

1 **A paradox view on Green Human Resource Management:**
2 **Insights from the Italian context**

3
4 Marco Guerci and Luca Carollo

5 *Department of Social and Political Sciences, Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy*
6

7 **Abstract**

8 Paradox – understood as a set of contradictory and incompatible poles all supported by apparently
9 sound arguments – is considered to be a key element in modern organizations. As a result, paradox
10 scholars argue that successful managers are those able to accept the tensions arising from the paradox
11 and able to pursue all its constitutive poles simultaneously instead of choosing only one of them.
12 Paradox theory has been recently applied to corporate sustainability, and it is a theoretical approach
13 that has been endorsed by influential authors also in the HRM field. In this context, this paper takes
14 the still unexplored opportunity to apply paradox theory to green HRM. In particular, it explores the
15 HRM-related paradoxes perceived by organizations developing environmental sustainability via
16 human resource management. Adopting a comparative multiple case study approach, semi-
17 structured interviews and document analysis were conducted in six Italian companies explicitly
18 pursuing an environmental strategy. The findings encompass the main characteristics of the green
19 HRM systems of the organizations analyzed, and a list is provided of eight HRM-related paradoxes
20 perceived by those organizations. For each paradox, we present and discuss its contrasting poles and
21 the components of the HRM system that it affects. The implications of the findings for both green
22 HRM research and practice are presented and discussed.

23 **Key Words**

24 *paradox, environmental sustainability, green HRM, sustainable HRM*
25

1. INTRODUCTION

26
27
28 In recent years, the concept of sustainable HRM, defined as people-management practices that take
29 the development of social, environmental and human capital into account, has emerged in contrast
30 to strategic HRM, which is mostly focused on achieving economic goals and maximizing
31 profitability (Ehnert 2009; Kramar 2013). Within the broad field of sustainable HRM, a growing
32 stream of studies explores the relation between a set of specific HRM practices (called ‘green HRM’)
33 and environmental sustainability. Indeed, developing employees’ commitment to, and involvement
34 in, green objectives has been found to be a key factor in realizing environmentally sustainable
35 organizations (e.g. Renwick et al. 2013).

36 Notwithstanding the recent developments in the field, the present paper is based on the assumption
37 that both green HRM research and practice have not yet explored the potential benefits arising from
38 the adoption of paradox theory. Paradox theory – which conceives paradox as a set of two or more
39 contradictory, incompatible and interrelated poles (Poole and Van de Ven 1989) – has been applied
40 by a growing number of contributions recently published by highly reputed organization studies
41 journals (e.g. Dameron and Torset 2014 on identity construction; Michaud 2014, on organizational
42 governance; Putnam et al. 2014, on flexible work arrangements; Kozica et al. 2015, on organizational
43 identity). Indeed, organization theorists view paradoxes as constitutive elements of modern
44 organizations, and they assume that the coexistence of their multiple poles generates tensions which
45 – depending on the coping strategies adopted by the organization – give rise to vicious or virtuous
46 cycles (Lewis, 2000). Vicious cycles emerge when organizations focus on one single pole following
47 an ‘either/or’ approach; these cycles are said to exacerbate tensions and are associated with missing
48 alternative perspectives and organizational inertia (Smith and Lewis 2011). By contrast, virtuous

49 cycles emerge when organizations develop an awareness of paradoxical tensions and choose all poles
50 of the paradox following a ‘both/and’ approach, even if this may be perceived as counterintuitive or
51 unrealistic. The benefits of virtuous cycles range from fostering radical and incremental innovation
52 (e.g. Andriopoulos and Lewis 2009) to ensuring organization survival in the long run (e.g. Probst
53 and Raisch 2005; Handy 1994).

54 In the HRM field, paradox theory seems to be a perspective that has characterized the work of such
55 influential scholars as Karen Legge and Paul Evans, although it is not yet fully recognized by extant
56 HRM research. This is because, in mainstream HRM research, paradoxical tensions have been
57 mostly considered from a ‘fit’ perspective which assumes that they can and should be ‘solved’,
58 instead of acknowledging the intrinsically contradictory nature of HRM activities (Legge 1978;
59 Evans 1999; Boselie et al. 2009; Sheehan et al. 2013).

60 In regard to corporate sustainability studies, scholars have applied paradox theory in order to
61 understand and improve sustainability-oriented practices by considering the multiple tensions that
62 the concept – which comprises different dimensions and traverses different levels of analysis – brings
63 to organizations and business leaders (Hahn et al. 2014a and b; Gao and Bansal 2013).

64 Although it has been recently argued that paradox is a fundamental lens through which to theorize
65 sustainable HRM (Ehnert 2009, 2014), it seems that green HRM has not yet taken the opportunity
66 to apply paradox theory, given that the field is heavily concentrated on content and design issues
67 (Jackson 2012). Consequently, here we adopt a paradox theory to explore the paradoxical tensions
68 that arise in the HRM area when companies decide to pursue environmental sustainability goals. In
69 particular, the aim of this explorative article is to contribute to green HRM theory and practice by
70 extending knowledge and comprehension of the HRM-related paradoxes that affect companies
71 developing environmental sustainability via HRM.

72 This knowledge extension represents an opportunity for green HRM practice. The previous literature
73 has highlighted several possible strategies for coping with paradoxes (Lewis 2000). What is relevant
74 here, however, is that two of these strategies are not considered to be constructive: ‘ignorance’, i.e.
75 not considering one pole of a paradox; and ‘denial’, i.e. assuming the two poles to be complementary
76 instead of contradictory. These strategies are critical because they deny the existence of tensions and
77 inhibit the learning opportunities generated by the emergence of paradoxes; “staying with the
78 paradox” (Vince and Broussine 1996: 4) is indeed considered a key ability for the ‘modern manager’
79 (Poole and Van de Ven 1989) and the emerging tensions may give rise to change and innovation by
80 “challenging actors’ cognitive limits, demanding creative sense-making, and seeking more fluid,
81 reflexive, and sustainable management strategies” (Smith and Lewis 2011: 395).

82 In accordance with these authors, we believe that the list of paradoxes identified in this paper will
83 help practitioners working on green HRM systems to detect paradoxes and develop a constructive
84 coping strategy, and also to make more informed design choices as they recognize the potential
85 downsides of their interventions. In parallel, the aim of the study is to contribute to the green HRM
86 literature, since our findings – in line with those of other contributions to organization studies –
87 support the idea that paradoxes are not sporadic accidents, but recurrent elements which affect the
88 components of the green HRM system. This study is thus an attempt to conduct critical re-evaluation
89 of the concept of ‘fit’ and to call for a more sophisticated approach to HRM-related tensions that
90 takes account of the complexity, ambiguity and diversity that characterize contemporary
91 organizations.

92 In pursuit of these objectives, the paper is organized as follows. The next section outlines the
93 theoretical framework, presenting how and why paradox theory has been adopted to understand
94 corporate sustainability and HRM. This leads to formulation of the study’s research objective and
95 questions. Then, the method section describes the various phases of the empirical research process

96 and all the related techniques, while the findings section presents the results of the study. In the last
97 three sections, we contextualize the research results in extant research, consider their implications
98 for green HRM practice, and discuss their limitations and possible future developments.

99

100 **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

101

102 The aim of this section is to explain why paradox theory is useful for analyzing environmental
103 sustainability in general and green HRM in particular, and to present the research questions
104 addressed in our research. Accordingly, we organize this section into three parts: in the first we show
105 the intrinsically paradoxical nature of sustainability in organizations; we then illustrate and discuss
106 the application of a paradox approach in analysis of green HRM; we finally present the research
107 objective and questions of the present study.

108

109 **2.1 The paradoxes of sustainability in organizations**

110 There are diverse definitions of the term ‘paradox’ in the management literature. Here we adopt the
111 one proposed by Poole and Van de Ven (1989: 563): “paradox consists of two contrary or even
112 contradictory propositions to which we are led by apparently sound arguments. Taken singly, each
113 proposition is incontestable, but taken together they seem to be inconsistent or incompatible”. The
114 pervasiveness of paradoxes is said to be related to tensions perceived by organizational actors (Lewis
115 2000). This concept has several applications in organization studies, and it has attracted substantial
116 attention in the top-tier journals (e.g. Warner 2009; Smith and Lewis 2011; Yoon and Chae 2012).
117 Today, it is considered to be a key theoretical lens through which to study organizations (for instance,
118 in 2013, *Organization Studies* called for papers on the paradoxes of organizational change and

119 innovation). Indeed, paradox is seen as a core theme of post-modern organizational design (Child
120 and McGrath 2001). The basic assumption is that dealing with paradoxes enables organizations to
121 improve the efficiency of existing products and to promote radical and incremental innovation for
122 future viability (Lewis 2000; Andriopoulos and Lewis 2009; Jansen et al. 2012). The literature
123 shows that companies able to manage mutually exclusive, but at the same time desirable, elements
124 are the ones most successful in the long term (Cameron 1986; Probst and Raisch 2005). Similarly,
125 the inability to deal with opposing forces is said to lead companies to failure (Handy 1994).

