

Nongovernmental Organizations in Business and Society, Management, and International Business Research

Review and Implications From 1998 to 2007

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This review shows how the relationship between nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and businesses has been examined in business and society, management, and international business (IB) literatures. Altogether 88 relevant studies have been identified through the analysis of article abstracts from 11 leading journals in these fields. The articles have been classified into three categories according to their focus: NGO–business interface, NGO–business–government interface, and NGOs as one of many corporate stakeholders. Six main themes are identified: (a) Activism and NGO influence, (b) dyadic partnership (NGO–business), (c) cross-sector partnership (NGO–business–government), (d) global governance and standardization, (e) national-level governance, and (f) stakeholder management. The state of the research topic is assessed, and implications and avenues for further research are provided.

Keywords: *nongovernmental organization; NGO; nonprofit; literature review*

The relationship between nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and companies has received increasing interest from both academic and practitioner communities. Although the taxonomy related to NGOs remains

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diverse, NGOs can be defined as social, cultural, legal, and environmental advocacy and/or operational groups that have goals that are primarily non-commercial.¹ The growing interest in NGOs is partially due to their rapid growth in number and influence (Bendell, 2000; Boli & Thomas, 1997; Doh, 2003; Powell & Steinberg, 2006; Teegen, 2003). Furthermore, NGOs are increasingly becoming more international and constantly developing new tactics for engagement with business and have shifted from focusing on governments to businesses (Doh & Teegen, 2003). In the analysis of the NGO–business relationship, key research themes have included the different roles and strategies adopted by NGOs and their impact on companies (e.g., Humphreys, 2004; Kong, Salzman, Steger, & Ionescu-Somers, 2002; Spar & La Mure, 2003), the various forms of collaboration, for example, dialogue and partnerships (Argenti, 2004; Austin, 2000; Heugens, van den Bosch, & van Riel, 2002; Millar, Choi, & Chen, 2004; Rondinelli & London, 2003; Seitanidi & Crane, 2009), the study of NGOs from the aspects of global governance or voluntary regulation (Christmann & Taylor, 2002; Teegen, Doh, & Vachani, 2004), and NGOs and businesses as institutions or in different institutional contexts (Doh & Guay, 2006; Doh & Teegen, 2002).

The once adversarial relationship between NGOs and companies has undergone a shift toward becoming more cooperative and more dialogic in form. The rise of NGOs as relevant players, in addition to private and public sector actors, has been seen as one of the most significant processes related to the global environmental and social challenges of today. This raises the following questions: How has the discussion on this important subject evolved and where could it be heading? Does the scholarly discussion on NGOs have a different emphasis in different academic literatures?

The conceptual entity of business and society related literature remains heterogeneous or even fragmented. Concepts such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), environmental management, sustainable development, corporate governance, and business ethics have all established their place in academic debate. The challenge is, however, that these concepts often overlap. Inspired by this challenge, several reviews on CSR-related literature have been conducted. Egri and Ralston (2008) examined the extent to which corporate responsibility (CR) research has been mainstreamed into international management literature. Similarly, Lockett, Moon, and Visser (2006) have focused on CSR in mainstream management journals. De Bakker, Groenewegen, and den Hond (2005) have also focused on the same topic (CSR and corporate social performance [CSP]). Their bibliometric analysis included both specialized and mainstream journals. Thus, it is clear that CSR literature has been reviewed in numerous studies. However, a comprehensive analysis of the growing amount of literature on the NGO–business

relationship has not yet been completed. Thus, there is a need for a review and thematic categorization of current research.

This study sets out to fill that gap by conducting a systematic analysis of articles that focus on NGOs in academic journals in the literatures of (a) business and society, business ethics, CSR, and environmental management, which are collectively referred to here as *business and society* (for the sake of abbreviation), (b) general management (including organization studies and strategic management), and (c) IB during a 10-year period from 1998 to 2007. Thus, the key research question of the article is the following: What is the state of research on the NGO–business relationship as found in the literatures of business and society, management, and IB? This article answers the research question by identifying key themes in current research and emphasizes the implications for future study in each theme and the topic in general. The following sections of this article will discuss the method of conducting the review and present and discuss the findings and implications.

Method

In this review, a first critical choice was the journals to be analyzed. Although different literatures could have been examined (such as international relations, international political economy, marketing, economics of development, sociology, international affairs, and nonprofit sector research), the starting point of this study was to examine how NGOs have been studied in business and society, management, and IB literatures. By including both mainstream and specialized articles, it is possible to achieve a comparative setting between these two categories themselves and between other reviews carried out on CSR (see de Bakker et al., 2005; Egri & Ralston, 2008; Lockett et al., 2006). Research on the NGO–business relationship is a continuously growing topic, and therefore it is interesting and relevant to see how business and society literature acts as a catalyst for research in more general fields. Thus, it is important to examine how research on the topic has become mainstream in management and IB literatures (see Egri & Ralston, 2008). In business and society, four key journals were identified: *Business Ethics Quarterly* (BEQ), *Business & Society* (BAS), *Business Strategy and the Environment* (BSE), and *Journal of Business Ethics* (JoBE). BEQ and JoBE can be considered to be the leading journals in business ethics (and CSR), BAS is the leading journal in its field, and BSE is an important journal in the area of environmental management and CSR. In terms of management research, the five main academic-oriented (nonpractitioner)

journals in the Financial Times 40 list were chosen: *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ), *Academy of Management Journal* (AMJ), *Academy of Management Review* (AMR), *Organization Science* (OrgSci), and *Strategic Management Journal* (SMJ). Similarly, the two IB journals in the Financial Times 40 list, *Journal of International Business Studies* (JIBS) and *Management International Review* (MIR), were chosen as the key journals representing IB. Table 1 describes the 11 journals included in the analysis.

