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Sustainable HRM: Bridging theory and practice through the 'Respect Openness Continuity (ROC)'-model**

Although the academic debate on the link between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and HRM is relatively young, it is generating increasing interest. We suggest that sustainable HRM is a next, innovative and promising domain for theory building, research and practice in the field of HRM. It nonetheless poses several new challenges. To date, the literature on this topic is inconsistent, and the field therefore lacks clear lines, fine-tuning and conceptual/practical maturity. In this context, the 'Respect Openness Continuity (ROC)'-model is introduced. This model proceeds from the proposition that sustainable HRM forms a subsequent stage in the tradition of HRM thinking. In recent years, mainstream HRM has been strongly identified with strategic HRM thinking. In developing a model for sustainable HRM, various theoretical viewpoints beyond the strategic HRM tradition are explored and assessed for their potential contributions to a framework for sustainable HRM that can bridge theory and practice.

Key words: **corporate social responsibility, critical HRM, ethics, institutional theory, stakeholder theory, sustainable HRM, paradox lens** (JEL: J59, J62, J80, M12, M54)

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1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a movement that has gained increasing attention in the past decade, is rooted in the concept of sustainable development, which addresses the needs of today without endangering the needs of coming generations (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Despite the lack of any universally accepted definition of CSR, it is often considered 'the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society' (European Commission, 2011). In line with the tradition of triple bottom line (Elkington, 1994), CSR refers to a process of continuous improvement, in which companies voluntarily and systematically integrate economic (Profit), environmental (Planet) and social considerations (People) into their overall business operations. Transparency and consultation with company stakeholders is considered a part of the process. Stakeholders in a company include shareholders, as well as employees, managers, employee representatives, suppliers, buyers, customers, consumers, the local community in which one does business, the government, environmental associations, NGOs and other parties. A recent comparative case study in Belgium (Baisier, 2013) has shown that the implementation of CSR continues to be a learning process for most companies, which tend to implement only some aspects of CSR. Some companies proceed from a fully integrated vision that addresses all three dimensions. Others implement the framework, but do not yet use CSR terminology. A considerable amount of attention is devoted to CSR efforts related to ecology (Planet) and the community or other external stakeholders (People external). Topics related to the economic reality of the company (Profit) draw attention as well, as the survival of the organisation and the justification for its existence are mutually dependent. In practice, CSR initiatives related to employees or other internal stakeholders (People internal) tend to receive less attention.

Pfeffer (2010) states a similar conclusion in 'Academy of Management Perspectives'. He uses a simple search in Google Scholar to illustrate the imbalance between the 3 P's of CSR: 20 800 entries for the term 'ecological sustainability' and 53 000 for 'environmental sustainability', but only 12 900 for 'social sustainability' and 569 for 'human sustainability'. "Why are polar bears or even milk jugs more important than people, not only in terms of research attention, but also as a focus of company initiatives?" (Pfeffer, 2010, p. 35). We would like to anticipate developments related to this rhetorical question. Strengthening the sustainability perspective within the context of HRM could contribute significantly to the positioning (or repositioning) of the internal People dimension, thereby improving its balance with the external People, Profit and Planet dimensions of CSR. To this end, we introduce a conceptual model that aims to bridge theory and practice with regard to sustainable HRM. In doing so, we respond to three calls in the literature: (1) to expand the scope of strategic HRM (SHRM) to incorporate sustainability issues (Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014); (2) to help bridge the gap between theory and sustainable HRM practice (Taylor, Osland, & Egri, 2012); and (3) to encourage future research and debate on this issue (Ehnert & Harry, 2012). The existing body of knowledge on CSR does not automatically correspond to the HRM literature. We therefore present a systematic literature review in order to build a reliable base of knowledge concerning sustainable HRM. We started our litera-

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ture review by exploring research, practical and conceptual papers in the domain of sustainable HRM. We also collected articles and papers reflecting different theoretical viewpoints that extend beyond the strategic HRM tradition but that are consistent with the CSR tradition (i.e. critical HRM, ethical HRM, stakeholders and institutional theory). We assessed these theoretical viewpoints in terms of their potential contributions to a framework for sustainable HRM. As noted by Ehnert and Harry (2012, p. 225), "the history of research on sustainable HRM is still at the pioneering if not emerging phase. It is only in the past decade that we observe an increase in publications on sustainability and HRM and many HR colleagues seem to remain critical of the concept". According to these scholars, we are currently experiencing a period in which competing ideas emerge regarding how sustainability can be used constructively for HRM, as well as with regard to methods for use in practice. Ehnert and Harry (2012) predict a plurality of competing approaches in the near future. Examples of such approaches are (1) negative externality theory or social costs of strategic HRM for stakeholders (Mariappanadar, 2003, 2013), human resource re-generative approach (Ehnert, 2009), sustainable work systems (Kira, 2002), green HRM (Jackson, Renwick, Jabbour, & Müller-Camen, 2011), reduction of work harm theory (Mariappanadar, 2014), synthesis effect of sustainable HRM (Mariappanadar & Kramar, 2014). Applications in practice and in future research will reveal which conceptualizations are more helpful for such purposes as solving practical problems and guiding critical reflection on HRM (Ehnert & Harry, 2012).

The purpose of this paper is to develop a conceptual model in which we (1) summarize, classify and fine tune several prominent theoretical concepts and premises within the young tradition of sustainable HRM; (2) embed these concepts within a broader theoretical debate, in which we attempt to align HRM and CSR theory; and (3) establish a direct connection with classifications and examples of sustainable HRM practices. In order to clarify, encourage and accelerate debate and support for the HRM-CSR connection, the model and the new vocabulary should be attractive to both scholars and practitioners in the field of HRM.