126 In the context of sustainability studies, corporate sustainability has been recognized as intrinsically
127 paradoxical because it brings tensions into organizations (Gao and Bansal 2013). In this regard, a
128 recent paper (Hahn et al. 2014a) identified four key sustainability-related paradoxes based on the
129 following contrapositions: (i) personal versus organizational sustainability agendas, which refers to
130 the broader paradox between individual agency and organizational structure (Barley and Tolbert,
131 1997); (ii) short-term orientation of the company's financial objectives versus long-run societal
132 expectations regarding environmental protection and social security (Held 2001); (iii) the need for
133 firm-specific organizational responses to stakeholders' pressures versus the institutionalization of
134 practices, which may affect sustainability-driven change with the risk of losing institutional
135 legitimacy (Midttun 2007); (iv) isomorphic pressure towards organizational efficiency versus a
136 societal need for diversity that fosters the resilience of social and organizational systems (Schutz,
137 1999).

138 According to paradox theory, those four paradoxes may be sources of learning and innovation when
139 organizations are able to live with the two poles of each paradox. Indeed, the suppression of one pole
140 of a paradox fuels vicious cycles because the focus on only one pole resurfaces the need for the other
141 (Lewis 2000). This inhibits the creative energy embedded in the tension (Sundaramurthy and Lewis
142 2003), so that organizational actors are paralyzed when they try to choose between the two poles

143 (Smith and Berg 1987).By contrast, developing constructive strategies is said to enable
144 organizational actors to manage those paradoxes by conceiving them as potential sources of
145 innovation and learning. For example, Kolk and Perego (2014) demonstrate how recognition and
146 acceptance of the tension between financial (short-term) versus social and environmental (long-term)
147 objectives leads companies to adjust variable pay systems to include both long- and short-term
148 concerns. This encourages managers to actively learn new competencies and creatively think about
149 new and more sustainable ways to do things.

150 Although the paradoxes reported by Hahn and colleagues (2014a) have been conceived in relation
151 to the broad concept of corporate sustainability (including the economic, social and environmental
152 dimensions), a paradox framework can also be applied to gain deeper understanding of
153 environmental sustainability *per se*. In light of the four above-mentioned paradoxes, we argue that
154 companies pursuing environmental policies experience paradoxical tensions, for example related to:
155 (i) the existence within the organization of different views on how and to what extent environmental
156 sustainability should be incorporated in business processes; the propensity of organizational
157 members to address environmental issues may be constrained by organizational practices, or the
158 organization's commitment to environmental sustainability may be not welcomed by organizational
159 actors (e.g. Bansal 2003; Pearce and Doh 2005); (ii) the difficulty of balancing environmental
160 objectives with business and social ones, for example regarding the issue of climate change, in regard
161 to which previous literature has demonstrated that its 'translation' into financial metrics (such as
162 carbon costs) by many companies narrows down the set of potential solutions and shortens the time-
163 horizon (Slawinski and Bansal 2012); (iii) the contraposition between the need to pursue radical
164 innovation and at the same time to preserve institutional legitimacy, as in the case of electric vehicles,
165 which, even if they represent a technological breakthrough, are still not common because they
166 challenge the expectations and consumption patterns of specialized media and car-users (Bakker et

167 al. 2012); (iv) the implementation of ‘standard’ green practices considered efficient by most of the
168 stakeholders versus firm-specific practices that foster diversity – as in the agricultural industry,
169 where many farmers implement similar green practices selecting the same crops, and thereby reduce
170 biodiversity and increase the social system’s level of resilience (Figge, 2004).

171 These tensions, together with decision-making under severe uncertainty and dealing with the lack of
172 information, bring a complexity into organizations oriented towards environmental sustainability
173 (Margolis et al. 2007; Matos and Hall 2007) that can be analytically understood more deeply by
174 adopting paradox theory (Ehnert 2009, 2014; Hahn et al. 2014b). At the same time, the practical
175 management of those tensions can be more effective when they are addressed within a paradox
176 frame. Regarding the first of the paradoxes discussed above, for example, organizations that ignore
177 or deny the contrast between individual versus organizational agendas in relation to environmental
178 sustainability experience high levels of conflict which may lead to poor HRM outcomes such as high
179 turnover or absenteeism or low workforce engagement. By contrast, as paradox theory maintains,
180 organizations that recognize this contraposition can manage it successfully by creating opportunities
181 for members to pursue their personal agendas (such as volunteering programs or green teams), or by
182 establishing formal procedures that enable organizational members to integrate their personal
183 agendas into the strategy-making process of the green organizational agenda. These initiatives –
184 even if they are not designed to eliminate the individuals/organization conflict – give rise to higher
185 satisfaction and motivation (Muthuri et al. 2009), as well as greater commitment to the organization’s
186 sustainability agenda (Andersson and Bateman 2000; Markusson 2010).

187 On recognizing the analytical and practical value of the application of paradox theory to
188 environmental sustainability, researchers in several disciplines have empirically analyzed the
189 paradoxes that environmental sustainability causes in organizations (see Kleindorfer et al. 2005 and
190 Wu and Pagell 2011 as examples of studies on the topic respectively pertaining to the disciplines

191 of logistics and supply chain management). To our knowledge, studies that address this topic in
192 HRM are still lacking. Given that environmental sustainability has proved to be an issue difficult
193 to manage in organizations, and that other managerial disciplines have applied paradox theory to
194 study it, we intend to extend the application of this theoretical framework to green HRM research
195 and practice. Consequently, we devote the next section to the development and discussion of a
196 paradox frame in which to analyze green HRM.

197

198 **2.2 Applying paradox theory to green HRM research and practice**

199 Paradox theory is present in, and has characterized the work of, influential researchers also in the
200 HRM research field, although not many scholars have formally referred to it. The seminal work by
201 Legge (1978), for instance, outlines ambiguities in the role of HR managers that make HRM an
202 intrinsically paradoxical field. In the 1990s, Evans (1999) extended this idea by contending that
203 ambiguities are the reaction of individuals to paradoxes and dilemmas. He concluded that “ambiguity
204 is the reactive face of the HRM subject to the oppositions of duality” (p. 333). Evans consequently
205 introduced “duality/dilemma/paradox theory”, which assumes that complex organizations face
206 opposing forces that need to be balanced dynamically. More recently, Boselie and colleagues (2009)
207 have listed twenty paradoxes intrinsic to HRM, including HRM vs. personnel management, HRM
208 vs. industrial relation, and ‘soft’ HRM vs. ‘hard’ HRM. Furthermore, the paradoxical view of HRM
209 has been supported by Sheehan and colleagues (2013), who showed how the role of HR managers
210 has inherent paradoxical tensions.

211 The application of paradox theory in HRM research has provided a more problematic view of
212 specific issues, and it has helped HRM practice to move away from oversimplified solutions. For
213 example, in a recent paper Putnam and colleagues (2014) have applied paradox theory to study

214 workplace flexibility. They find that organizations able to conceive (and accept) the tensions arising
215 from work and life – understood as two contradictory poles of a paradox – are more likely to satisfy
216 the work and non-work needs of employees. On the basis of this finding, the authors provide HRM
217 practice with in-depth recommendations on how to effectively design and support workplace
218 flexibility interventions in organizations.

219 Despite the analytical and practical contributions of paradox theory, however, this theoretical
220 approach has attracted only a few researchers in HRM. One possible explanation is that recent HRM
221 research has mostly endorsed contingency theory, under-representing the need to consider paradoxes
222 as constitutive components of modern organizations and HRM processes. Indeed, apart from some
223 exceptions which have highlighted the need to develop dynamic configurations (Pauwe et al. 2013),
224 the recurrent focus on fit – which can be traced back to the Harvard “map of HRM territory” (Beer
225 et al. 1984) – assumes that paradoxes and tensions can and should be ‘resolved’. By contrast, the
226 research studies reported here assume not only that tensions cannot be resolved by design (Evans
227 1999) but that they also are sources of new and more sophisticated HRM practices (Putnam et al.,
228 2014).

229 Within the broad field of HRM, an area in which the application of paradox theory is still
230 underdeveloped is green HRM, a matter to which recent HRM research and practice have devoted
231 increasing attention, especially in the past decade. Indeed, several scholars have studied the relation
232 between HRM and the firm’s environmental performance (e.g. Jabbour et al. 2008; Harris and
233 Tregidga 2012; Jackson et al. 2012; Paillé and Boiral 2013), and HRM journals have devoted special
234 issues to the topic (see Human Resource Management, 2012). Similarly, practitioners’ professional
235 associations have dedicated publications to it (SHRM, 2011 and 2013; CIPD, 2012 and 2013).