The primary method used to identify relevant articles was to read all of the abstracts or author-supplied abstracts one by one. For the 11 journals, all the abstracts of all the articles that are available through Business Source Premier (EBSCO) and ABI/INFORM ProQuest electronic databases were read to make sure that no relevant articles were left out due to the variety of concepts and terminology associated with NGOs.² A supplementary check was conducted through a second method: keyword search. The contents of the abstracts or the author-supplied abstracts of journal articles were searched one journal at a time through the use of keywords that are commonly used to refer to NGOs. Keywords that are associated with collaboration and partnership were also added.³ However, it should be emphasized that the keyword search was only a supplementary method because the list of chosen keywords is not exhaustive, and numerous relevant articles could have been left out, especially in cases where NGOs were referred to indirectly. According to the primary method, an article was either included or excluded based on the content and context of the article.

After the choice of relevant journals, the next critical question was relevance in article choice. The key criterion used in this analysis was some reference to the NGO–business relationship in the title or abstract. Therefore, in the primary method, phase all articles that had some kind of reference to NGOs and business were taken for further examination. As very few management and IB article abstracts referred directly to NGOs, articles with indirect references were included more readily than they were for business and society journals. As mentioned, the focus of this study is on NGOs working in the fields of world polity, welfare, environment, human rights, and community development. If civil society or local communities were mentioned, the requirement was that a reference was made to some kind of group. Political parties, trade unions, and professional and business associations were not included in the analysis. International and intergovernmental organizations, such as the International Labour Organization, United Nations, and International Organization for Standardization (ISO), were also excluded (although the latter can be considered a quasi NGO). Social Accountability 8000, AA1000, and Fair Trade studies were included, as

Table 1
Key Characteristics of the Analyzed Journals

Academic Field	Journal Title	Affiliation	Focus
Business and society	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Society for Business Ethics	"Application of ethics to the international business community"
	<i>Business & Society</i>	International Association for Business and Society	"Relationship between business and society"
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	The Greening of Industry Network	"Understanding of business responses to improving environmental performance"
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	European Business Ethics Network	"Ethical issues related to business" from "broadest possible scope"
Management (general)	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	Cornell University	"Organization studies"
	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	Academy of Management	"Empirical research that tests, extends, or builds management theory"
	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	Academy of Management	"New theoretical insights that advance our understanding of management and organizations"
	<i>Organization Science</i>	Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences	"Fundamental research about organizations"
	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	Strategic Management Society	"All aspects of strategic management"
International business	<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	Academy of International Business	"Research on International Business"
	<i>Management International Review</i>	Published by Gabler	"Applied research in the fields of international management"

Source: Journal Web sites.

SA8000 and AA1000 are NGO certification mechanisms and Fair Trade labels are usually NGO based. Apart from the above-mentioned exclusions, some articles mentioned NGOs in some implicit form, but their relevance to this article was trivial. A decision about the inclusion or exclusion of those articles was made after careful discussion of each individual article.

After reviewing the results of the abstract analysis, all articles were initially classified into three main categories based on the actors involved in the setting. First, the purpose was to see what proportion of articles emphasized the dyadic nature of the NGO–business relationship. The first category, thus, contains articles in which the focus is on two actors and their relationship. The nature of the relationship may be both adversary or collaborative. Second, the emphasis was on how the blurring of the boundaries of public, private, and third sectors was visible in the data. The interest was on how NGOs were examined in the wider societal context in which they were seen as counterparts to public and private sector actors. These cross-sectoral approaches thus formed the second category, the NGO–business–government interface. Third, NGOs were frequently mentioned as one stakeholder among others, but on the whole, they did not receive a major emphasis in the article they were mentioned in. Similarly, although often described as powerful watchdogs, they often received minor attention in an article. Thus, three general categories emerged as a result of the previously described inductive process: (a) NGO–business interface, (b) NGO–business–government interface, and (c) NGOs as one of many corporate stakeholders. A further categorization of studies into main research themes is presented in the discussion and implications section. Out of many possible classifications of articles, an actor-specific and thematic categorization as described above was seen as the most fruitful in terms of evaluating the state of research on the topic and discussing the implications to future study.

The articles of the journals in question from the years between 1998 and 2007 were analyzed according to both methods. Altogether 88 articles were identified with the help of the abstract analysis and keyword search. While being analyzed, the articles were categorized on spreadsheets according to terminology, organizational perspective, theme/focus, theoretical foundation, methodological approach, and key findings.

Quantitative Overview of Articles

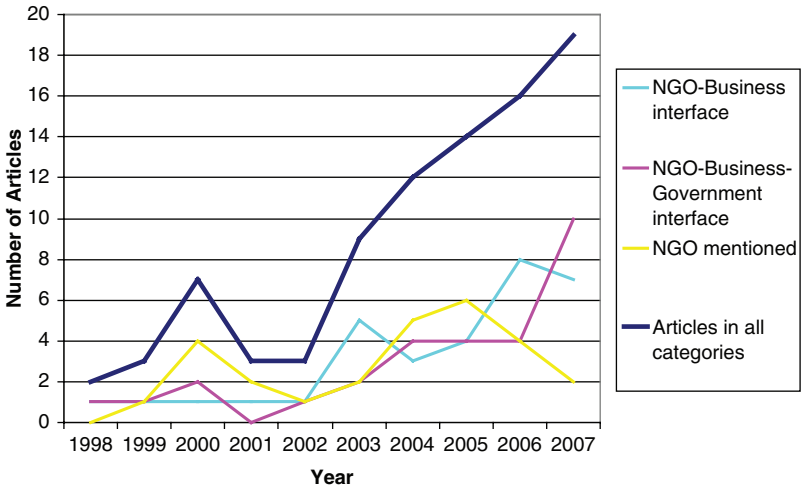
The review identified a total of 88 articles. The number of articles by focus and journal is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Number of Articles Analyzed by Focus and Journal

Focus	Journals										Total		
	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	<i>Business & Society</i>	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	<i>Academy of Management Quarterly</i>	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	<i>Organization Science</i>	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>		<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	<i>Journal of Management International Review</i>
NGO–business interface	2	4	6	14	0	3	1	0	0	2	0	0	32
NGO–business–government interface	1	4	4	12	2	3	0	1	0	0	1	1	29
NGO mentioned	5	4	3	12	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	27
Total	8	12	13	38	2	7	1	2	3	3	1	1	88

Note: NGO = nongovernmental organization.