2. Introducing the ROC-model

Several definitions currently exist for sustainable HRM. One of the most cited is the definition of Ehnert (2009, p. 74): "Sustainable HRM is the pattern of planned or emerging human resource strategies and practices intended to enable a organizational goal achievement while simultaneously reproducing the human resource base over a long-lasting calendar time and controlling for self-induced side and feedback effect on the HR systems on the HR base and thus on the company itself". Recently, Kramar (2014) has expand this definition by adding the idea of minimising the negative impact on the natural environment and on people and communities and by acknowledging the critical enabling role of CEOs, middle and line managers, HRM professionals and employees. According to the author, there are 3 common characteristics in the attempts to define sustainable HRM up to now. First, the focus is on the development of human capital as an essential outcome of HRM processes. Second, sustainable HRM does challenge the premise that the primary purpose of HRM is the achievement of business outcomes. And third, a dominant concern involves the longer-term

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survival of the organisation and the HRM processes and outcomes that can contribute to this survival.

In the same line the definition by De Lange and Koppens (2007) can be situated. These authors translated the three P's (i.e. Planet, People and Profit) of Elkington (1994) into 'Respect, Openness and Continuity' (ROC). According to De Lange and Koppens (2007), sustainable HRM differs from mainstream HRM because of the following characteristics:

1. a renewed focus on respect for the internal stakeholders in the organisation, the employees (Respect);
2. environmental awareness and outside-in perspective on HRM (Openness);
3. a long-term approach, both in terms of economic and societal sustainability terms and with regard to individual employability (Continuity).

In recent years, the triple-P vocabulary has gained popularity in light of its practicality from the perspective of managers and scholars. Similar to the way in which the triple-P rhetoric has contributed to the mainstreaming of CSR, we expect that the ROC-model could be capable of supporting the implementation and mainstreaming of sustainable HRM practices. Based on a critical review of three mainstream theoretical perspectives on strategic HRM, we discuss the building blocks of the ROC-model in the sections that follow (see also Table 1). According to Paauwe (2012), the field of HRM, by nature, reflects developments in society and trends in the academic disciplines that contribute to the field. During the 1990s, strategic HRM emphasised the following issues: (1) the link between HRM and financial performance; (2) the fit between HRM and strategy; and (3) HRM and sustainable competitive advantage (the resource-based view). The narrative style of many HRM articles focuses on 'strategy' and the 'search for added value through people'. The HRM literature of that time is

Table 1: The Respect Openness Continuity (ROC)-model of Sustainable HRM: Theoretical antecedents and overview of HRM practices

	People **Respect**	Planet **Openness**	Profit **Continuity**
Credo	*'Searching for the Human in HRM'*	*'HR from the outside in'*	*'Long-term scope of HRM'*
Theory Mainstream strategic HR-perspective revisited	Resourced-based view revisited	Strategic fit revisited	Long-term performance/ long-term employment relationships revisited
Theoretical antecedents	Ethical and critical HR theory	Institutional and stakeholder theory	
Practices Horizontal/ thematic	Talent, Engagement, Empowerment, Health and Wellbeing, Employee Participation, etc.	Diversity, Ageing, Work–life Balance, Ecology, Stakeholders, Labour Market etc.	Employability, Careers, Succession, Learning organisations, Workplace innovation, etc.
Vertical/transformational	Sustainable recruitment, selection, training, development, compensation, leadership, change, culture etc.		

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dominated by 'what employers want' (Boselie, 2010). In contrast to this unilateral strategic perspective, discussions concerning sustainable HRM are more balanced, recognising the fact that 'what employers want' is not necessarily the same as 'what employees want' and 'what society/external stakeholders want'. In this respect, the model responds to the plea by Janssens and Steyaert (2009) for reconstructing- reflexivity within the HRM field: "R-reflexivity stands for reconstructing and reframing by bringing in issues of alternative paradigms, perspectives, and political values so that it illuminates what is left out and marginalized. It provides alternative descriptions, interpretations, vocabularies and voices that could be taken into account, aiming to open up new avenues, paths and lines of interpretations that produce 'better' research ethically, politically, empirically and theoretically" (Janssens & Steyaert, 2009, p. 144).

3. Assumptions

Before presenting the model in more detail, we address its primary underlying assumptions. These assumptions are related to the theoretical roots and foundations of the ROC-model, as well as to its implementation possibilities.

3.1 A second wave of revisionism

The ROC-model is based on the assumption that sustainable HRM forms the next, complementary stage in the tradition of HRM thinking (De Lange & Koppens, 2007; Ehnert, 2009; Kramar, 2014). It reframes and revises the mainstream principles of strategic HRM, which were dominant in HRM thinking beginning in the 1980s. This kind of revision movement is not unique in the history of HRM. In the 1960s and 1970s (see Table 2), a revision approach emerged as well (Boselie, 2010). This approach criticised the highly 'rational' principles of Scientific Management, including the extreme division of labour, strong leadership and efficiency, as well as the far-reaching 'social' principles of the Human Relations Movement (with its strong focus on the social function of work, interactions between workers, personal attention to employees by supervisors, informal social systems and similar topics). Influenced by the changing climate of the 1960s, power and authority were no longer accepted as such. The quality of working life, involvement and participation of employees became key issues within the revisionistic approach.