236 Empirical research has shown that HRM practices can effectively contribute to improvement of the
237 organization’s environmental performance. A recent review of research works by Renwick and

238 colleagues (2013) confirmed that HRM practices affect the environmental performances of firms.
239 Specifically, the authors adopted a synthetic representation by Jiang and colleagues (2012) of the
240 key components of the HRM system, which – drawing on AMO theory (Appelbaum et al. 2000) –
241 is conceived as composed of three main HRM policy domains: (1) the knowledge, skills, and abilities
242 (KSAs) domain (i.e. recruiting, selection and training), (2) the motivation and effort domain (i.e.
243 performance management, compensation and incentive), and (3) the opportunities-to-contribute
244 domain (i.e. employee involvement, industrial relations, and job design). Following this line of
245 analysis, Renwick and colleagues (2013) showed that all the three components of the HRM system
246 can improve organizational environmental performance by adopting environmental criteria in hiring
247 and selection and conducting training and development programs on green-related issues (e.g.
248 Jabbour 2013) – the KSAs domain; by developing employee motivation and commitment to
249 environmental management (e.g. Fernández et al. 2003) through formal and informal, monetary and
250 intangible incentives (e.g. Berrone and Gomez-Mejia 2009) – the motivation and effort domain; and
251 by offering opportunities to contribute to the sustainability debate within the company through
252 individual and collective engagement processes (e.g. Harvey et al. 2013) – the opportunity-to-
253 contribute domain.

254 Although the growing stream of research on Green HRM has largely extended the available
255 knowledge, it still seems to have neglected the paradox theoretical approach. As in the broader field
256 of HRM, the application of paradox theory to green HRM is a possible source of innovative
257 analytical and practical insights. This opportunity has been recently acknowledged by Jackson
258 (2012), who found that extant research on green HRM is mostly focused on content and design
259 issues. Jackson consequently called for a “problem-focused agenda for research on workforce
260 management and environmental sustainability” in order to recognize that “HRM practitioners
261 negotiate solutions that optimize results against multiple and sometime conflicting goals, introduce

262 changes while at the same time sustaining a sense of continuity, respond to signals that suggests that
263 current conditions are changing, and remain flexible enough to adjust to an unknown future” (2012
264 p. 420). The apparently ambiguous posture of HRM practice noted by Jackson is connected with the
265 very nature of the idea of paradox, which assumes that organizations are webs of tensions where
266 opposing poles simultaneously co-exist and mutually reinforce each other. We thus argue that
267 paradox theory is a valuable theoretical lens through which to address the above-cited “problem-
268 focused agenda” for green HRM and, at the same time, to provide HRM practice with data-driven
269 recommendations.

270 Jackson also notes that “HRM scholars may recognize the need for internally consistent workforce
271 management practices, but often they focus their research efforts on just one or two elements of the
272 total system. Following the logic of ‘basic science’, they search for fundamental principles that apply
273 across contexts. But this approach seldom produces clear answers to the questions that practicing
274 managers must answer” (2012, p. 419). According to Jackson, if research on environmental
275 sustainability and green HRM is to improve its relevance to practice, HRM researchers should focus
276 on a wide set of green HRM practices, rather than on specific interventions, in order to endorse a
277 systemic perspective that acknowledges the complexity and variability of experiences in
278 organizations when managing sustainability issues. Similarly, Renwick and colleagues (2013: 10)
279 emphasize the need to consider the workings of the entire HRM system instead of focusing on one
280 or a few HRM practices. It is for this reason that in our study we focus on the overall green HRM
281 system, rather than on a narrow set of specific practices – a perspective which we believe is much
282 closer to that of practitioners in organizations.

283

284 **2.3 Objective and research questions of the study**

285 In the review of the literature, we identified a basic knowledge gap as follows: both sustainability
286 and HRM have proven to be paradoxical fields in organizations. Although this topic is addressed
287 by several theoretical and empirical studies, it seems to be neglected by green HRM scholarship.
288 In order to fill this gap, the present paper explores the paradoxes perceived by organizational actors
289 when designing the HRM system intended to support the company's development towards
290 environmental sustainability. The above-mentioned overarching objective of the study has been
291 translated into the following two research questions, which guided the empirical work as well as
292 the illustration of the findings:

- 293 1) Where did environmental sustainability impact on the HRM systems of the companies that we
294 studied?
- 295 2) Are there, and what are, the paradoxes that these companies encounter when implementing
296 green HRM policies and practices, and what were they?

297

298 **3. METHODS**

299

300 **3.1 Research Design**

301 Since the aim of the research was to investigate the paradoxes related to the design of green HRM
302 systems, we adopted a qualitative and interpretative approach (Schwandt 1994). Previous studies
303 had identified and theorized paradoxes through rich case studies (e.g. Leonard-Barton 1992;
304 Westenholz 1993). Similarly, our research was based on a multiple case study design in order to

305 gain broad understanding of the topic and a robust basis for analysis and discussion of the results
306 (Eisenhardt 1988; Yin 2003).

307 Qualitative research can be undertaken from a deductive or an inductive perspective. Deduction is
308 when researchers work within a defined framework; whereas induction is when they see the
309 development of relevant theory, new propositions and concepts as the purpose of the research
310 project (Whetten 1989). In our research we sought to combine both deduction and induction because
311 we believe, with Suddaby (2006), that new ideas arise from the combination of these two
312 fundamental approaches.

313 Accordingly, we started by investigating the green aspects of the HRM systems of the companies
314 studied. Then, when analyzing tensions and conflicts, we maintained an ‘open’ attitude towards the
315 concepts and themes emerging from analysis of the interviews in order to formulate our own
316 contribution to theory.

317 We decided to focus on the Italian context for two main reasons. First, in Italy, HRM is based on
318 what is known as the European model (Mayrhofer et al. 2012), which, compared to the US model,
319 has a stronger stakeholder orientation and is more deeply embedded in society and social awareness.
320 Moreover, according to Albareda and colleagues (2008), in Italy the government plays a
321 fundamental role in promoting environmental sustainability and leading companies towards social
322 and environmental objectives through dedicated policies (Perrini et al. 2007; Russo and Tencati
323 2009; Habisch et al. 2011). Italian companies are therefore in a cultural and institutional context
324 which motivates them to address social and environmental issues through a constructive and
325 participatory dialogue with their stakeholders stimulated by the government’s action.

326 Within this national context, case selection was guided by the purposeful sampling method (Patton
327 2002), which selects cases on the basis of their relevance to the research object and purpose. We
328 centered our sampling procedure on the members of a private foundation that interconnects

329 companies involved in social and environmental sustainability actions. The requirements for
330 organizations to be included were: (i) a high mandate within decision-making processes on HRM-
331 related issues; (ii) a significant commitment to environmental sustainability; (iii) relatively broad
332 experience in green HRM. In order to meet these requirements, we mainly selected companies with
333 Italian ownerships, since we wanted to collect opinions directly from planners of sustainability and
334 HRM policies; we conducted exploratory analysis of the corporate websites of the foundations
335 members to evaluate those policies, and we were also supported by the board of the foundation,
336 which drew on its deep knowledge of the members to indicate those most engaged in green HRM
337 programs.

338 This procedure assured the relevance of the cases to the purpose of the research, as well as the
339 interest and collaboration of participants. We selected ten possible participant companies, six of
340 which agreed to take part in the research. The entire fieldwork lasted ten months, from March to
341 December 2013. All the interviews were conducted directly in the offices or establishments of the
342 companies. Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of our sample.

343 [TABLE 1 AROUND HERE]
344

345 **3.2 Data Collection**

346 The case studies involved the extensive interviewing of key organizational actors, coupled with the
347 use of documentary evidence in the form of company reports, documents, corporate websites, and
348 other materials provided by interviewees. Before approaching each company, we generated
349 background information and circulated it within the research team. The latter consisted of two senior
350 researchers in HRM and organizational behavior, experienced in conducting research projects on
351 HRM topics that involve multiple private-sector companies, and two junior researchers at PhD level
352 with previous experience of qualitative data collection and analysis.

353 When the companies were approached, we initially asked if we could conduct interviews with the
354 HRM Director (HRMg), the Environmental Manager (EnvMg), and the Corporate Social
355 Responsibility Manager (CSRMg). However, in some cases the specific role did not exist, or roles
356 overlapped in the same person. The last column of Table 1 summarizes the number and order of
357 interviewees for each company, and their roles in the organization.

358 We organized the interviews so as to have the HRM director as the last interviewee. The interviews
359 with CSR and Environmental managers covered aspects such as the implementation of sustainability
360 policies in the company, current strategies and practices, responsibility for environmental matters
361 and 'green' performances, the contribution expected from the HRM department, and possible
362 sources of tensions. In the HRM director interview we collected information on the key features of
363 the green HRM system implemented by the company. We followed the above-illustrated
364 representation of the HRM system based on AMO theory, distinguishing its specific components
365 and their expected and actual impacts. In so doing, we referred to the general green HRM policies
366 and practices applied in each company, without focusing on a particular category of employees in
367 order to obtain a comprehensive representation of their green HRM systems. We concluded the
368 interview by examining the paradoxes affecting those systems. We tackled this topic by deciding not
369 to introduce the notion of paradox in our questions, but instead to rely on the common meaning of
370 the term 'tension' as a sensitizing concept (Blumer 1954) with which to explore problems and
371 potential conflicts inherent to green HRM.