Figure 1
Total Number of Articles Over Time and by Category Over Time



In terms of the number of articles, all four business and society, business ethics, and CSR journals seem to be important outlets for NGO-related studies, but the *JoBE* had a much larger number of articles than other journals in these fields. In the field of management, the key outlet for NGO studies seems to be the theoretical *AMR*. All in all, studies are distributed rather equally in terms of category: About 36% of studies deal with the NGO–business interface, about 33% with the NGO–business–government interface, and about 31% are studies where NGOs are mentioned as one company stakeholder among many others. Figure 1 presents the total number of articles over time and by category over time.

The total number of articles on the topic has grown in the period of analysis, with a rapid rise since 2002. The number of NGO–business articles has risen in number especially in the past few years, the number of NGO–business–government articles has increased relatively steadily since 2001, and the number of articles where NGOs are only mentioned seems to fluctuate more as it has had peaks in 2000 and 2005.

The methodological and geographical orientations of the articles are presented in Table 3 and Table 4. In terms of methodology, we made a distinction between theoretical and/or conceptual articles and empirical articles.

Table 3
Primary Methodological Orientation of Articles

Journal	Number of Theoretical/ Conceptual Articles	Number of Empirical Articles
<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	7	1
<i>Business & Society</i>	3	9
<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	3	10
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	12	25
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	0	3
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	7	0
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	0	1
<i>Organization Science</i>	0	2
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	0	3
<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	1	0
<i>Management International Review</i>	1	0
Total	34	54

Table 4
Primary Geographical Orientation of Articles

Journal	Global	International	National	Local
<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	6	2	0	0
<i>Business & Society</i>	5	2	3	2
<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	2	2	9	0
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	15	7	15	0
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	0	1	2	0
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	6	0	0	1
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	0	0	1	0
<i>Organization Science</i>	1	0	1	0
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	1	0	2	0
<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	1	0	0	0
<i>Management International Review</i>	1	0	0	0
Total	38	14	33	3
Total, %	43.2%	15.9%	37.5%	3.4%

Of all articles, 61.4% were empirical and 38.6% either theoretical and/or conceptual.

In terms of geographical focus, the articles were classified into primarily global (approximately 43.2% of articles), international (approximately 15.9%), national (approximately 37.5%), and local (approximately 3.4%). International studies examined either the cross-border or regional (such as

European Union) level, whereas global studies adopted a worldwide perspective. About 60% of the articles dealt with the global or international aspect of the business–NGO relationship. The countries that were examined in national and local articles included the Netherlands (2), Sweden (2), Germany (1), United Kingdom (6), Myanmar (1), Hungary (1), Brazil (3), Nigeria (1), Australia (2), Spain (4), United States (8), Canada (2), and France (1); two articles dealt with business–NGO engagement on a national or local level without specifying the location.

In the following sections, articles are analyzed by academic field, first, in business and society and, second, in management and IB. This is done to facilitate a comparative setting. Within these literatures, articles are categorized as addressing specifically the business–NGO relationship, the business–government–NGO interface, or whether NGOs are only mentioned as one stakeholder among many others.

NGOs in Business and Society Literature

Altogether, 71 articles were identified in the business and society literature, and they are presented in Table 5.

The first category of articles has an emphasis on the NGO–business relationship. In chronological order, the first of the 26 articles to address the NGO–business relationship is Grolin’s (1998) article on Shell’s Brent Spar case (see also van den Bosch & van Riel, 1998; Zyglidopoulos, 2002). The case gained widespread media attention at that time and is a good example of the increasing role and influence of NGOs. The lesson from the case was, according to Grolin (1998), that new and trustworthy forms of dialogue should be developed. After 10 years, Gilbert and Rasche (2007) and Palazzo and Scherer (2006), among others, took up this challenge by examining the preconditions for meaningful engagement. Nevertheless, although the Brent Spar was a case of conflict, several other articles have examined more cooperative cases. The success story of the Greenpeace–Forn alliance acts as a counterbalance to the failures in the Brent Spar case (Stafford, Polonsky, & Hartman, 2000), and Harvey and Schaefer (2001) focused on water and electricity utilities. Both cases are examples of successful collaboration, which prove that the NGO–business relationship can be successful.

In addition to these single case studies, the Greening of Industry Network held a conference in 1998 in Rome on partnerships. A special issue review article by Hartman, Hofman, and Stafford (1999) draws together the discussion on the theme, which includes a wide variety of perspectives.

Table 5
Business and Society Articles by Category

Category	Journal	Author(s)	Year	Title
NGO-business	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Gilbert and Rasche	2007	Discourse ethics and social accountability: The ethics of SA.8000
	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Arya and Salk	2006	Cross-sector alliance learning and effectiveness of voluntary codes of corporate social responsibility
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Hendry	2006	Taking aim at business: What factors lead environmental non-governmental organizations to target particular firms?
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Schepers	2006	The impact of NGO network conflict on the corporate social responsibility strategies of multinational corporations
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Rehbein, Waddock, and Graves	2004	Understanding shareholder activism: Which corporations are targeted?
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Hendry	2003	Environmental NGOs and business (dissertation abstract)
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Åhlström and Sjöström	2005	CSOs and business partnerships: Strategies for interaction
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Waygood and Wehrmeyer	2003	A critical assessment of how non-governmental organizations use the capital markets to achieve their aims: A U.K. study
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Heugens	2003	Capability building through adversarial relationships: A replication and extension of Clarke and Roome (1999)
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Stafford, Polonsky, and Hartman	2000	Environmental NGO-business collaboration and strategic bridging: A case analysis of the Greenpeace-Foron alliance
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Hartman, Hofman, and Stafford	1999	Partnerships: A path to sustainability
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Grolin	1998	Corporate legitimacy in risk society: The case of Brent Spar
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Egels-Zandén and Hyllman	2007	Evaluating strategies for negotiating workers' rights in transnational corporations: The effects of codes of conduct and global agreements on workplace democracy
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	MacDonald and Whellams	2007	Corporate decisions about labelling genetically modified foods
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Lozano, Albarreda, and Balaguer	2006	Socially responsible investment in the Spanish financial market

(Continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Category	Journal	Author(s)	Year	Title
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Egels-Zandén and Hylman	2006	Exploring the effects of union-NGO relationships on corporate responsibility: The case of the Swedish Clean Clothes Campaign
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Palazzo and Scherer	2006	Corporate legitimacy as deliberation: A communicative framework
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Rasche and Esser	2006	From stakeholder management to stakeholder accountability
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Palazzo and Richter	2005	CSR business as usual? The case of the tobacco industry
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Hendry	2005	Stakeholder influence strategies: An empirical exploration
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	MacDonald and Chrisp	2005	Acknowledging the purpose of partnership
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Guay, Doh, and Sinclair	2004	Non-governmental organizations, shareholder activism, and socially responsible investments: Ethical, strategic, and governance implications
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Graafland, Eijffinger, and SmidJohan	2004	Benchmarking of corporate social responsibility: Methodological problems and robustness
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Válor-Martinez	2003	Social alliance for fundraising: How Spanish nonprofits are hedging the risks
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Zyglidopoulos	2002	The social and environmental responsibilities of multinationals: Evidence from the Brent Spar case
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Harvey and Schaefer	2001	Managing relationships with environmental stakeholders: A study of U.K. water and electricity utilities
NGO-business-government	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Weber and Getz	2004	Buy brides or bye-bye bribes: The future status of bribery in international commerce
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Antal and Sobczak	2007	Corporate social responsibility in France: A mix of national traditions and international influences
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Schwartz and Weber	2006	A business ethics national index (BENI): Measuring business ethics activity around the world
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Blockson	2003	Multisector approaches to societal issues management (dissertation abstract)
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Boddewyn	2003	Understanding and advancing the concept of "nonmarket"

(Continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Category	Journal	Author(s)	Year	Title
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	LaFrance and Lehmann	2005	Corporate awakening—Why (some) corporations embrace public–private partnerships
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Regézi	2005	Limited partnership: The lack of sustainable development in relation to participation in Hungarian public–private partnerships
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Starik and Heuer	2002	Strategic inter-organizational environmentalism in the U.S.: A multi-sectoral perspective of alternating eco-policy roles
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Gunningham, Phillipson, and Grabosky	1999	Harnessing third parties as surrogate regulators: Achieving environmental outcomes by alternative means
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Albareda, Lozano, and Ysa	2007	Public policies on corporate social responsibility: The role of governments in Europe
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Griesse	2007a	Caterpillar's interactions with Piracicaba, Brazil: A community-based analysis of CSR
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Griesse	2007b	The geographic, political, and economic context for corporate social responsibility in Brazil
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Beschorner and Müller	2007	Social standards: Toward an active ethical involvement of businesses in developing countries
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Nwankwo, Phillips, and Tracey	2007	Social investment through community enterprise: The case of multinational corporations involvement in the development of Nigerian water resources
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Detomasi	2007	The multinational corporation and global governance: Modelling global public policy networks
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Egels-Zandén and Wahlqvist	2007	Post-partnership strategies for defining corporate responsibility: The business social compliance initiative
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Singer	2006	Business strategy and poverty alleviation
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Tracey, Phillips, and Haugh	2005	Beyond philanthropy: Community enterprise as a basis for corporate citizenship
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Loza	2004	Business–community partnerships: The case for community organization capacity building
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	De la Questa Gonzalez and Valor Matinez	2004	Fostering corporate social responsibility through public initiative: From the EU to the Spanish case
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Van Luitjk	2000	In search of instruments: Business and ethics halfway

(Continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Category	Journal	Author(s)	Year	Title
NGO mentioned	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Campbell	2006	A human rights approach to developing voluntary codes of conduct for multinational corporations
	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	O'Higgins	2006	Corruption, under-development and extractive resource industry: Addressing the vicious cycle
	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	De George	2005	Intellectual property and pharmaceutical drugs: An ethical analysis
	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Windsor	2004	The development of international business norms
	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Dunfee and Hess	2000	The legitimacy of direct corporate humanitarian investment
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Dawkins	2005	First to market: Issue management pacesetters and the pharmaceutical industry response to AIDS in Africa
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Frooman and Murrell	2005	Stakeholder influence strategies: The roles of structural and demographic determinants
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Butterfield, Reed, and Lemak	2004	An inductive model of collaboration from the stakeholder's perspective
	<i>Business & Society</i>	Seifert, Morris, and Bartkus	2004	Having, giving, and getting: Slack resources, corporate philanthropy, and firm financial performance
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Delmas and Toffel	2004	Stakeholders and environmental management practices: An institutional framework
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Madsen and Ulhøi	2001	Integrating environmental and stakeholder management
	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Stramegård	2000	Flexible couplings: Combining business goals and environmental concern
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Rauflet and Gurguel do Amaral	2007	Bridging business and society: The Abrinq Foundation in Brazil
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Levendis, Block, and Morrel	2006	Nuclear power
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Hira and Ferrie	2006	Fair trade: Three key challenges for reaching the mainstream
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Sullivan	2005	Code integration: Alignment or conflict?	

(Continued)

Table 5 (continued)

Category	Journal	Author(s)	Year	Title
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Pines and Meyer	2005	Stopping the exploitation of workers: An analysis of the effective application of consumer or socio-political pressure
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Moore	2004	The fair trade movement: Parameters, issues and future research
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Davies and Crane	2003	Ethical decision making in fair trade companies
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Dando and Swift	2003	Transparency and assurance: Minding the credibility gap
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Kolk and van Tulder	2002	Child labor and multinational conduct: A comparison of international business and stakeholder codes
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Maynard	2001	Policing transnational commerce: Global awareness in the margins of morality
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Rosthorn	2000	Business ethics auditing—More than a stakeholder's toy
	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Kaler	2000	Reasons to be ethical: Self-interest and ethical business

Note: NGO = nongovernmental organization.

