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## BOOK REVIEW

### *NGOs and Corporations: Conflict and Collaboration*

By Michael Yaziji and Jonathan Doh.

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As the world continues to “flatten” with the advent of globalization and relationships start to consolidate and get intertwined into networks, a significant and much interesting relationship between corporations and NGOs has propped up (Friedman, 2005). Both are becoming increasingly important actors in shaping today's society. Published at an important time of this brisk relationship, Michael Yaziji and Jonathan Doh in *NGOs and Corporations*, argue that understanding the dynamics of interaction between corporations and NGOs is highly essential in this age, in the context of sustainability and a globalized world. This well-structured and comprehensive book convincingly deals with this discourse and offers a profound insight into the dynamics of the corporate-NGO relationship.

The book is structured into four parts, the last one being the conclusion. Case illustrations giving real life examples; accompany the content covered in each part, which are further divided into chapters. Each chapter begins by elucidating coherently the underlying analytical framework for the question it means to answer and ends with a brief summary. The first part, in the chapters one to three, aims to provide a methodical understanding of the NGOs. Chapter one builds the framework for this understanding by defining and classifying NGOs according to their primary activity (service delivery or advocacy) and their beneficiary (self or others). It also discusses the importance of how these NGOs network with each other and different kinds of such networks. Chapter two is dedicated to explaining how markets and regulatory failures give NGOs the *raison d'être*. It also briefly lists the

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variety of reasons responsible for the significant rise in the number of NGOs of late. Chapter three analyses the ethical and institutional complexities surrounding both NGOs and corporations at both organizational and inter- and intra-personal levels. It touches upon the importance of abidance to realms of ethics and legal systems for corporations while maintaining sustainable profitability. It also discusses how the divergent expectations of its stakeholders affect the choice of corporations thereby defining its normative legitimacy.

The second part, in the chapters four to six, discusses the interactions between corporations and NGOs, concentrating on mainly the conflicting interactions. Chapter four discusses how the NGO campaigns against corporations can be structured in the process of normative de-legitimation. The authors suggest that a host of factors at both individual-firm level and larger institutional level could be antecedents of social risk attached to these corporations and could push them further to become illegitimate. They also talk about how larger social movements surrounding the corporation in terms of social, political, economic and technological environment could build up risks for its functioning. Chapter five illustrates the difference between radical and mainstream advocacy NGOs by the means of tactics and channels of influence utilized to achieve their aims. It stresses on how the level of institutionalization of these organizations affect these tactics of work and how the radical NGOs garner freedom of action by the virtue of homogeneity of resources. Based on the tactics adopted by the NGO campaigns, Chapter six attempts to classify them as either “watchdog” or “proxy war” campaigns. The authors rightly point out that the occurrence of such campaigns although is unpredictable for any corporation, it is even more difficult for them to ignore such attacks. They suggest that the best response seems to be building more collaborative relationships between the corporations and NGOs.

The third part, in the chapters seven and eight, builds upon the author's previous suggestion and explicates the collaborative relationships between the NGOs and corporations. Chapter seven analyses the increasingly complex, diverse and fluid interactions between NGOs and corporations and stresses on collaborative exchanges rather than conflicting ones to accrue the possible benefits looking through both corporation's and NGOs' lenses. It also briefly explains how the corporate-NGO relationship may evolve or devolve depending on context and strategies implemented. Chapter eight brings in the concept of globalization into

the NGO-Corporation relationship. It highlights specific arenas and contexts in which this relationship has been intense (e.g. - International economic policy or Formulation of corporate codes of conduct). It discusses how developing countries, where states have failed to function leaving out 'institutional voids', provide an interesting ground for understanding the dynamics of the corporate-NGO relations. Chapter nine, in the final part of the book, predicts the future trend of this dynamic relationship between NGO and Corporations, after delicately tracing its evolution through three different stages. It explains how the emphasis has shifted towards setting up voluntary industry standards from being engaged in 'conflicting campaigns' and partnerships with individual firms in the past. Yaziji and Doh argue that the future of the corporate-NGO relationship lies in the collaboration between the NGOs, businesses and governments for the provision of the greater good for the society.

The book is a valuable input to the academic research and proves suitable for both scholars and students alike. It can prove to be an excellent tool for business managers practising in complex and diverse social environments as well. The authors also provide a holistic view of these corporate-NGO interactions by supplementing theoretical frameworks with data and case illustrations. They use neo-institutional framework to study the structure of NGOs and review a variety of literature to analyse the various social movements attached to the interactions and combine them with analysis drawn from the study of ethics and business. Thus, it gives remarkable clarity and in simple language, provides deep insight into the dynamics of these corporate-NGO interactions.

'*NGOs and Corporations*', in spite of its noteworthy rendition has certain limitations too. The key lacuna in my opinion is the lop-sided analysis of the corporate-NGO relationship, which primarily laid stress on NGOs only. In the early chapters, where the authors provided the framework to understand the structure of NGOs, they could have also provided a basic framework to understand corporations. The book hasn't clearly defined corporations as organizational actors, which makes the analysis primarily naïve. Thus, this skewed analysis falls short of the book's aim to provide an objective understanding of the NGO-Corporation relationship.

More importantly, while focusing on NGOs as organizational actors, the book ignores the less organized social movements and local civic groups, which are not necessarily radical but might be engaged in interactions with the local industries and firms. Also, while predicting the future course of this NGO-Corporation relationship the authors seem to have ignored the larger civil society beyond the formalized NGOs, which of late has become an important participant in the process of change in the society. For example, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the recent past was a large non-institutionalised protest against the wide social inequalities perpetrated by the corporates. The authors don't provide much space in their analysis for such non-institutionalised and lesser formal actors that interact with corporations. Finally, though the book repeatedly discusses the corporate-NGO interactions, it makes no effort to give it a structure or to understand the interplay of conflicting and collaborative approaches within these interactions.

In spite of these limitations, '*NGOs and Corporations*' achieves its' stated purpose fairly well. It is a clear, succinct yet a significant coverage of the NGO-corporation interaction discourse. Yaziji and Doh's writing invites structured analysis of these interactions. In this globalized age, where both NGOs and Corporations are already large socio-economic and political actors, this book serves as a great contribution to a better understanding of the interaction between these actors.

## REFERENCES

Freidman, Thomas L. 2005. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.