372 The main data-gathering technique was the semi-structured interview (Drever 1997), which we
373 applied by following the guidelines for the ethnographic interview (Spradley 1979). In this regard,
374 the interview protocol was used as a flexible tool instead of a rigid scheme: we prioritized the natural
375 development of the interviewees' discourses, adapting the interview track while performing it.

376 All the interviews were conducted in Italian in the presence of two researchers, and they lasted
377 between one and two hours. The interviews were transcribed and translated into English in a way
378 that preserved their original meaning. The final empirical documentation of our research resulted in
379 16 interview reports, which were supported by written documentation both self-collected and
380 provided by the interviewees.

381

382 **3.3 Data Analysis**

383 Our analysis procedure made general reference to the guidelines for applied thematic analysis as
384 indicated by Guest et al. (2012). Accordingly, we organized the analysis into two steps.

385 First, we performed a structural coding process (Guest et al. 2012). This means that, based on our
386 research questions and the literature review, the researchers shaped different categories and
387 completed them for each company. Quotes and information about the green HRM system of each
388 company were summarized in a contrasting matrix and examined using a case-oriented approach
389 (Miles and Huberman 1994). Our initial purpose was to determine the impact of environmental
390 sustainability on the HRM system of each company; the main results of this operation are
391 summarized in section 2 of the findings and in Table 2.

392 We then conducted a cross-case analysis to identify elements recurrent across companies. This
393 analysis was based on the identification of themes: following Ryan and Bernard (2003), we inspected
394 the transcripts for recurrent arguments, comparisons and metaphors, making large use of indigenous
395 categories to code the text. We were particularly interested in detecting episodes that revealed
396 problems in the companies' green initiatives, and in the evaluation of their environment-related
397 HRM practices by the interviewees.

398 In this phase, two coders worked separately in order to avoid thinking inertia. Each researcher drew
399 up a list of paradoxes that were then discussed jointly by the research team. Once a shared definition
400 of each paradox had been established, the researchers again went through the texts, re-coding them.
401 Problems and inconsistencies were resolved by basing the interpretation on the identification of
402 ‘exemplar quotations’. These quotations were included in the description of the paradoxes (section
403 3 of the findings) and helped to anchor the research results (Guest et al. 2012). The triangulation of
404 analysis (Denzin 1978) also helped to enhance the reliability of the results, since only one of the
405 coders was also present during the interviews. The entire process was supported by the Atlas.ti 7
406 qualitative data analysis software.

407 We finally organized a focus group with seven of the managers interviewed, to whom we presented
408 our data interpretations. On this occasion, the HR managers acknowledged the explanatory capacity
409 of paradox theory in helping them diagnose the tensions characterizing the green HRM systems of
410 their companies. Although the aim was not to seek confirmation or disconfirmation of results, this
411 further interview session enabled us to refine our analysis and integrate the findings on the basis of
412 the practitioners’ feedback (Bloor et al. 2001).

413 The research findings are presented in the next section. We first introduce the key features of the
414 green HRM systems that we studied and then present the paradoxes characterizing those systems.

415

416

417

418

4. FINDINGS

419

420 **4.1 Key Features of the Green Human Resource Management System(s)**

421 A considerable part of our research was devoted to understanding what kind of HRM-related actions
422 companies put in place in order to support the organization’s environmental performance. For this
423 purpose, part of the interviews explored the extent to which the various components of the HRM
424 system were devoted to green purposes by the companies. The practices that emerged from the
425 interviews are now described (and summarized in Table 2) following the above-presented
426 representation of the HRM system proposed by Jiang and colleagues (2012).

427

428 **4.1.1 Knowledge, Skills and Abilities**

429 *Recruiting.* All the HR managers interviewed recognized the positive impact of communicating
430 sustainability plans to potential applicants, especially to young and educated ones, since younger
431 people are considered more sensitive to environmental matters. Among the HR managers
432 interviewed, only the HR manager of company F did not communicate green actions to the labor
433 market because, he argued, “the strategy of the company is focused more on implementing green
434 plans than communicating them”.

435 *Selection.* The HR managers took two approaches to designing selection processes to support
436 environmental performance: (i) including environmental sustainability-related issues in interviews
437 and reflecting on them during the selection process to check candidates’ sensitivity and alignment
438 with the company’s view (companies A, D, and E); (ii) including environmental sustainability-
439 related issues in interviews but focusing only on technical skills and not on environmental sensitivity
440 when selecting candidates (company B). In fact, the HR managers did not consider a ‘green
441 credential’ to be a discriminatory criterion for hiring: this happened only in the case of technical
442 roles requiring environment-related skills and knowledge as essential components of the job

443 requirements. Interestingly, company B remarked that its focus in the selection process on ‘green’
444 technical skills for specific positions was due to the fact that, in many cases, Italian and European
445 public administrations, which represent a significant market for the company, require their service
446 providers to declare, in commercial proposals, the extent to which the employees with key roles in
447 the project possess environment-related competencies or certifications.

448 *Training.* While some HR managers organized environmental training only for specific positions
449 related to environmental issues (company C), others arranged training for all employees (companies
450 A, D and F). Notably, all the companies that provided extensive environment-related training to
451 large proportions of their employees (A, D and F in our sample) took advantage of public funds
452 devoted, by local, national or European public policies, to the support of employee competence
453 development on green-related issues. Moreover, because selection and training practices were
454 considered jointly when developing the necessary skills, a company may invest more in the selection
455 process and less in training, or vice versa. For instance, company E’s HR manager declared that they
456 had decided to focus on environment-related skills in the selection process in order to avoid investing
457 in environmental training.

458

459 **4.1.2 Motivation and Effort**

460 *Performance Management.* The HR managers of companies B and C stated they were interested in
461 measuring only those environmental performances that enable cost reduction. Nevertheless, it was
462 also possible to find individual or unit performance targets aimed at improving organizational
463 environmental performances (companies A, D, E and F).

464 *Incentive and compensation.* The companies had introduced both monetary and non-monetary
465 incentives to motivate employees in regard to environmental plans (companies A, C, D, E and F).
466 They sometimes employed creative forms of symbolic reward, such as the planting of a tree for each

467 employee, ‘employee of the month’ prizes, or even chances for employees to attend a week-long
468 WWF (World Wildlife Fund) camp (company F).

469

470 **4.1.3 Opportunity to Contribute**

471 *Employee involvement.* The companies sought to increase the participation of their employees in
472 environmental sustainability plans by using suggestion boxes, conferences, meetings, sustainability
473 reports and social networks (e.g. the company intranet). For example, whereas companies A and D
474 used suggestion boxes to involve employees in sustainability processes, rewarding suggestions
475 according to the level of their applicability, company E used its intranet as a tool through which
476 employees could exchange views on environmental sustainability.

477 *Job Design.* Environmental tasks were never included in job descriptions, with the exception of
478 special technical positions or responsibility roles (e.g. site managers for companies in the chemicals
479 and steel industries, like A, C and E).

480 In sum, among the different components of the HRM system, we found that all the HR managers in
481 the companies that we studied had adopted performance measurement practices to enhance
482 environmental performance. Moreover, interviewees from five out of six companies stated that they
483 applied recruitment, selection, and incentives policies to foster the environmental sustainability goals
484 of their companies. Finally, we found that the job description was the tool least used to improve
485 environmental performance, because only three companies had job specifics, and these specifics
486 were only for positions directly related to environmental responsibilities. The details of each
487 company’s green HRM practices are presented in Table 2.

488 [TABLE 2 AROUND HERE]

489

490

4.2 Eight Paradoxes That Occur When Human Resource Management Meets

Environmental Sustainability

In this section, we report on the paradoxes emerging in relation to the design of green HRM systems. Analysis of our cases identified eight paradoxes, each of which is reported below. We present the sound but contradictory arguments that characterize each pole, and support these arguments with examples and quotations from the interview data.

4.2.1 Green performance vs. other social and economic performances

Setting environmental goals along with other goals (economic, social, and human) puts companies in a complex situation and may bring a paradox to light. The first pole concerns employing HRM to improve environmental plans. However, fostering environmental plans increases the possibility of financial shortages and may be detrimental to other plans. Thus, the second pole of this paradox entails using the potential of HRM to enhance financial and social performances.