One discussion that they specifically draw attention to is the idea of learning-action networks as tools for partnership. Heugens (2003) later applied the framework set out by Clarke and Roome (1999) to examine adversarial business–NGO relationships. He argued that even if there is an adversarial nature to a relationship, the parties can still build capabilities. Arya and Salk (2006) also focus on the learning perspective in alliances.

Moving on from partnership thinking to examining ways of influencing reveals that shareholder activism is a theme that has evoked numerous articles (Rehbein, Waddock, & Graves, 2004; Waygood & Wehrmeyer, 2003) as has socially responsible investment (SRI; Guay, Doh, & Sinclair, 2004; Lozano, Albareda, & Balaguer, 2006). In addition, more traditional forms of influence were also found. Hendry (2003, 2005, 2006) and Schepers (2006) specifically focus on NGO influence strategies' impact on corporate responsibility strategies. The NGO–business relationship is also examined from the NGO perspective. Certain subjects, such as defining CSR (Graafland, Eijffinger, & SmidJohan, 2004; Palazzo & Richter, 2005), improving labor rights (Egels-Zandén & Hyllman, 2006, 2007), and transparency in regard to genetically modified foods (MacDonald & Whellams, 2007), are examples of issues that have caused much debate between NGOs and business. Also partnership, and the financial motivation for it, has been viewed from the NGO perspective (MacDonald & Chrisp, 2005; Valor Martinez, 2003).

In summary, it can be argued that partnership and conflict go hand in hand. Ählström and Sjöström (2005) explicitly focus on this aspect. They map NGOs into four different types based on their strategic orientation toward partnership and conclude that only one certain type of NGO has the preconditions necessary for successful partnership.

Extending the NGO–business relationship to include governmental actors finds a total of 21 articles that examine the NGO–business–government interface. The shifting relationships of the public, private, and third sector were raised as a relevant business ethics research agenda by van Luijk (2000) as late as in 2000. Van Luijk argued that, unlike political and administrative scientists who have recognized this institutional challenge, business ethicists have thus far failed to address this issue. Later, especially in the year 2007, numerous articles with business–NGO–government interface as their focus were published. Community enterprises (Griesse, 2007a, 2007b; Loza, 2004; Nwankwo, Philips, & Tracey, 2007; Tracey, Phillips, & Haugh, 2005), CSR public policies at the European level (Albareda, Lozano, & Ysa, 2007) and national level (Antal & Sobczak, 2007; de la Questa González & Valor Martinez, 2004), ethics indices (Schwartz &

Weber, 2006), and Detomasi's (2007) global public policy networks at the global level represent the most comprehensive introductions of cross-sectoral partnerships, which are seen as substitutes to the short-sighted nature of philanthropy. Although several specific conceptualizations such as post-partnership strategies (Egels-Zandén & Wahlqvist, 2007) and combating bribery (Weber & Getz, 2004), are seen as cross-sectoral challenges, the more general interplay of the roles of governments, businesses, and NGOs in solving global problems is addressed in several articles (Blockson, 2003; Boddewyn, 2003; Gunninham, Phillipson, & Grabosky, 1999).

Although society may be seen as the main beneficiary of a cross-sector partnership, LaFrance and Lehmann (2005) focused on the gained increase in business legitimacy. Another focus is shown by Starik and Heuer (2002), who examine NGOs and business actors as influencers of the public policy formulation process. Regéczi (2005) viewed the setting from a Hungarian perspective and claimed that the national policy level hinders participation and cooperation. However, in this article the emphasis is more on the business–government relationship and places NGOs in a minor role. Therefore, there are numerous interests and beneficiaries in the cross-sectoral setting.

In the third category, the distinctive feature in all articles is that NGOs are mentioned as a source of social pressure along with other stakeholders. In 24 articles, NGOs are mentioned as watchdogs, sources of social pressure on the level of an individual manager (Kaler, 2000; Rosthorn, 2000), a company (Maynard, 2001), or an entire industry (Kolk & van Tulder, 2002; Levendis, Block, & Morrel, 2006; Pines & Meyer, 2005; Sullivan, 2005). In addition, 3 articles focus on the Fair Trade movement (Davies & Crane, 2003; Hira & Ferrie, 2006; Moore, 2004), 1 on a Brazilian foundation (Raufflet & Gurguel do Amaral, 2007), and they are also included in this category.

NGOs are also examined as catalysts or appliers of pressure for improved performance, monitors, and even consultants (Campbell, 2006; Dawkins, 2005; De George, 2005; O'Higgins, 2006; Windsor, 2004). However, in some cases, such as humanitarian investment, business is argued to be a more efficient actor than NGOs (Dunfee & Hess, 2000). Related to that theme, Seifert, Morris, and Bartkus (2004) argued that philanthropy does not have a significant effect on company financial performance. Finally, NGOs are also seen as just one of many stakeholders in two articles focusing on stakeholder influence (Frooman & Murrell, 2005) and collaboration (Butterfield, Reed, & Lemak, 2004).

NGOs in Management and IB Literatures

The 17 articles identified as belonging to management and IB literatures are presented in Table 6.

Six management and IB articles deal specifically with the relationship between NGOs and businesses. Den Hond and de Bakker (2007) examined how activism influences corporate social change activities. They assumed that activists aim for field-level change, argued that the ideology of activists (radical vs. reformist) affects the tactics they employ, and discussed the range of tactics used. Rowley and Moldoveanu (2003) argued that, although research has assumed that stakeholder group action is interest based, stakeholder groups (especially NGOs) also act to develop their identities. However, King (2007) focused on the cooperative aspect of the NGO–business relationship from a transaction-cost perspective. He examined the necessary conditions for the codevelopment of technology between companies and environmental groups, partial property transfer, development of long-term relations, and separate corporate engagement groups. King and Soule (2007) argued that activists' protests are more influential when they target issues dealing with critical stakeholder groups, such as labor or consumers, and when they generate large media coverage. The article is grounded in social movement literature and utilizes an event study methodology. Eesley and Lenox (2006) and David, Bloom, and Hillman (2007) both employ Mitchell, Agle, and Wood's (1997) framework to evaluate stakeholder pressure. In the former article, the purpose is to see whether stakeholder pressure can evoke positive corporate reactions, and in the latter, the same is applied to investor activism. Interestingly, David et al. (2007) concluded that investor activism may actually divert managerial responses away from improving CSP to alternative political strategies to defend themselves from stakeholder pressures. Therefore, although NGOs are mentioned as only one stakeholder among many others, an emphasis is placed on them to the extent that they are put in the NGO–business category.

