

# research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



## Can Models of Ecological Citizenship Help Us Better Understand the Role of Corporations in Dealing with Environmental Problems?

### What is this research about?

Corporate activities have serious effects on the environment. These effects can be harmful, helpful, or both. Corporations play a big role in shaping the debate on environmental protection. This is because the amount of environmentally friendly management practices the corporation chooses to bring about makes them important actors. This research focuses on understanding the roles and responsibilities of the corporation in environmental protection, conservation, and sustainability.

### What did the researchers do?

The researchers looked at the latest literature to bring together various views on ecological citizenship. Ecological citizenship is focused on the relationship of citizens to their environment. Specifically, it looks at:

- Status
- Entitlements
- Process of participation

The researchers applied a set of ideas called new corporate environmentalism (NCE) to this study. They used the view of citizenship to analyze how the actions of corporations in environmental management are political.

### What you need to know:

Corporations affect the environment in a number of different ways. Ecological citizenship models reveal the important roles and impacts of corporations on environmental politics.

### What did the researchers find?

The researchers found that corporations are like citizens in many ways. They set an example on how to treat the environment with their actions. The researchers found ecological citizenship to be a useful model for looking at the changing role of the corporation in society. Ecological citizenship may be explained through 3 broad approaches:

1. As intimate connection
2. As an extension of rights and obligations
3. As a non-territorial obligation

While these 3 views differ from each other, they all help to better explain the changing role of the corporations. These approaches shed light on 3 main areas where the corporations have an active role to play:

- Exporting liberal citizenship
- Extending the stakeholder set

- Reconfiguring the community of the corporate citizen

The researchers also argue that the ecological impact of corporations has made them crucial players on the world stage. Corporations now have a duty to work with other political actors in tackling global environmental problems like climate change.

### How can you use this research?

This research brings together issues that have been talked about separately in the past. It uses a political framework to bring together all of the views. Policymakers and community groups will find this research useful to:

- Better understand the role of corporations in the environmental management debate
- Encourage more ambitious environmental management practices from corporations
- Better incorporate the practices of corporations into public sustainability and environmental activities

### About the Researchers

Andrew Crane is the George R. Gardiner Professor of Business Ethics in the Schulich School of Business at York University. Dirk Matten is a Professor of Strategy and the Hewlett-Packard Chair in Corporate Social Responsibility at Schulich. Jeremy Moon is a Professor and Founding Director of the International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility and Deputy Director of Nottingham University Business School.

[acrane@schulich.yorku.ca](mailto:acrane@schulich.yorku.ca)

### Citation

Crane, A., Matten, D., & Moon, J. (2008). Ecological citizenship and the corporation: Politicizing the new corporate environmentalism. *Organization and Environment*, 21(4), 371-389. Available online at <http://bit.ly/P1d4nz>

### Keywords

Environmental policy, Business and the natural environment, Corporate environmentalism, Management theory

### Knowledge Mobilization at York

York's Knowledge Mobilization Unit provides services for faculty, graduate students, community and government seeking to maximize the impact of academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice. This summary has been supported by the Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation at York and project funding from SSHRC and CIHR.

[kmbunit@yorku.ca](mailto:kmbunit@yorku.ca)

[www.researchimpact.ca](http://www.researchimpact.ca)