Since it was undergoing a major restructuring, Company B is an example of company where there has recently been an open conflict between environmental performance and social and financial performances. The general HR manager seemed to have a strong position on this issue:

My policy is “people come before everything”, even sustainability; If we have to make cuts, we first cut all the rest, and only at the end, if necessary, we cut people. But you also have to include the other themes in this process because, for example, regarding sustainability, the working environment is crucial for employee satisfaction - [HRMg, B]

The interviewee was aware that sustainability has implications for company life: for example, relative to employee satisfaction and work performance. Hence HR managers cannot entirely avoid

513 this dimension, and they have two main strategies with which to contribute to the greening of their
514 organizations:

515 (1) focusing on green performances when they do not imply costs for the company;

516 *Our company is more concerned with cost reduction; it enables us to pursue our initiatives but*
517 *without using any resources... and the imperative is always not to increase costs... - [HRMg, B]*

518 (2) implementing green performance when the company has no other priority;

519 *It is not easy to talk about sustainability when we are reorganizing production. There is a heavy*
520 *climate in the company whereby some projects are seen as accessory - [CSRmg, C]*

521 This paradox occurs at a very basic level of the HRM system: managers encounter it when they want
522 to set the direction and objectives of the green HRM system. The companies that we studied were
523 strongly committed to environmental sustainability; they therefore all expressed the desire to
524 improve environmental performance. Nevertheless, when there were other issues at stake, these
525 companies preferred to pursue environmental sustainability goals as ‘accessory’ ones and to
526 prioritize other objectives.

527

528 **4.2.2 An open vs. a closed green HRM system**

529 Environmental sustainability poses the following question for managers: what is the context of our
530 actions? Is it HRM policies and practices, the entire organization, or should external actors also be
531 involved? When structuring the boundaries of green HRM systems, companies should pay attention
532 to the emergence of the following paradox.

533 On the first pole, companies could undertake actions directed at external parties like the employers’
534 association, non-profit associations, public administrations, suppliers or even customers. The second
535 pole of the paradox consists of strategies centered on the internal dimension of organizations.

536 The ambitious recruitment plan of company D represents a case of an ‘open’ HRM system:

537 *Five years ago, when many elderly workers took early retirement, the company was devoid of skills:*
538 *fresh intake had to remedy the losses. [D]’s managers decided to develop a recruitment program in*
539 *collaboration with local technical high schools. They started to select outstanding students willing*
540 *to undertake a dual training program [...] the selection was supported by a work psychologist, who*
541 *helped the company to assess candidates’ attitudes towards environmental and safety issues. At the*
542 *end of the project, all the trainees were hired... - [HRMg, D]*

543 The project “was a success”, concluded the interviewee, because it enabled the company to create a
544 trust relation with the new employees, as well as with the local community and its educational
545 institutions.

546 Although actions of this kind positively affect relations with the organization’s external context, they
547 may also present some difficulties. For example, the environmental manager of a pharmaceutical
548 company (C) explained that customers are used to glass bottles as drug-containers, but glass is not
549 environmentally friendly, since it entails high costs and is not recyclable. A possible solution
550 proposed by the interviewee was to provide training and information to customers while extending
551 the boundaries of the green HRM system. “But it is hard to change the mentality” she concluded,
552 explaining why the company decided to not undertake any further initiative in this direction.

553 Another difficulty occurs when partners pay little attention to environmental aspects. Whilst a
554 partnership, with a supplier for example, can be useful, companies often encounter the problem that
555 other organizations lack technical knowledge or commitment; in other words, companies may have
556 few internal tensions whereas external resistance may be huge.

557 By choosing the first pole, HR managers can also have an impact outside the company boundaries,
558 although in many cases there is high external resistance. The alternative is to focus on the internal
559 workforce, relying for example on training instruments and intervention on work practices. A
560 ‘closed’ HRM system forgoes the creation of synergies and collaborations with a wider range of

561 actors outside the organization, thus limiting possible difficulties but also its scope and margin of
562 action.

563

564 **4.2.3 Focusing the green HRM system on everyday work vs. symbolic events**

565 HRM was often depicted in the interviews as a ‘soft function’, by which is meant that it especially
566 concerns cultural aspects such as the fit between company values and employees’ values, their
567 sensitivity and attitudes towards certain topics. Nevertheless, organizations also have a ‘hardware’
568 consisting of rules, procedures and work habits.

569 Consequently, sustainability can assume one or other of these two faces. This paradox has to do with
570 the degree of formalization and integration of the green HRM system in the organization. At one
571 pole there is a conception of sustainability as a mainly cultural dimension manifest in speeches,
572 slogans, symbols, yearly meetings, or resounding initiatives. At the other pole, environmental
573 sustainability is widespread in the organization because managers integrate it into everyday work
574 through regulations and procedures.

575 HR managers must address this paradox when formalizing green HRM policies and practices: should
576 they act at the level of the symbolic representation of the company, or should they be more focused
577 on the concrete work activity? The HR manager of C described the issue in these terms:

578 *I think there is a small gap between corporate culture and the concrete organization with its*
579 *procedures... although the cultural level somehow compensates for this procedural inadequacy. It*
580 *is sometimes difficult to move from initiatives to policy because our company style is liquid, fluid,*
581 *and it is difficult for us to structure our initiatives - [HRMg, C]*

582 When the cultural aspect of sustainability prevails, it creates enthusiasm and involvement,
583 reinforcing the company’s values and its public image. At the same time, it is a signal that
584 sustainability needs periodic recall in the minds of everybody; otherwise it will be overlooked. It is

585 for this reason that the HR manager of company F hoped for a gradual evolution towards greater
586 integration of sustainability into “everyday business”:

587 *Communication and involvement are really important, not only in relation to sustainability, and we*
588 *have to balance symbolic situations and everyday business. The company can consider itself mature*
589 *when there is no longer a need for celebratory occasions with high emotional value, such as the*
590 *annual sustainability day - [HRMg, F]*

591 On the other hand, this is how the CSR manager of E illustrated the shortcomings of a highly
592 formalized green HRM system:

593 *We do many things, but sometimes you lose the general sense of what you are doing: in the end, you*
594 *do not know if your actions have had a positive impact at the global level or any impact at all...*
595 [CSRMg, E]

596 Although simplifying and overemphasizing certain aspects, communication and symbolic events
597 provide all employees with a ‘general sense’ of their environmental efforts. But managers should
598 also help to integrate environmental sustainability into the organizational routine, in order to
599 influence concrete work practices. In conclusion, when defining the formalization of green HRM
600 systems, companies need constantly to balance “symbolic situations and everyday business”.

601

602

603

604 **4.2.4 Collective vs. Individualized Green HRM Practices**

605 Every company is a mixture of employees with different characteristics, interests, and perspectives:
606 these often represent a problematic aspect of organizations. In other words, internal diversity gives
607 rise to a paradoxical situation. Companies in which explicit messages and strategic statements

608 connect visions and missions to environmental goals are aware that those messages have different
609 audiences. This paradox emerges when setting the level of standardization of the green HRM system.
610 At one pole there are undifferentiated messages and practices that clarify ambiguities regarding
611 strategic environmental plans. The alternative strategy is to focus on the attitudes of employees and
612 assign suitable practices to different categories.

613 For example, in company C environmental efforts were directed at all employees without
614 considering their position and organizational level.

615 *Not all of the middle managers are fully committed to ES and we take the risk of sending ambiguous*
616 *messages to all workers: it might be that an employee is strongly committed to environmental*
617 *sustainability, whereas his/her direct supervisor is not committed at all... - [HRMg, C]*

618 Neglecting different orientations and positions may affect the way in which supervisors manage their
619 subordinates, causing misunderstandings and failures.

620 For example, the HR manager of company D explained that, while younger people are more sensitive
621 to environmental plans, older workers “for reasons such as age and monoculture” regard
622 environmental plans as unnecessary. The company decided to deal with this inconsistency by
623 differentiating HRM practices in relation to the different age groups. We have already illustrated
624 (paradox 2) the company’s ambitious recruitment plan, which injected young, environmentally
625 sensitive employees into the organization. Regarding senior employees and workers, they decided
626 instead to intervene on work practices, modifying the layout of workplaces and introducing rules
627 and procedures on safety and waste disposal: since they could not impact on the inner beliefs and
628 values of this part of the workforce, they decided to act on concrete work behaviors in order to reduce
629 the inconsistency within the company.

630 The universal approach is simple to manage and effective in the case of strong homogeneous
631 company cultures, and when there is a shared commitment to sustainability goals at all company

632 levels. Conversely, it fails to address different values and interests of employees when internal
633 heterogeneity is high. The individualized approach instead needs more time and preparation, but it
634 is successful in taking advantage of potential capabilities of even those employees who are not green-
635 oriented.

636

637 **4.2.5 Value-free vs. Value-based Employee Involvement**

638 In the management of HR, some choices must be made with regard to how much a company wants
639 its employees to be engaged in sustainability efforts, and what kind of involvement they should have
640 in the realization of environmental plans.

641 Employee involvement may be on a purely instrumental basis defined in the employment contract
642 and supported by the benefit system. Or it may be rooted in personal attitudes that mobilize
643 employees' values and sensitivity. This paradox operates at the level of motivations and
644 opportunities for employees to participate.

645 An example of value-free, transactional involvement is provided by company F, which operated in
646 mass retailing. This company had implemented a system of sanctions to induce store-level
647 collaborators to collect waste packaging in the proper manner. Value-free involvement mechanisms
648 can reach all the employees in the organization, not only those already committed to environmental
649 sustainability. A system of control and sanctions of this kind is effective in reducing deviant behavior
650 and free riding, although it does not assure a workforce truly committed to environmental actions.