Table 2: Overview of HRM characteristics

	Scientific Management	Human Relations	Revisionism	Strategic HRM	Second wave of revisionism in Sustainable HRM
Period	Ca.1918-1945	Ca.1945-1965	Ca.1965-1980	Ca.1980-now	Ca.2010-?
Focus	Labour division and close employee monitoring	Personal attention and employees in their social context	Creation of autonomy, challenging jobs and employee involvement	Strategic embeddedness and managerial orientation	Searching for the Human in HRM, HRM from the outside in and long-term HRM orientation
Purpose	Efficiency	Cooperation	Autonomy	Performance	Sustainability

Source: Based on Boselie (2010)

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One of the dominant scholars was McGregor (1960). His alternative view, also known as 'Theory Y', relies heavily on notions of self-control and self-direction. A system of decentralisation and delegation, job enlargement, employee participation and consultative management, reflects his critiques on scientific management almost 50 years after its birth (Boselie, 2010). The current theoretical shift towards sustainable HRM represents a second wave of revisionism and reflects critique on the mainstream strategic HRM tradition in the 1980s. It contains also 'the flavours' of the past revisionistic approach, e.g. in the search for the Human in HRM.

3.2 Mainstream HRM revisited

The assumption that a dominant perspective currently exists and that it should be identified is important. The identification of a mainstream HRM perspective (see Table 3), along with its implicit assumptions, offers the possibility of more comprehensive critique and revision, both within and outside the perspective (Greenwood, 2013). Briefly stated, mainstream HRM assumes an objective, value-free reality. Humans are seen as objective, rational 'resources', whose beliefs and actions can and should be studied (and managed) with regard to how they should be directed in order to achieve organisational objectives (Greenwood, 2013). The unifying focus is a managerial orientation that prizes the functional and organisational benefits of HRM, particularly with regard to its potential contributions to strategy and organisational performance.

Table 3: Overview of the characteristics of mainstream and next-generation HRM perspectives

	Perspectives	
	Mainstream	**Next generation**
Assumptions regarding		
Employment relationship	Unitarist	Pluralist
Alignment	Fit	Tensions
Research process	Positivism	Constructivism

Source: Based on Greenwood (2013)

Studies within the critical HR-tradition (Janssens & Steyaert, 2009; Van Buren, Greenwood, & Sheehan, 2011) have extensively shown that HRM is impregnated by a unitarist approach in the management of the employment relationship. The field of HRM within a Anglo-Saxon context apparently assumes that the well-being and organisational goals of employees can always be aligned and that managers, employees, and HR professionals will all work together towards a common goal of efficiency and high performance levels. In a more pluralistic perspective, concepts are needed to account for the complexity of employment relationships, which are characterised by both shared and conflicting goals and interest. The primary assumption is that both parties to the employment relationship have divergent and sometimes conflicting interests, as well as common interests that provide the foundation for a voluntary (or largely voluntary) cooperative relationship.

A second assumption of much mainstream HRM thinking concerns contingency and fit. In contingency perspective the HR policies must be consistent with other

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functions and policies of the organization. Thus, contingency perspective stresses 'best fit' where HR policies are aligned with company strategy. According to Ehnert (2014) and Ehnert and Brandl (2013), the contingency view, with its focus on alignment and fit, is still the dominant logic in research on both organisations and HRM. Nevertheless, this view is being increasingly contested. The both/and approach or 'paradox lens' focuses on the idea of 'dynamic equilibrium' rather than on contingency (i.e. fit, alignment). Together with Ehnert (2014) and Ehnert and Brandl (2013), we criticise the excessively strong fit paradigm in HRM. We aim to contribute to the understanding of how HRM actors can address tensions (e.g. between soft and hard HRM, between People, Profit and Planet) proactively and positively, instead of being paralysed by the fear of unfolding dynamics, instead of victimising HRM managers or employees, and instead of ignoring or suppressing tensions. Sustainable HRM highlights the synthesis paradox (Clegg, Vieira Da Cunha, & Pina e Cunha, 2002; Mariappanadar, 2014). In this both/and approach, organisations can use strategic HRM practices to maximise their profits, in addition to reducing the harm of HRM practices on the stakeholders, given that these two polarities are not mutually exclusive but can be mutually reinforcing.

Third, positivism is the dominant epistemological approach in HRM. Positivism seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements. Critical HRM scholars (Greenwood & Freeman, 2011; Legge, 1995) contest the positivist research approach, as it tends to reinforce rather than to question the status quo. These scholars advocate an alternative, social-constructive approach, in which HRM is perceived as a social construction. The language used by theorists and researchers to describe HRM is a form of social action, creating understandings regarding what HRM is, as well as with regard to the effects it is presumed to have on social life and the structuring of employment relationships (Keegan & Boselie, 2006).

3.3 The search for supporting theory

For the theoretical grounding of our ROC-model, we searched for innovative and critical streams of literature that provide a base for the principles of next-generation HRM and that correspond to the CSR tradition. We focused on aspects of stakeholders, institutional, ethical and critical theory.

Stakeholder theory has experienced resurgence in the context of recent CSR and HRM research (Ferrary, 2009; Jamali, 2008). In the early 1990s, Brenner and Cochran (1991) had postulated that stakeholder theory would become the theoretical centrepiece in a field searching for workable paradigms. Within the context of CSR, the stakeholder concept addresses issues regarding those to whom business is or should be accountable. For the domain of HRM, Ferrary (2008, p. 31) suggests that "the framework of stakeholder analysis enables escape from a purely instrumental approach to HRM, and avoids reducing our understanding of conflicts within companies to mere antagonism between employees and their employers. It enables us to point out the existence of other stakeholders in the relationship".

With regard to the concept of institutions, there is a close interrelationship between HRM and CSR. Most studies in this regard refer to the theoretical approach

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developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and extended by such scholars as DiMaggio and Powel (1983, 1991). The analytic focus is often on social or cultural pressures that drive firms toward isomorphic conformity in order to obtain legitimacy or social fitness. For example, institutional scholars have studied how institutional pressures have shaped corporate practices on such HRM-related issues as managing diversity and employee grievances, as well as on such CSR-related issues as corporate environmental performance (Lee, 2011).