Eight management and IB articles deal more widely with the NGO–business–government interface. Hardy and Philips (1998) wrote about this relationship relatively early compared to other articles and called for a critical evaluation of the benefits and costs of cross-sectoral collaboration, especially in situations of unequal power relations and conflicting interests. Scherer and Smid (2000) also called for an increased need for cross-sectoral perspectives. As for IB, Teegen et al. (2004) argued that “IB research appears to lag behind other disciplines in considering NGOs and the broader societal

Table 6
Management and IB Articles by Category

Category	Journal	Author(s)	Year	Title	
NGO-business	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	Den Hond and de Bakker	2007	Ideologically motivated activism: How activist groups influence corporate social change activities	
	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	King	2007	Cooperation between corporations and environmental groups: A transaction cost perspective	
	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	Rowley and Moldoveanu	2003	When will stakeholder groups act? An interest- and identity-based model of stakeholder group mobilization	
	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	King and Soule	2007	Social movements as extra-institutional entrepreneurs: The effect of protests on stock price returns	
	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	David, Bloom, and Hillman	2007	Investor activism, managerial responsiveness, and corporate social performance	
	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	Easley and Lenox	2006	Firm responses to secondary stakeholder action	
	NGO-business-government	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	Bonardi, Holburn, and van den Bergh	2006	Nonmarket strategy performance: Evidence from U.S. electric utilities
		<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	Kassimis and Vafeas	2006	Stakeholder pressures and environmental performance
	NGO mentioned	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, and Ganapathi	2007	Putting the S back in corporate social responsibility: A multilevel theory of social change in organizations
		<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	Campbell	2007	Why would corporations behave in socially responsible ways? An institutional theory of corporate social responsibility
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>		Bonardi and Keim	2005	Corporate political strategies for widely salient issues	
<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>		Teegen, Doh, and Vachani	2004	The importance of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in global governance and value creation: An international business research agenda	
<i>Management International Review</i>		Scherer and Smid	2000	The downward spiral and the U.S. model business principles—Why MNEs should take responsibility for the improvement of world-wide social and environmental conditions	
<i>Organization Science</i>		Hardy and Philips	1998	Strategies of engagement: Lessons from the critical examination of collaboration and conflict in an interorganizational domain	
		Marquis, Glynn, and Davis	2007	Community isomorphism and corporate social action	
		Rao and Sivakumar	1999	Institutional sources of boundary-spanning structures: The establishment of investor relations departments in the Fortune 500 industrials	
		Sharma and Henriques	2005	Stakeholder influences on sustainability practices in the Canadian forest products industry	

Note: IB = international business; NGO = nongovernmental organization.

interests they represent” (p. 473). The authors proposed a new research agenda on NGOs in IB instead of only concentrating on the multinational firm as the preeminent global organization. Therefore, a call for more cross-sectoral approaches is apparent and is especially true for the IB field.

Bonardi, Holburn, and Van Den Bergh (2006) have developed a theory of the performance determinants of a firm’s nonmarket strategy in shaping public policy outcomes. Kassinis and Vafeas (2006) have examined stakeholders’ internal heterogeneity from a resource-dependence perspective and have found a positive relationship between community stakeholder pressures and environmental performance at the plant level. Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, and Ganapathi (2007) have created a typology of instrumental, relational, and moral motives at the individual, organizational, national, and transnational level that lead to CSR. The authors argued that NGOs affect companies’ CSR especially at the transnational level. Similarly, Campbell (2007) theorized that, among other institutional conditions, the presence of nongovernmental and other independent organizations that monitor corporate behavior is likely to lead to companies’ behaving in a more responsible way. Bonardi and Keim (2005) analyzed how adversarial business–NGO relationships affect public policy. The authors discussed how information and reputation cascades, driven by activists or NGOs, cause public policy issues to become widely salient.

Finally, three management and IB articles deal with NGOs as one of many corporate stakeholders. The main argument in all articles is that NGOs are a source of pressure (Sharma & Henriques, 2005) and a catalyst for change (Marquis, Glynn, & Davis, 2007; Rao & Sivakumar, 1999). The first case is from the forest industry, the second from community development, and the third from the financial sector. In all cases, NGOs have had a significant role in bringing about change.

Discussion and Implications

The main contribution of this article is a systematic review on the state of research on NGOs in academic journals in business and society, management, and IB literatures between the years 1998 and 2007. Figure 1 indicates that the topic has been receiving increasing interest in these fields, especially in the past few years. The different categories of research areas presented in this study (NGO–business interface, NGO–business–government interface, and NGOs mentioned as one stakeholder group among many others) seem to have received similar amounts of attention as depicted in Table 2. It is

especially interesting to see that, although quite a large number of studies on the topic exist, they are still quite rare in management and IB journals. All in all, in terms of the number of articles, interest in the general theme of this article has grown steadily.

In terms of terminology, it can be stated that *nongovernmental organization* is clearly the most commonly used term, although many other terms are also utilized. In articles where the relationship between an NGO and business is seen as adversarial, the terminology used is more varied: anti-market environmentalists, pressure groups, and activists. In articles in the NGO–business–government category, a more common way to refer to NGOs is as civil society actors, third sector actors, social movement actors, local community actors, nonmarket, and as other civil sector terms that do not necessarily refer to organized forms of engagement. U.S. based studies, especially in the field of management, commonly use the term *nonprofit*, which is most likely a reference to the taxation status of the organization.