651 It is important to have employees aligned with the organization's overall vision and mission. It is for
652 this reason that some companies (A, C, E) declared that they sought to verify candidates' 'green
653 orientation' during job interviews. However, when managing their personnel, a further process of
654 involvement raised the risk of creating new expectations and demands for companies:

655 *There's fear and uncertainty in every change process. Many people do not do their best because they*
656 *do not know where the change is leading. There's also a fear in activating people: they may become*
657 *more critical and ask always for more if the company shares some problems or doubts...* - [HRMg,
658 F]

659 The same risk was identified by the CSR manager of E, who stated that when she asked someone
660 for their opinion, “they [would] come back and ask me for feedback”. This is because people are not
661 easily satisfied and “always want to know the result of their contribution”.

662 The paradox is essentially related to whether a company prefers ‘activated’ employees, accepting
663 the implications of raising their motivations and expectations; or whether a company prefers value-
664 free employee involvement. Benefit/sanction systems reinforce an exclusively instrumental attitude
665 towards sustainability goals; but at the same time, they are less problematic from the managerial
666 point of view and more effective in reaching the workforce as a whole.

667

668 **4.2.6 Top-down vs. bottom-up change processes**

669 In our research we found that the nature of environmental sustainability implementation can be
670 traced back to either top-down or bottom-up change processes. Strategic and structured actions
671 pertain to top-down practice, meaning that they start from top management and then follow the
672 process structured by top managers. By contrast, companies can obtain involvement, commitment
673 and participation through bottom-up processes, which arise mainly from employees and then spread
674 to the upper levels of the organization.

675 There are many reasons that induce companies to choose top-down practices: for example, the
676 influence of top management decisions, the possibility of cost reduction and clear evaluation of
677 interventions, or the possibility to implement prompt corrective actions. For example, company E,
678 had decided to opt for a general top-down approach to sustainability; the CEO said that this was

679 necessary because otherwise there would have been no significant improvement in the company's
680 environmental performance.

681 One problem with this approach is that it places a great deal of stress on results, even though when
682 companies undertake an action, the results are not certain and information is never complete.

683 *When colleagues devise a project, a doubt remains: can we manage to balance people, planet earth,*
684 *and profits? The goal is ambitious, the project goes in the right direction, with data on the reduction*
685 *of carbon dioxide and waste... but one may wonder how much the model actually affects global*
686 *balances. It is a virtuous path, but to what extent can you affect this balance? - [CSRMg, E]*

687 Moreover, when companies follow this pathway, it seems that they have difficulties in creating
688 commitment:

689 *The main challenge is creating commitment. This is the most difficult thing needed to start the*
690 *project, because it requires a substantial initial investment and it is hard to manage involvement -*
691 *[CSRMg, E]*

692 Alternatively, management can support the emergence of ideas by creating spaces and opportunities
693 for employees to participate. In this regard, company E also tried to stimulate suggestions and change
694 initiatives from the employee level. This bottom-up approach was characterized by “less pressure”
695 and “more spontaneity” in the words of the interviewee. Nevertheless, there were some other
696 weaknesses:

697 *We organized forums where people could discuss environmental sustainability. We were trying to*
698 *reduce impacts at the individual level, including private life, but some saw it as an intrusion, because*
699 *they saw a disproportion between individual and business impacts. These topics are delicate and*
700 *may cause employee complaints - [CSRMg, E]*

701 The advantage of top-down initiatives is that they are more effective and controllable, although they
702 may suffer from a lack of commitment. Bottom-up processes are more spontaneous; but when they

703 are in place, it is difficult to undertake a consistent set of environmental actions, or to frame them in
704 integrated environmental reports and branding activities, because the lack of a clear direction may
705 lead to ambiguous outcomes, disagreement, or even rejection.

706

707 **4.2.7 Centralization vs. decentralization of the green HRM system**

708 Managers know that environment-related plans require not only resources and funds but also
709 consistency in their implementation and the involvement of all departments. In light of these
710 requirements, a key question is whether the company should have a separate centralized
711 environmental department or environmental professionals working in all departments (decentralized
712 structure). This question concerns the structuring of green HRM systems, and it directly affects the
713 criteria defining all the three HRM policy domains (i.e. knowledge, skills, and abilities; motivation
714 and effort; opportunities-to-contribute).

715 A centralized environmental department enables companies to undertake explicit and distinct
716 environmental actions and to have specialized employees whose abilities, roles and responsibilities
717 are clearly defined for the other departments.

718 On describing the relation with the HRM department of her company, the head of the environment
719 department of company C said:

720 *The contribution of the HR results in strongly supportive action. For example, when communicating*
721 *to employees the results of environmental performances such as waste collection, recycling, energy*
722 *savings ... - [EnvMg, C]*

723 Nevertheless, centralized structures may pass on problems from one department to another,
724 complicating company structure and decision-making. Another problem of centralization is that the
725 environmental competences of the HRM department may not be enough to guide employees:

726 *In terms of supportive training, the HR plays a passive role, since the environment department*
727 *proposed the environmental training and the HR only agreed with them* -[ENVMg, C]

728 Companies need culture, time and training to become decentralized. However, this strategy is
729 attractive for organizations because it decreases the misconnection between departments. A concrete
730 example of decentralization is provided by the role of the sustainability development coordinator
731 (SDC) in company F. The definition of this role emphasizes the fact that sustainability development
732 is considered to be common responsibility in the company.

733 *Our slogan is: everyone is responsible for every responsibility!* [emphasis]. *Responsibility thus*
734 *refers to good suppliers, transport, people management, customer contact, products marketing,*
735 *support in the use of increasingly green products, impact in the area where the store is located,*
736 *waste disposal [...] every business unit works to reinforce the sustainability process* - [SDC, F]

737 Company F, which operated in mass retailing, had a highly decentralized structure. Since the
738 beginning of its sustainability strategy, established in every store had been ‘green teams’ which
739 devised and pursued their own environmental initiatives. An emerging problem was that realization
740 of these initiatives was strongly dependent on the willingness of local actors like store managers.

741 In conclusion, decentralized structures are more difficult to achieve, and stakeholders within and
742 outside the organization may consider the environment to be a secondary concern because there is
743 no central authoritative interlocutor. Centralization instead assign clear tasks and responsibilities to
744 specialized managerial figures, but it increases internal disconnection because other departments can
745 only play a supportive role in the development and realization of environmental plans.

746

747 **4.2.8 Role of the HR manager: personal credibility vs. professional credibility**

748 The last paradox has to do with the degree and form of involvement of employees in the greening of
749 their companies, and it focuses on those actors in the organization who work directly on the HRM

750 system: HR managers and their staff. This paradox is related to the personal positioning of people
751 working in HRM departments with regard to environmental sustainability. The issue at stake is this:
752 is it preferable to have ‘technical’ support, based mainly on the company’s requirements and
753 operating through the classic HRM tools; or to have the ‘personal’ involvement of HR managers
754 which overcomes the boundaries of their professional and working lives?

755 The two poles are well exemplified by the opposed positions of two interviewees. According to the
756 HR manager of B, “beyond ethics and an ideal commitment to improving the world, which are part
757 of every individual, the role of the HR manager should be distinct...”, since – the interviewee further
758 explained – it is not part of this role to promote environmental sustainability at the company level.
759 Another interviewee instead preferred a more ‘exposed position’ from the point of view of his private
760 life and everyday choices:

761 *The most difficult thing was changing personal behaviors in order to reach congruence between*
762 *what is said and done in lifestyles, especially in the domestic and private sphere. Because in order*
763 *to spread a green message I must be believable [emphasis]. So, me and my family, we decided to*
764 *make purchase choices such as getting rid of the car, paying attention to water and energy*
765 *consumption, etcetera. This enabled me to see myself as a reliable interlocutor and as carrying*
766 *forward environmental efforts for my company in a vigorous way - [HRMg, F]*

767 According to the first interviewee, a ‘professional approach’ focused on specific HRM tools
768 strengthens the position of HR managers and gives them more power in supporting sustainability
769 policies along with other organizational objectives. By contrast, the second interviewee thought that
770 the personal example of HR managers in the promotion of sustainability at company level, although
771 less systematic, was more effective in “carrying forward environmental efforts” in regard to himself
772 and the employees.

773 In the first case, the HR manager is a ‘professional supporter’ of sustainability, helping to design a
774 technically optimal green HRM system involving recruitment, training, job design, benefits, etc. In
775 this way HR managers support the greening of their organization by doing what they know best:
776 HRM. The other option is to overcome role boundaries by bringing personal values into work, so as
777 to heighten the effect of green HRM interventions with the personal examples and beliefs of HR
778 managers.

779

780

5. DISCUSSION

781

782 In the previous section we presented: (i) the features of the green HRM systems implemented in each
783 organization, considering respectively ability-enhancing practices (recruiting, selection, training and
784 development), motivation-enhancing practices (performance management, incentive and
785 compensation), and opportunity-enhancing practices (employee involvement and job design
786 practices); (ii) the eight paradoxes that we identified in the companies analyzed when HRM meets
787 environmental sustainability. In this section, we discuss the knowledge advances of the research
788 findings.