Finally, we draw a connection with ethics and critical theory. In contrast to the long tradition of the connection between CSR and business ethics, the intersection of HRM and ethics remains underdeveloped. According to Greenwood (2012), few HRM researchers address such questions as, 'Is this right or wrong?' or 'How should organisations behave?'. Partly inspired by the critical HR tradition, a cautious shift is now taking place. In this work, we attempt to integrate these recent insights into the theoretical foundations of our ROC-model.

3.4 The search for sustainable HRM practices

A final assumption is related to the search for applications of the concept of sustainable HRM. Given its young tradition, very few empirical studies illustrate a full application of the concept. This does not prevent us, however, from drawing upon the rich research tradition on the many sub-domains of sustainable HRM (e.g. related to diversity management, social innovation, talent management). In addition, many checklists, roadmaps and other instruments related to sustainable HRM are available (e.g. the recent guidelines of the SHRM Foundation (2012); the stakeholder harm index (Mariappanadar, 2014)). Although the approach and tools described in these works are often not particularly new, framing them within the context of an integrated sustainability perspective is. As mentioned before, one basic assumption is that sustainable HRM can be classified as a social-constructivist concept (Keegan & Boselie, 2006). The idea of 'knowledge as substance' is replaced by the idea of 'knowledge as participation'. Knowledge is developed, spread and applied within active working relationships between the members of a practice-community. In the section that follows, we adhere to this assumption, in some places referring to possible applications. Instead of being normative or exhaustive, this discussion is intended to stimulate the practical community to explore and apply the concept of sustainable HRM according to the various dimensions of the ROC-model.

4. First building block: Respect

The first building block of the ROC-model stems from the ethical and critical tradition related to 'respect'. The ROC-model calls for a smarter and more respectful attitude towards resources, and especially towards human resources. Given that 20% of European jobs are 'poor-quality jobs' with low levels of health and well-being (Eurofound, 2012), the Respect dimension should be a priority on the HRM agenda.

4.1 Ethical and critical roots of sustainable HRM

The relationship between ethics and HRM has been the subject of recent discussion. The turning point was the subsequently well-established proposal that ethics should be considered central to the HRM function (Rhodes & Harvey, 2012). According to

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Guest and Woodrow (2012), HRM professionals should act as 'ethical stewards'. They might do this by aiming for a strong HRM system, forming alliances for the formulation and implementation of policy, seeking opportunities for promoting worker well-being and, more generally, seeking to make ethical choices whenever the opportunity arises (Guest & Woodrow, 2012). The latter is reflected in various contexts, including in the daily events within an organisation, in conflicts between line managers and their subordinates and in situations in which a worker is transferred to another team. From an ethical and humanity perspective, such daily issues are certainly not solely the responsibility of HRM. If HRM passes this responsibility purely to line management, however, then HRM is at risk of becoming locked in an ivory tower. The meaning of ethics and humanity for HRM is thus an important issue for the future (Janssens & Steyaert, 1996; Marriapanadar, 2012).

The critical HRM literature contains many calls for bringing humanity back into HRM. According to Van Buren et al. (2011), the strategic HR business partnership role has made HR more organisation- than employee-focused, leading to a lack of concern for employee welfare a perspectives. In their book Searching for the Human in Human Resource Management, Bolton and Houlihan (2007) suggest that, even though people appear to be of central concern in HRM theory, HRM practice and the workplace experience, the rich, warm and unpredictable faces of humanity are all too clearly absent. By managing the employment relationship solely in economic terms, humanity is 'squeezed out' and the resource is therefore never seen in its full light. Scholars of CSR would refer to this as a tension between the logic of Profit and the logic of People. In the revision of the SHRM tradition, it implies the recognition and revaluation of the basic characteristics of the H(uman) within the resource-based view. As remarked by Lengnick-Hall and colleagues (2009): "While SHRM research has drawn substantially from the resource-based view of the firm to emphasize the strategic and the resource factors in SHRM activities, at times it appears that the "human" element has been neglected"(Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade, & Drake, 2009, p. 70).

4.2 Resource-based view revisited

During the 1990s, Legge was one of the first critical scholars to advocate an alternative 'soft' HRM perspective in addition to the hard version of HRM. The hard version of HRM is defined as "a process emphasizing the close integration of human resource policies with business strategy which regards employees as a resource to be managed in the same rational way as any other resource being exploited for maximum return" (Legge, 1995, p. 43). In contrast, soft HRM emphasises the 'human' aspect and it is associated with the human relations school. Legge refers to this model as 'Developmental Humanism' (Legge, 1995, p. 66-67). The soft model focuses on treating employees as valued assets and as a source of competitive advantage through their commitment, adaptability and high-quality skill and performance. Employees are proactive rather than passive inputs into productive processes, capable of development, worthy of trust and collaboration, which is achieved through participation.

More recently, both critical and other HRM scholars have been providing arguments for bringing the H back into the HRM rhetoric. For example, Gratton (2001)

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was one of the leading HRM scholars to call for re-humanisation within the HRM and Human Capital discourse. According to Gratton, people are fundamentally different from financial capital and technology. If people are placed at the center of sustained competitive advantage (within a resource-based view of SHRM), it becomes necessary to account for the fundamental characteristics of human capital. Understanding these basic differences induces an entirely new way of thinking and working in organisations. In contrast to financial or technological capital, people are seen as functioning in time, giving meaning and having a soul (Gratton, 2001).