In terms of theoretical foundations of the papers, business and society journals tend to follow loosely the stakeholder approach (especially JoBE and BSE) and, to some extent, the resource-based view. Nonetheless, a small number of studies also utilize alternative perspectives, such as those developed by Hobbes and Habermas, organizational learning literature, and alliance literature. In contrast to business and society, management and IB journals utilize and have developed a wide variety of theories, in particular AMR articles utilizing transaction cost, institutional, social movement, social identity, stakeholder, organizational justice, corporate governance, and varieties of capitalism theories. Although there is some variance in the theoretical base, there seems to be room for utilizing different approaches to bring out new interesting aspects of the relationship between business and NGOs. However, social movement literature and institutional theory (including concepts such as institutional fields and institutional entrepreneurship) are used surprisingly little. In addition, network theory and transaction cost analyses could be developed further. Key organizational theories, such as sense making and population ecology, are not utilized. Furthermore, political philosophy and theories could be combined to gain a better understanding of the role of NGOs in the NGO–business–government interface. IB studies on the importance of context, for instance, from a cultural perspective, would be a valuable addition to the literature. Finally, similar reviews than the one completed in this study could be conducted on different academic fields or literatures. Although various theories can be used to better understand the NGO–business interface, studying NGOs can also offer contributions to traditional management theories. NGOs have different

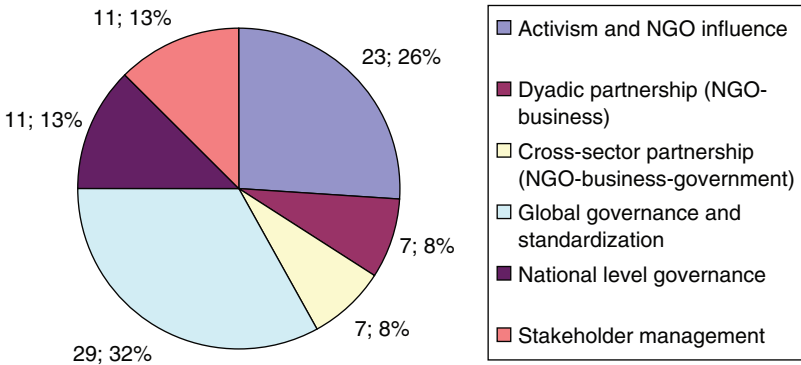
motives, purposes, organizational forms, governance structures, and practices than companies, and studying the NGO–business interface or NGOs and businesses comparatively can bring new insights into, for instance, alliance and governance theories.

Approximately, 40% of the articles included an empirical analysis. When observing the methodological choices, single (Grolin, 1998; Heugens, 2003; MacDonald & Chrisp, 2005; Stafford et al., 2000; Zyglidopoulos, 2002) and multiple case studies (Hendry, 2005) are dominant in business and society journals. These case studies are often used to either illustrate or apply theory. The management journals use more quantitative data analysis methods, commonly for building new theory or constructs. It seems that different methodological approaches, such as larger data sets, the modeling of decision making, and network analyses, could be utilized.

Through coding articles according to their main thematic orientation, six main themes were identified: (a) activism and NGO influence, (b) dyadic partnership (NGO–business), (c) cross-sector partnership (NGO–business–government), (d) global governance and standardization, (e) national level governance, and (f) stakeholder management. Figure 2 presents the number of articles in each of these themes.

The first theme, activism and NGO influence, emphasizes the NGO perspective and NGO motives, tactics, and influence strategies and includes 23 articles (or 26% of the analyzed articles). Within this first theme, three subthemes are focused on. First, articles on NGO influence strategies or stakeholder pressure (e.g., den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Frooman & Murrell, 2005; Hendry, 2005, 2006) are often influenced by Frooman's (1999) theoretical study, which identified four types of strategies used by stakeholders to gain influence (direct withholding, direct usage, indirect withholding, or indirect usage) and classified them in relation to power and interdependence. A second subtheme is capital markets, shareholder activism, and SRI (e.g., David et al., 2007; Guay et al., 2004; Rehbein et al., 2004; Waygood & Wehrmeyer, 2003). Third, articles also deal with the NGO-related conditions of NGO–business engagement (e.g., Eesley & Lenox, 2006; Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003; Schepers, 2006).⁴ Within this theme, potentially fruitful avenues for further study include NGO legitimacy, representativeness, accountability or responsibility, use of simultaneous adversarial and cooperative strategies by NGOs, evaluation of the effectiveness of NGO influence strategies, cross-national comparisons of activism, historical development and propagation of activist movements, and their use of new communication tools and organizational forms. Although shareholder activism is an especially interesting strategy that has received research attention,

Figure 2
Number of Articles by Theme



other influence strategies such as direct action offer new research opportunities. Corporate political activity is an important research theme in business and society literature, and NGO political activity toward companies especially through the activity of lobbying is a topic that seems to have received little attention.

The second theme is the dyadic NGO–business partnership. JoBE and BSE articles tended to emphasize the management of NGO relations, and there seems to be a movement from a philanthropy orientation in the studies toward an orientation that recognizes dialogue and, ultimately, partnership. Seven studies (or 8% of the articles analyzed) deal specifically with NGO–business partnerships (Åhlström & Sjöström, 2005; Arya & Salk, 2006; Hartman et al., 1999; Heugens, 2003; King, 2007; MacDonald & Chrisp, 2005; Stafford et al., 2000), which are seen as a promising tool toward creating sustainability, especially in BSE. However, Åhlström & Sjöström (2005) evaluated different NGO types with the conclusion that only a few types of NGOs are suitable for collaboration. Seven articles (or 8% of the articles analyzed) deal with the third theme of cross-sector partnerships (e.g., LaFrance & Lehmann, 2005). Unlike the second theme, these articles not only analyzed partnerships between all societal sectors (private, public, and civil society) but also the dyadic relationship between a company and an NGO. Articles examining community-level interactions and partnerships between societal sectors at the community level are included in this theme. Thus, the general theme of partnership (a combination of Themes 2

and 3) represented 16% of the articles analyzed. Within these two partnership themes, potentially fruitful avenues for further study include the development of partnerships over time, the analysis of power relations between different actors, the role of personal relationships in the development of partnerships, and the evaluation of business and societal outcomes. For instance, whether partnerships are more effective than philanthropy or the development of common standards or codes remains unanswered. In addition, further critical studies on partnerships would be welcome. For instance, the problems related to the partnerships themselves could be elaborated on, as could critical perceptions on partnerships within civil society as they seem to have received little research attention.