789 In regard to our first result (i.e. the green HRM practices implemented by the organizations studied),
790 those organizations had a broad set of implemented practices. We found that the organizations
791 selected engaged in practices similar to those considered by previous studies (referring in particular
792 to Renwick et al., 2013). For example, five out of the six companies analyzed had green practices
793 covering all three components of the HRM system, i.e. green HRM practices enhancing abilities,
794 motivations, and opportunities. The exception was by company B (a global company operating in
795 the consultancy industry) which did not implement any practice included in the opportunity domain.

796 This confirms that the practicing managers whom we interviewed operated on a highly diversified
797 set of green HRM policies and practices, experiencing the complexity and interrelation of
798 sustainability-oriented interventions in organizations. Therefore, following Jackson (2012), we
799 argue that, by analyzing the overall green HRM system rather than a limited set of HRM practices,
800 our study derived a picture of green HRM close to the concrete everyday experience of practitioners
801 in organizations.

802 Moreover, in relation to the relevance of the national and institutional context, we showed how these
803 companies implemented green HRM practices in order (i) to fulfill explicit commercial requirements
804 imposed by public administrations in relation to the green-related competencies that key employees
805 of their service providers are required to possess, or (ii) to take advantage of public resources
806 supporting extensive training activities on green-related issues.

807 Besides these observations relative to our first findings, we consider this study's essential finding to
808 be that paradoxes characterized all the companies analyzed. Moreover, paradoxes were found to be
809 pervasive in all the components of the green HRM system. Indeed, paradoxes were apparent in
810 relation to the objectives of the green HRM system (paradox 1), its boundaries (paradox 2), its
811 formalization (paradox 3) and standardization (paradox 4). Paradoxes were also found in relation to
812 specific practices within the green HRM system, such as promoting employee green abilities
813 (paradox 7), motivation (paradox 7), and opportunities (paradoxes 5, 6, and 7). Finally, it emerged
814 that even the role of the HR manager becomes paradoxical in environmental sustainability-oriented
815 companies (paradox 8).

816 These findings extend the previous literature in two directions.

817 First, although our results concern the experience of a limited number of companies, they show that
818 sustainability in general, and environmental sustainability in particular, are intrinsically paradoxical
819 and convey paradoxes to organizations – as has been illustrated by several contributions in

820 organization disciplines (e.g. Bansal 2003; Kleindorfer et al. 2005; Matos and Hall 2007; Wu and
821 Pagell 2011; Slawinski and Bansal, 2012). As a consequence, we argue that the adoption of paradox
822 theory as a lens through which to study sustainable HRM represents a fertile and insightful
823 perspective, as theorized in the recent contributions by Ehnert (2009, 2014).

824 Second, this study contributes to the development of a more realistic and problematizing view of
825 the concept of fit (Paauwe et al. 2013) by integrating – and contextualizing in the HRM field –
826 management studies on paradox theory. Indeed, Cameron and Quinn (1988) state that considering
827 paradoxes enables researchers to understand the complexity, ambiguity and diversity of
828 organizations. Moreover, Eisenhardt and Westcott (1988: 170) claim that “the contribution of
829 paradox to management thinking is the recognition of its power to generate creative insight and
830 change”. Agreeing with authors that consider a ‘fit’ solution and polarized notions to be an
831 oversimplified interpretation (Boselie et al. 2009; Paauwe et al. 2013), our study shows that ‘fit’ (i)
832 is a complex task, since both poles of the paradoxes identified are attractive; (ii) is multi-level, since
833 there are many paradoxes at different levels of green HRM systems; (iii) is dynamic, since it
834 changes over time according to the priorities of organizations and their stakeholders. As a result,
835 we draw attention to the two following questions: (1) can we really expect companies to have a
836 perfect fit; in other words, is it doable? and (2) since many scholars such as Quinn et al. (1994) and
837 Denison et al. (1995), refer to paradoxes as learning opportunities, can we really suggest that
838 companies should constantly seek “the perfect fit”? Our findings support the idea that adopting a
839 fit perspective in green HRM is problematic, because it may not account for the paradoxical
840 tensions that seem to be persistent in green HRM systems, and because it may cause companies to
841 miss the learning opportunities that those paradoxes offer.

842

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR GREEN HRM PRACTICE

843
844
845 The previous discussion brings us to the managerial implications of this study. From the standpoint
846 of green HRM practice, we highlight the implications for two specific types of practicing managers.
847 First, we believe that our findings are important for managers designing green HRM systems ‘from
848 scratch’ because they can help those managers to make more informed design choices by considering
849 the potential downsides. For example, a company might decide to mobilize its workforce towards
850 environmental sustainability by developing more green-oriented values and organizational culture,
851 rather than by incorporating it into standard procedures. Our findings – in particular paradox 5,
852 ‘value-free versus value-based involvement’ – suggest to such a company that this choice has the
853 potential to activate employees’ motivation on green issues. At the same time, however, without a
854 system that sanctions free-riding behavior, the company is taking the risk not to ‘onboard’ the
855 employees not sensitive to these topics. The list of paradoxes can thus be useful to warn practitioners
856 of the possible ‘B-side’ of each design choice when arranging the green HRM system of their
857 company. We argue that this warning function is particularly important in a growing field like green
858 HRM, where there is the risk of applying oversimplified solutions, for example supported by global
859 HRM consultancy firms, or of diffusing a ‘best-practicism’ mindset supported by success stories
860 disseminated by non-scientific publications.

861 Second, the paradoxes illustrated can help managers working on existing green HRM practices to
862 develop a constructive reaction to possibly emerging paradoxes. Indeed, we know from the previous
863 literature that there are two possible reactions to paradoxes. The first reaction is to control/suppress
864 the paradox, which means assuming a defensive position in an attempt to avoid it. The alternative
865 reaction is to cope with/explore the paradox; this allows managers to consider paradoxes as

866 opportunities that enable them to profit from tensions (Eisenhardt and Westcott 1988; Lewis 2000;
867 Ehnert 2009). The development of the latter reaction is fostered by recognition of the paradox and
868 the related tension, as well as the view of them as “normal” rather than as “exceptional” elements of
869 organizational life (Lewis 2000). From this perspective, the paradoxes presented here can be used
870 by practitioners operating in environmental sustainability-oriented companies to recognize the
871 paradoxes in their green HRM practices and to consider them as ‘normal’, in order to develop
872 context-specific constructive coping strategies.

873

874

7. CONCLUSIONS

875

876 In conclusion, we recognize that green HRM is a relatively new and effervescent area of research
877 and practice, and that application of a paradox view is an innovative contribution in this area.
878 Therefore, like any other, this study suffers from some limitations that, given its exploratory nature,
879 can be considered an agenda for future research. One limitation concerns the size and features of our
880 sample, since we targeted six big environmentally-committed companies, with relevant experience
881 in green HRM and operating in the Italian context, which has cultural and institutional peculiarities
882 in regard to environmental sustainability. Future research (especially quantitative studies) could
883 investigate, on a larger and differentiated sample, what organizational, cultural and institutional
884 variables are associated with specific green HRM paradoxes. Secondly, our research involved only
885 designers of environmental sustainability plans (i.e. HR, CSR and environmental managers) and not
886 other organizational actors that are the ‘users’ of those plans, such as employees or line managers.
887 Moreover, our interviews generally referred to green policies and practices applied to the whole
888 workforce. Since HRM systems are usually differentiated for different groups of employees (e.g.

889 Dierdoff and Morgeson 2013), further research is needed to explore what are the paradoxes
890 perceived by different occupational groups within organizations. Thirdly, we restricted our study to
891 identification of the paradoxes without describing the coping strategies adopted by the organizations
892 studied to deal with them and their outcomes: this also represents an avenue for future research.
893 Notwithstanding its limitations and the exploratory nature of our work, we believe that this study
894 represents a step forward in the study of green HRM in organizations. Through a multiple case study
895 research design, we identified a list of eight HR-related paradoxes occurring in companies that
896 pursue environmental objectives via HRM tools. The main contribution of our paper is that
897 environmental sustainability brings a set of unavoidable paradoxes to HRM and, as a consequence,
898 both researchers and HR managers need to recognize and learn possible ways to deal with them.