These three tenets should be taken into account at the very core of the philosophy of sustainable organisations and HRM. In line with these tenets, such people-oriented HRM themes as self-development, sense making, democratic dialogue, employee participation, autonomy, engagement and talent hold a central position in the Respect dimension of sustainable HRM. These concepts make it possible to frame the People dimension within HRM and CSR as not merely means to ends, but also as ends in themselves (Donnely & Proctor-Thomson, 2011). This approach aims to explore the sustainability of HRM systems and practices, devoting much greater attention to outcomes for a range of stakeholders, including employees, employee's family, community, … rather than to outcomes for the organisation alone. These outcomes can be positive in terms of engagement, wellbeing, work life balance, … but also negative in terms of psychological harm (e.g. burnout, lack of concentration), social harm (e.g. family breaks/divorces) or health harm (e.g. stress related depression) (Mariappanadar, 2012, 2013, 2014). A central interest of many of the sustainable HR writers including those within the tradition of sustainable work systems (e.g. Kira, 2002), is the development of HRM practices that result in positive human/social outcomes such as work–life balance on the one hand, as well as organisational economic outcomes and sustainable change processes on the other.

4.3 The Respect dimension in practice: Sustainable people management

The current, more applied debates concerning best practices in HRM reflect a similar search for renewed attention to the human aspects of HRM. Van Beirendonck (2009) summarises the evolution as follows (see Table 4): from competency management (organisational perspective, job fit), towards talent management (employee perspective, strengths) and sustainable management (perspective of both employee and organisation, common terminology) (Van Beirendonck, 2009). Competency management proceeds from an organisation's mission, vision and strategy, which are ultimately rendered as a profile of desired competencies, and which become the focal point for various HRM applications. Observed human behaviour is compared against the desired profile. The greatest opportunity for development is sought in the weakest competencies of people, and this demands considerable additional effort of them. One consequence of this conclusion is that many practitioners and scholars have sought refuge in an entirely different approach. This could explain the increasing popularity of talent management (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001), which proceeds from people's strengths. Talent management builds upon the strong aspects of an individual. Underlying interests and 'talents' are identified, with the goal of drawing relevant connections between these interests and competencies and the roles and/or posi-

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tions in one or more organisational contexts. In a third, both/and, synthesis approach of sustainability, the challenge is to combine these different perspectives. This approach concerns dialogue, and it is characterised by mutual respect and by the search for and discussion of possibilities and opportunities for both individual and organisation. In this approach, the organisation's mission is matched to the individual's passion.

Table 4: A typology of competency, talent and sustainable people management approach

Competency approach	Talent approach	Sustainable approach
We start with the mission, vision and the 'desired' profile	We start with 'what is' in terms of strengths and talents	We start with what is and match it to profiles
Greater focus on the organisational perspective	Greater focus on the employee perspective	Combined perspectives of both employee and organisation
Characteristics are competencies	Characteristics are 'talents'	Common terminology
Strengths, based on the competency profile	Strengths as characteristics that are conspicuously present/easily available	Observable characteristics that are useful
Focus on job fit, efficiency, ROI	Oriented towards 'utilising', meaningfulness, development	Meaningful, partly based on objective observations
Gap analysis	Focus on strengths and 'making use of what is available'	Oriented towards using and fitting

Source: Van Beirendonck, 2009

5. Second building block: Openness

In addition to the ethical approach, CSR adds an outside-in perspective (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, & Ulrich, 2012) to HRM. Outside-in HR extends beyond strategy to align its work with business contexts and stakeholders. As stated by Ulrich and colleagues (2012, p. 58) "We now believe that rather than a mirror in which HR practices are reflected, business strategy should be regarded as a window through which HR professionals observe, interpret, and translate external conditions and stakeholders expectations into internal actions".

5.1 Institutional and stakeholder roots of sustainable HRM

Dubois and Dubois (2012) noted recently that many HRM professionals and researchers have backgrounds in Industrial/Organisational (I/O) psychology. They therefore tend to pay little attention to organisational responsibility, given that I/O psychology focuses primarily on the individual and internal organisational issues. In contrast, the focus of organisational sustainability is primarily at the organisational level. The introduction of an approach based on stakeholder and institutional theory could thus broaden the scope of mainstream HRM.

First, promoting an HRM with an outside-in character implies the adoption of a stakeholder perspective on HRM. Stakeholder theory represents a significant part of

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the debate in business ethics, and it shows many obvious connections to HRM (Greenwood & Freeman, 2011). The theory suggests that the organisation's purpose, principles and relationship to society should be a shared process, in which employees are at the centre, in addition to social partners, customers and social movements (e.g. the green movement). Along the same lines, it can be argued that every organisation is like a mini-society, reflecting the same societal issues and trends. Dealing with diversity, work-life balance, ageing, scarcity, pollution and other issues should also be included on any HRM agenda.

Second, institutional theory is needed in order to account for the societal embeddedness of HRM practices. As observed by Powell (1998), organisational practices are often direct reflections of our responses to rules and structures stemming from their environments. Institutional theory was first linked to the Industrial Relations (IR) literature, in order to explore the rise of trade unionism, the role of employees in the workplace and the development of collective bargaining. Later on, the neo-institutionalists shifted their focus to a broader and more holistic analysis of the employment relationship and processes of institutionalisation or 'structuration'. As introduced by DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the concept of isomorphism refers to a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that are exposed to the same set of environmental conditions.

5.2 Strategic fit revisited through an institutional and stakeholder theory lens

Paauwe and Boselie (2003 and 2007) argue that, in addition to strategic (i.e. vertical) fit and horizontal fit, organisational success through HRM depends upon environmental fit. They present a model of HRM based on the institutional mechanisms for organisational isomorphism developed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983). Three different types of institutional isomorphism can be distinguished: coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism results from formal and informal pressures on organisations exerted by other organisations upon which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the societies in which they function. In HRM, coercive mechanisms include the influence of social partners (e.g. trade unions and works councils), labour legislation, and governments (Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). From a broader perspective, coercive isomorphism can also refer to a connection between the prevailing social norms and values and other processes (e.g. the labour market participation of mothers, the elderly and immigrants). Mimetic isomorphism results from standard responses to uncertainty, leading to the imitation of structure, organisational design, or certain practices of similar organisations. Applied to HRM, mimetic mechanisms refer to imitations of the HRM strategies and practices of competitors due to uncertainty or a desire to follow trends in HRM (Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). Normative isomorphism is associated with professionalisation. Formal education and professional networks lead to increasing homogeneity in the skills and knowledge of the entire workforce in a particular sector, which subsequently increases similarity between organisations.