The fourth theme, global governance and standardization,⁵ includes 29 articles (or 32% of all articles) and includes two major subthemes. First, studies have dealt with NGO, business, and government initiatives related to global issues (e.g., De George, 2005; Dunfee & Hess, 2000; Gunningham et al., 1999; Weber & Getz, 2004). A second subtheme is the relationship between compulsory and voluntary regulation on a global level and the role of NGOs in the development of global standards and guidelines (e.g., Gilbert & Rasche, 2007; Kolk & van Tulder, 2002; O'Higgins, 2006; Windsor, 2004). The fifth theme, national-level governance, includes 11 studies (or 13% of the articles analyzed). These studies focus on the national level of the business–NGO interface and typically also include state actors and the division of labor between societal sectors (e.g., Antal & Sobczak, 2007; Regéczi, 2005). Thus, the general theme of governance (a combination of Themes 4 and 5) represented 45% of the articles analyzed. Within these two governance themes, potentially fruitful avenues for further study are numerous due to the wide scope of the themes. As it is necessary to examine the big picture in this type of research, studying these topics is also very challenging. Suggestions for further research include the development and institutionalization process of a standard or governance mechanism, the comparison of NGO involvement in different global issues and standards, and the evaluation of governance mechanisms and standards (not only in terms of efficiency but also of effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and democracy). Although specific standards and initiatives have been examined and reviews of various standards exist, the development of a new institutional framework for corporate responsibility and global governance raises new research questions. In particular, the interoperability of different mechanisms is a key future theme for research. It seems apparent that isomorphic forces are developing a common and comprehensive framework for responsibility and governance, but this should be researched

further. Importantly, the political implications of bypassing democratically governed institutions in global governance merits attention. An interesting article, which was not part of the analysis, is Matten and Crane's (2005) critical examination of the concept of *corporate citizenship*, which brings out the inherent political nature of corporate responsibility.

The sixth and final theme is articles that deal with company stakeholder management, which see NGOs as one stakeholder among many others (e.g., Delmas & Toffel, 2004; Harvey & Schaefer, 2001; Madsen & Ulhøi, 2001; Sharma & Henriques, 2005). In total, 11 articles (or 13% of the analyzed articles) fall under this theme. Influential articles not included in the analysis include Mitchell et al.'s (1997) seminal article on stakeholder theory and salience and Margolis and Walsh's (2003) review of studies on the link between CSR and corporate financial performance. Margolis and Walsh (2003) called for a deeper analysis of the business and societal outcomes of CSR, especially at the NGO–business interface because gaps seem to exist in this field. New categorizations of NGOs as corporate stakeholders (especially due to the wide variety of types of civil society actors) and the empirical testing of existing stakeholder models in the NGO–business interface are also interesting research topics.

In this article, we have discussed how research on the NGO–business relationship has developed, compared key studies in different academic literatures, and identified six main research themes. The question that remains to be answered is where research on the topic is headed. Based on the trend indicated in Figure 1, we expect research on the topic to increase in future years, and we would like to see studies utilizing new theoretical and cross-disciplinary approaches. More and more articles are likely to be published in mainstream general management journals, and there is likely to be more discussion on the topic, which is needed to break the barriers of business and society literature. Business and society has functioned as a catalyst, and general management is a way to mainstream the topic. Until now, few studies have been published in high-level management and IB journals. In fact, IB especially seems to be lagging behind (Teegen et al., 2004) but hopefully will catch up. In addition, a multitude of case studies exist, but more rigorous empirical research designs that use qualitative and quantitative approaches would lead to further theory development. The terminology used to refer to different forms of NGOs is varied, but we do not see a need for conformity. Furthermore, studies on the topic have examined various geographical levels: global, international, national, and local. All things considered, further studies on the above-described themes are needed to better understand the relationship between NGOs and businesses.

Notes

1. The focus of this study is on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the fields of world polity, welfare, environment, human rights, and community development. Thus, political parties, trade unions, and professional and business associations are not included in the analysis.

2. Electronic databases do not always make available special issue articles, for example, Doh and Guay (2004). Articles not available through these electronic databases are not included in the analysis.

3. The following 17 keywords were utilized: *nongovernmental, non governmental, nongovernmental, NGO, nonprofit, non-profit, non profit, environmental group, civil* (as in civil society), *CSO* (as in *civil society organizations*), *third* (referring to the term *third sector*), *sector, activist, interest* (as in *interest group*), *movement, partnership, collab** (as in *collaboration or collaborative*).

4. A topic area not included in the review is studies where NGOs are the unit of analysis but not in relation to business. Although not included, it can be stated that such studies exist both in the fields of business and society (Knox & Gruar, 2007; MacDonald, McDonald, & Norman, 2002; van Oosterhout, 2006) and management (Galaskiewicz, Bielefeld, & Dowell, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Lawrence, Hardy, & Phillips, 2002; Majchrzak, Jarvenpaa, & Hollingshead, 2007; Osterman, 2006). In addition, a few studies had a comparative setting between NGOs and businesses (Brower & Shrader, 2000; Cordano, Hanson Frieze, & Ellis, 2004; Egri & Herman, 2000). These were excluded because the focus of the analysis is on the relationship between NGOs and businesses.

5. A specific topic that was not included in this analysis is ISO standardization. Although not examined here, it can be stated that there has been important research conducted on ISO 9000 and 14001 standards in business and society (Darnall, 2006), international business (Christmann & Taylor, 2006), and especially in the field of management (Benner & Tushman, 2002; Boiral, 2007; Guler, Guillén, & Macpherson, 2002; King, Lenox, & Terlaak, 2005; Terlaak, 2007).

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