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An Essay on Sustainable Work Systems: Shaping an Agenda for Future Research

This essay is based on a review of the following text, now recognized internationally as being of central relevance to studies of sustainability in contexts for HRM practice and research:

- Docherty, P., Kira, M., & Shani A. B. (eds.). (2009). *Creating sustainable work systems*. Abingdon: Routledge. pp. xxiii + 296, ISBN 978-0-415-77272-3.

The book reviewed here is a second (paperback) edition, and one that in turn develops on:

- Docherty, P., Forslin, J., Shani, A. B., & Kira, M. (eds.). (2002). *Creating sustainable work systems: Emerging perspectives and practices*. London: Routledge.

Context

This review was drafted as the Rio+20 Earth summit was coming to a close. Its concluding document, entitled *The Future We Want*, appears weak now in terms of the practical and measurable commitment displayed by international leaders to establish development objectives designed to support social, economic and technological growth that should benefit the world's populations and safeguard a natural environment such that future generations might prosper; or, as a minimum ambition, survive. The Rio earth summit took place against a background of acute and global economic uncertainty; indeed, representatives of some so-called 'developed' economies among the 20+ continue to preside over economic meltdown: the living standards of their citizens continue on average to decline. In their role as agents influencing whether we in fact get 'the future we want', the political leaders of the 20+ appear determined to prioritize short-term national interests over those of the planet and its future inhabitants. For example, they declare that access to drinkable water is a human right but have promised little of substance that might improve the situation of over a billion people in the world for whom easy access to water is routinely denied.

Review

Against this background we should try to understand the importance of books such as *Creating Sustainable Work Systems*, edited by Peter Docherty, Mari Kira and A. B. (Rami) Shani. If we are to achieve sustainable social, economic and technological growth now

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