The presence of these different isomorphic pressures on HRM, however, does not necessarily mean that organisations and their stakeholders see the institutional environment as restrictive. Organisations are able to create additional room by opting for specific HRM systems (Boon, 2008; Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). Institutional theo-

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rists have focused on structural conformity and isomorphism, while tending to overlook the role of active agency and resistance in organisation–environment relationships. This active role of organisations has also been referred to as institutional entrepreneurship, which reintroduces agency, interests, power and stakeholders into the institutional analyses of organisations (Garud, Hardy, & Maguire, 2007). For this reason, Lee (2011) calls for a theoretical framework that combines institutional and stakeholder theories in order to explain how firms choose their CSR and HRM strategies. According to Lee's argument, stakeholders play a critical role between institutional environments and organisations. On the one hand, stakeholders can amplify institutional pressure by directly channelling the message to the attention of organisational decision-makers. On the other hand, stakeholders can also smooth the institutional effect by acting as buffers between organisational and institutional pressure. A further assumption is that institutional forces and stakeholder influences are often issue-specific. For example, strong environmental norms or regulations do not necessarily entail equally pervasive norms on issues of employee diversity or human rights. Similarly, certain stakeholder groups with a strong interest in labour rights (e.g. unions) may have no interest in other CSR-related issues (e.g. pollution reduction). Organisational decision-makers should therefore identify and evaluate the strength of relevant institutional forces and stakeholder groups for each issue (Lee, 2011). From a sustainable HR-perspective, the stakeholder harm index can be a useful tool to manage this both from the perspective of the internal HR-stakeholders as well as from the perspective of the external stakeholders (e.g. labour advocacy groups, public policy makers, …). The stakeholder harm index is defined as "a catalogue to capture the harmful aspects of reduced psychological, social and work related health wellbeing outcomes for the stakeholders (employees, their families, and the community) and the aggregate social costs of welfare loss due to such harmful aspects" (Mariappanadar, 2014, p. 315). The framework provides the insight that overutilization of human resources for maximizing an organisation's profit has an unsustainable impact on the individual, the organisation and society.

5.3 The Openness dimension in practice: Green HRM

Another typical example of the outside-in perspective in current HRM practices is known as 'green HRM' (Jackson et al., 2011; Dubois & Dubois, 2012; Renwick et al., 2012). Terms such as 'green employees', 'green careers' and 'green jobs' are becoming increasingly common. Renwick, Redman and Maguire (2012) call for the integration of the literature on environmental management (EM) with research on HRM. One prominent theme in the EM literature is that effective outcomes cannot be achieved simply by making changes to production processes, products or raw materials. They also depend upon changes in the corporate culture, in the sense that organisations have deeply embedded values that support long-term sustainability. An organisational culture that encourages EM is one that stimulates employees to make suggestions for activities that improve the environment, in addition to giving them the freedom to engage in such activities. In particular, employees must be well informed about environmental issues that affect the workplace, and wider employee participation in EM has been found to cultivate such supportive cultures. Based on Ability-Motivation-

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Opportunity (AMO) theory, the Table 5 categorizes and summarises several green HRM practices.

Labour unions constitute one of the important stakeholders in discussions concerning green HRM, as well as in the broader sustainable HRM and CSR debate. To date, labour unions have been somewhat ambiguous about this debate. Despite historically striving for what many would argue are key tenets of sustainable HRM – equitable wages, humane working conditions, due process for workers, and rights for marginalized communities – some union leaders fear that social responsibility will undermine their preferred structure of contracts and regulation (Preuss, 2008). Others argue that a broad, socially conscious labour movement that is genuinely concerned about social justice is better positioned for the future, and that a more favourable view of unions by members and potential members is a pre-requisite for union revitalization (Freeman & Rogers, 1999). Dawkins (2012) reports support for this assumption, with results suggesting that the social responsibility of labour unions can enhance union attachment and inform union strategy. It also allows employee representatives to 'stretch' their roles and broaden their impact (Lucio, Pulignano, Whittall, & Ittner, 2012).

Table 5: Summary of green HRM practices

Developing green abilities	Motivating green employees	Providing green opportunities
Attracting/selecting Green employer branding Recruitment of 'green aware' employees Green issues in processes of introduction/socialisation	*Performance management* Green KPI in PM systems and appraisals	*Employee involvement and engagement* EI practices in EM, including newsletters, suggestion schemes, problem-solving groups Encouraging employees to make suggestions for EM improvements Supportive managerial and supervisor engagement in EM
Training/development Employee training in EM Green knowledge management Green leadership styles Trade union involvement and union activist EM training	*Pay and reward systems* Staff suggestions in EM rewarded Green benefits Monetary-based EM reward systems Managerial bonuses for good EM	*Union role in EI and EM* Joint management/union initiatives in EM Green union representatives EM education programs for union members

Source: Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013

6. Third building block: Continuity

A third building block within the ROC-model is the long-term perspective from the viewpoints of both the organisational relationship and the employment relationship. Companies strive to create conditions under which they can survive over a relatively long time, and HRM can contribute to this process. We begin this section with a discussion of the HRM and Performance debate, the classical variant of which seems to have had its peak (Boselie, 2011). Second, we revisit the meaning of continuity within the employment relationship. We argue that, although 'careers for life' are from a distant past, the organisational career is far from dead.

