maxwell is the W George Pinnell professor of Business Economics and Public Policy at the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. His research explores the economics of corporate, government and civil society strategies, and how their interaction impacts our natural environment.

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