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6.1 Long-term performance and the employment relationship revisited through the lens of institutional and stakeholder theory

Important publications by Arthur (1994), Huselid (1995) and MacDuffie (1995) sparked a decade of discussions on the benefits of HRM. Fifteen years and dozens of studies later, Boselie (2011) presents a relative optimistic conclusion in a review article: there is growing evidence that HRM can lead to a better performance. Boselie is less optimistic about the type of performance standards being used. The predominant theme is trying to understand how organisations manage their employees more effectively, such that productivity and profits are maximised. Although this issue is important in itself, it is relatively one-sided, as it ignores the importance of the employee perspective and the link to broader societal and institutional objectives. Within a more sustainable approach, research on three levels of performance is relevant: (1) the organisation (e.g. quality, efficiency, flexibility, innovation, profits), (2) society (e.g. stakeholder satisfaction, employment growth, social inclusion) and (3) the individual (e.g. good work–life balance, engagement, employability). In a balanced approach, exclusive high scores on financial, individual or social performance are considered undesirable for the long-term survival of an organisation. The sustainable approach combines insights from the economic perspective with those from the institutional perspective in order to create a balanced and sustainable position for the organisation (Paauwe, Boon, Boselie, & den Hartog, 2013). In this respect, sustainable HRM differs substantially from mainstream HRM.

To date, the balanced approach has been further discussed and completed from at least two critical perspectives. First, the notion of performance and the link with stakeholder approach has been the subject of further debate. Janssens and Steyaert (2009) argue that, by focusing on performance outcomes, even if operationalised in a multidimensional way, HRM seems to consider only powerful stakeholders within the organisational boundaries, overlooking the effects of HRM practices on society (e.g. when bankers taking bonuses when all going well and passing costs to societies when things goes wrong or the impact of redundancy programmes for short term financial gain of a corporate with costs of unemployment to the society). They argue that it is only by replacing performance with a broader concept of outcome that HRM will be able to consider its societal embeddedness and its long-term impact on various stakeholders in society. These stakeholders include those who do not subscribe to the logic of performance. One possible example of such a broad notion is sustainability, which includes an economic, a social and an ecological dimension. Such new vocabulary expands the population of conversational partners for HRM to include protest movements, consumers, non-governmental organisations, institutional regulators and financial institutes (Janssens & Steyaert, 2009).

A second critical perspective involves the notions of balance and fit, as discussed by Ehnert and Brandl (2013). According to these authors, these notions continue to indicate an either/or perspective of managing pressures in HRM, depending upon the specific constellation of institutional and market pressures. In particular, the idea of searching for an 'optimal level of conforming' ignores questions concerning alternative approaches to working with tensions in HRM. One alternative is the both/and

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approach, which focuses on the idea of 'dynamic equilibrium' rather than that of contingency/fit.

The Continuity dimension can also be seen as an individual challenge within the employment relationship. The essence of the employment relationship is the supply of labour by the employee in return for a wage. The idea within exchange relationships is that these elements persist only as long as the exchange is in balance. Organisations can opt for HRM policies focused on mutual investments within a long-term perspective (Rousseau, 1995). Implications for the employer include investments in training or other forms of competence or career development initiatives. Implications for the employee include loyalty or the opportunity to develop skills that can be carried into the future (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). In contrast, the exchanges in short-term labour relationships are limited to the provision of labour for a wage, without any guarantee of job security. The relational dimension is clearly missing in this context (Montes & Irving, 2008).

Within the literature on human capital (Lepak & Snell, 2002), these types of employment relationships are related to the strategic orientation and strategic importance of human capital. Current research shows that organisations whose workforces are characterised by low value and low uniqueness tend to be less concerned with the intra-organisational mobility of their employees and to offer fewer career management practices, while holding individual employees less accountable for managing their own careers (De Vos & Dries, 2013). Scholars have interpreted these findings as implying that such organisations tend to adopt a *laissez-faire* approach to career management, assigning organisational priority to neither career management nor continuity.

In contrast, this reality has been subjected to strong criticism within the literature on labour relations and stakeholder management. Questions concerning the treatment of low-wage, dependent workers are among the most central in ethical analyses of contemporary employment relationships (Van Buren & Greenwood, 2013). The ways in which organisations treat this group of stakeholders, who lack power and meaningful ways of changing the terms of exchange with their employers, should be a central focus of work in business ethics and stakeholder analysis. Given that stakeholders co-create value, one role of managers should be to create deals in which all of the firm's stakeholders – including low-wage workers – can ultimately win.

Such wins can be incorporated into the concept of sustainable employability and/or workability. Sustainability in the employment relationship is not equal to lifetime employment, but rather to lifetime employability and that to which is currently referred to as the work ability of the employee. As distinguished from work ability, employability is an attempt to describe the ability of people to become employed and to sustain that employment or find new employment. It therefore involves reference to a person's skill set and qualifications (both formal and informal) for a job. In brief, employability concerns the access, retention and progression of people in paid work across the life course. In contrast, work ability (Ilmarinen, 2006) seeks a proactive, preventative and holistic approach to working lives through better age management throughout the entire working life of the individual. The primary aim of this approach is to improve the quality of employees' work by encouraging better health in mind and body, linking and improving the working and home environment and, ultimately, the

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quality of life and productivity of the individual. In Finland, where the concept was first developed, studies have shown that the widespread introduction of the approach has helped workers to work better and more productively, in addition to feeling able to extend their working lives and have improve the quality of their retirement. The work-ability approach thus provides benefits to the economy, to the enterprise, to society and to the individual (see Ilmarinen, 2006).

6.2 Continuity in practice: Sustainable careers

As mentioned above, we assume that sustainability in the employment relationship is not equal to lifetime employment. One of the most striking findings in a recent comparison of literature of careers and on talent management (De Vos & Dries, 2013) is that, although most authors in the career literature assume that the traditional organisational career is 'dead', the talent management literature advocates renewed attention to continuity (e.g. succession planning and retention initiatives) (see Table 6). They argue that organisations that attach greater importance to continuity are more likely to adhere to traditional models of organisational career management (see talent management). This does not mean that talent management cannot benefit from the career approach by acknowledging the free agency of career actors and their aim for sustainable careers. Within a synthesis (both/and) approach on sustainable careers, the individual employee and the organisation find each other to ensure continuity of business for organisations and to ensure continuity of worthwhile employment for individuals by means of effective self and organisational career management. As suggested by Tekleab and Taylor (2003), a high-quality exchange relationship with an individual's supervisor may provide many opportunities to discuss reciprocal expectations and obligations. Additionally, these high quality relationships engender the level of trust needed to take advantage of these opportunities.

Table 6: The careers versus the talent management literature

	Career literature	Talent management literature	Synthesis perspective on sustainable careers
Credo	*'Build a career in which I can use and develop my talents in view of my personal career drivers and goals'*	*'Detect, develop, and deploy employees' talent in order to obtain superior performance at the individual, group and organisational level'*	*'An ongoing dialogue between organisation and employees which leads to customized careers and sustainable value for both parties'*
Importance attached to continuity	Low	High	High
Focus of career management	Individual	Organisational	Individual+Organisational
Accountability for career management	Self (protean)	Organisation	Self+Organisation
Mobility reference	Inter-organisational	Intra-organisational (bounded)	Inter-and intra-organisational
Number of formalized CM practices	Low/focus on career self-management	High/focus on organisational career management	Focus on self- and organisational career management

Source: based on De Vos and Dries, 2013

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As proposed by Newman (2011), sustainable careers have three features. First, they must include opportunities for renewal – times when employees pause briefly to reinvigorate themselves. Second, they must be flexible and adaptable. Half of what we think we know now will be obsolete in a few years. Individuals and firms need to be continuous and flexible learners, ready to travel new roads as conditions dictate. Finally, sustainable careers must include opportunities for integration across life spheres and experiences that lead to wholeness, completeness and meaning. In line with these shifts, career patterns have become relatively more flexible and unpredictable throughout the lifetime of individual workers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), and employees have become more proactive in redesigning their jobs in order to increase the alignment with their own competencies, motivations, interests and passions (Rousseau, 2005).

7. Conclusions and research agenda

Inspired by the three Ps of Corporate Social Responsibility, we have positioned 'Respect', 'Openness' and 'Continuity' as the three building blocks of sustainable HRM. In the previous sections, we illustrate the three dimensions by summarising several theoretical and applied concepts and dynamics. Many of the elements addressed in previous literature are not necessarily new. New elements include the critical reflection and redirection of existing HRM practices, systems and themes towards the ROC-model. Sustainable HRM is therefore a more complementary perspective. Its aim is not to replace the strategic HRM perspective, but to offer a correction, given the concretisation of the latter from the unilateral perspective of business management. This perspective brings HRM into a next stage of maturity. To accomplish this, it draws upon inspiration derived from the CSR approach, from ethical and critical HRM and from stakeholder and institutional theory. Due to the positioning of the concept of sustainable HRM as a social-constructivist concept, the ROC-model challenges HRM practitioners to implement sustainable HRM in co-creation with the academic community. The ROC-model aims to bridge theory and practice. It provides a framework and new vocabulary for classifying and positioning (or repositioning) new initiatives and experiments, as well as existing practices and traditions within the domain of sustainable HRM.

We would like to close this article by identifying a possible research agenda for sustainable HRM. As we stated earlier, sustainable HRM can help organisations to (1) achieve their CSR strategies through people and (2) make their own HRM domains more sustainable. Future research could proceed from both angles, thus generating interesting research questions at several levels of analysis.

One angle could involve assessing whether organisations with strong CSR profiles are indeed more inclined to apply sustainable HRM practices. If this is the case, questions can be raised with regard to extent of and manner in this affects the organisation, the society and the individual, and with which results. Conversely, it can be assumed that any organisation can develop sustainable HRM. It is less clear, however, whether this also makes them sustainable companies. Other questions concern the role of HRM actors in this regard, whether sustainable HRM requires competences

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other than those associated with mainstream HRM, as well as the roles of trade unions and other stakeholders and which parties claim leadership.

From the second angle – sustaining HRM practices as such – questions can be raised concerning how, when and why organisations opt to concretise this from the perspective of the ROC-model. For example, one relevant question with regard to the Respect dimension concerns what organisations effectively do (or plan to do) in order to commit employees as internal stakeholders in their HRM and CSR policies. Attention should also be paid to the combined impact of stakeholders and intuitions on implementing sustainable HRM initiatives. Relevant questions concerns the identification of the socio-economic and strategic context in which sustainable HRM prospers best. For example, one interesting question could involve determining the extent to which cost-cutting strategies might imply the *a priori* exclusion of sustainable HRM strategies. Another avenue for investigation could involve identifying ways of advocating sustainable HRM in times of restructuring. It might also be useful to search for a typology of sustainable HRM practices (or bundles thereof). In this regard, researchers could consider the extent to which organisations develop integrated or *ad hoc* approaches to the three dimensions of the ROC-model and the roles played by vertical, horizontal, transactional and transformational themes, practices and processes within these approaches. In summary, there are many interesting research questions, which will hopefully receive more attention soon from the broad research community involved with HRM and CSR.

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