899

900

901

902

REFERENCE LIST

- 903 Albareda, L., Lozano, J.M., Tencati, A., Midttun, A., and Perrini, F. (2008), 'The changing role of governments in
904 corporate social responsibility: drivers and responses', *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 17, 347-363.
905 Andersson, L. M., and Bateman, T. S. (2000). 'Individual environmental initiative: Championing natural environmental
906 issues in U.S. business organizations', *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 4, 548-570.
907 Andriopoulos, C., and Lewis, M. W. (2009), 'Exploitation-exploration tensions and organizational ambidexterity:
908 Managing paradoxes of innovation', *Organization Science*, 20, 4, 696-717.
909 Appelbaum, E., Bailey, T., Berg, P., and Kalleberg, A. (2000), *Manufacturing advantage: why high-performance work
910 systems pay off*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
911 Bakker, S., van Lente, H., and Engels, R. (2012). 'Competition in a technological niche: The cars of the future',
912 *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 24, 5, 421-434.
913 Bansal, P. (2003). 'From issues to actions: The importance of individual concerns and organizational values in
914 responding to natural environmental issues', *Organization Science*, 14, 5, 510-527.
915 Barley, S. R., and Tolbert, P. S. (1997). 'Institutionalization and structuration: Studying the links between action and
916 institution', *Organization Studies*, 18, 1, 93-117.
917 Beer, M., Spector, B., Lawrence, P., Mills, D.Q. and Walton, R. (1984) *Human Resource Management: a General
918 Manager's Perspective*, New York: Free Press.
919 Berrone, P., and Gomez-Mejia, L. R. (2009), 'Environmental performance and executive compensation: An integrated
920 agency-institutional perspective', *Academy of Management Journal*, 52, 1, 103-126.
921 Bloor, M., Frankland, G., Thomas, M. and Robson, K. (2001), *Focus group in social research*, London: Sage.
922 Blumer, H. (1954), 'What is wrong with social theory?', *American Sociological Review*, 18, 3-10.
923 Boselie, P., Brewster, C., and Paauwe, J. (2009), 'In search of balance—managing the dualities of HRM: an overview of
924 the issues', *Personnel Review*, 38, 5, 461-471.

- 925 Cameron, K. S. (1986), 'Effectiveness as paradox: Consensus and conflict in conceptions of organizational
926 effectiveness', *Management science*, 32, 5, 539-553.
- 927 Cameron, K. S., and Quinn, R. E. (1988), 'Organizational paradox and transformation,' in *Paradox and transformation:
928 Toward a theory of change in organization and management*, eds. R. E. Quinn and K. S. Cameron, Cambridge,
929 MA: Ballinger, pp. 12-18
- 930 Child, J., and McGrath, R. G. (2001), 'Organizations unfettered: Organizational form in an information-intensive
931 economy', *Academy of management journal*, 44, 6, 1135-1148.
- 932 CIPD - Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2012), 'Responsible and sustainable business: HR leading
933 the way', available at www.cips.co.uk.
- 934 CIPD - Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2013), 'The role of HR in corporate responsibility', available
935 at www.cips.co.uk.
- 936 Dameron, S. and Torset, C. (2012), 'The discursive construction of strategists' subjectivities: Towards a paradox lens
937 on strategy', *Journal of Management Studies*, 51, 2, 291-318.
- 938 Denison, D., Hooijberg, R., and Quinn, R. E. (1995), 'Paradox and performance: Toward a theory of behavioral
939 complexity in managerial leadership', *Organization Science*, 6, 524-540.
- 940 Denzin, N. K. (1978), *Sociological Methods: A Sourcebook*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- 941 Dierdorff, E. C., and Morgenson, F. P., (2013), 'Getting what the occupation gives: Exploring multilevel links between
942 work design and occupational values', *Personnel Psychology*, 66, 3, 687-721.
- 943 Drever, E. (1997), *Using semi-structured interviews in small-scale research: A teacher's guide*, Edinburgh: The Scottish
944 Council for Research in Education.
- 945 Ehnert, I. (2009), *Sustainable Human Resource Management: A conceptual and exploratory analysis from a paradox
946 perspective*, Heidelberg: Springer.
- 947 Ehnert, I. (2014), 'Paradox as a lens for theorizing sustainable HRM', in *Sustainability and Human Resource
948 Management*, eds. I. Ehnert, W. Harry, and K. J. Zink, Berlin Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 247- 271
- 949 Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989), 'Building theories from case study research', *Academy of management review*, 14, 4, 532-
950 550.
- 951 Eisenhardt, K. M., and Westcott, B. J. (1988), 'Paradoxical demands and the creation of excellence: the case of just-in-
952 time manufacturing,' in *Paradox and transformation: Toward a theory of change in organization and management*,
953 eds. R. E. Quinn and K. S. Cameron, Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, pp. 169-194
- 954 Evans, P. A. (1999), 'HRM on the edge: a duality perspective', *Organization*, 6, 2, 325-338.
- 955 Fernández, E., Junquera, B., and Ordiz, M. (2003), 'Organizational culture and human resources in the environmental
956 issue: a review of the literature', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 14, 4, 634-656.
- 957 Figge, F. (2004). 'Bio-folio. Applying portfolio theory to biodiversity', *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 13, 4, 827-849.
- 958 Gao, J., and Bansal, P. (2013). 'Instrumental and integrative logics in business sustainability', *Journal of Business Ethics*,
959 112, 2, 241-255.
- 960 Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., and Namey, E. E. (2012), *Applied thematic analysis*, Thousands Oak, CA: Sage.
- 961 Habisch, A., Patelli, L., Pedrini, M., Schwartz, C. (2011), 'Different talks with different falcks: A comparative survey of
962 stakeholder dialogue in Germany, Italy and the U.S', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 100, 3, 381-404.
- 963 Hahn, T., Pinkse, J., Preuss, L., and Figge, F. (2014a). Tensions In Corporate Sustainability: Towards An Integrative
964 Framework. *Journal of Business Ethics*, DOI: 10.1007/s10551-014-2047-5.
- 965 Hahn, T., Preuss, L., Prinske, J., and Figge F. (2014b). 'Cognitive Frames in Corporate Sustainability: Managerial
966 Sensemaking with Paradoxical and Business Case Frames', *Academy of Management Review*, doi:
967 10.5465/amr.2012.0341.
- 968 Handy, C.B. (1994), *The age of paradox*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- 969 Harris, C., and Tregidga, H. (2012), 'HR managers and environmental sustainability: strategic leaders or passive
970 observers?', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, 2, 236-254.
- 971 Harvey, G., Williams, K., and Probert, J. (2013), 'Greening the airline pilot: HRM and the green performance of airlines
972 in the UK', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24, 1, 152-166.
- 973 Held, M. (2001). 'Sustainable development from a temporal perspective', *Time & Society*, 10, 2-3, 351-366.
- 974 Jabbour, C. J. C., Santos, F. C. A., and Nagano, M. S. (2008), 'Environmental management system and human resource
975 practices: is there a link between them in four Brazilian companies?', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 16, 17, 1922-
976 1925.
- 977 Jabbour, C. J. C. (2013), 'Environmental training and environmental management maturity of Brazilian companies with
978 ISO14001: empirical evidence', Forthcoming to *Journal of Cleaner Production*,
979 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.10.039>.

- 980 Jackson, S. E., Ones, D. S., and Dilchert, S. (2012), *Managing human resources for environmental sustainability*, New
981 Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- 982 Jackson, S.E. (2012), 'Building empirical foundations to inform the future practice of environmental sustainability', in
983 *Managing human resources for environmental sustainability*, eds. Susan E. Jackson, Deniz S. Ones and Stephan
984 Dilchert, New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, pp. 416-432.
- 985 Jansen, J. J., Simsek, Z., and Cao, Q. (2012), 'Ambidexterity and performance in multiunit contexts: Cross-level
986 moderating effects of structural and resource attributes', *Strategic Management Journal*, 33, 11, 1286-1303.
- 987 Jiang, K., Lepak, D. P., Han, K., Hong, Y., Kim, A., and Winkler, A. (2012), 'Clarifying the construct of human resource
988 systems: Relating human resource management to employee performance', *Human Resource Management Review*,
989 22, 2, 73-85.
- 990 Kleindorfer, P.R., Singhal, K., and Van Wassenhove, L.N. (2005), 'Sustainable operations management', *Production
991 and Operations Management*, 14, 4, 482-492.
- 992 Kolk, A., and Perego. P. (2014). 'Sustainable bonuses: signs of corporate sustainability of window dressing?', *Journal
993 of Business Ethics*, 119, 1-15.
- 994 Kozica, A. M. F., Gebhardt, C., Müller-Seitz, G. and Kaiser, S. (2015), 'Organizational Identity and Paradox: An
995 Analysis of the "Stable State of Instability" of Wikipedia's Identity', *Journal of management inquiry*, 24, 2, 186-
996 203.
- 997 Kramar, R. (2013), 'Beyond strategic human resource management: is sustainable human resource management the next
998 approach?', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, (ahead-of-print), 1-21.
- 999 Legge, K. (1978), *Power, innovation, and problem-solving in personnel management*, London: McGraw-Hill.
- 1000 Leonard-Barton, D. (1992), 'Core capabilities and core rigidities: A paradox in managing new product development',
1001 *Strategic management journal*, 13, 111-125.
- 1002 Lewis, M. W. (2000), 'Exploring paradox: Toward a more comprehensive guide', *Academy of Management Review*, 25,
1003 4 760-776.
- 1004 Margolis, J. D., Elfenbein, H. A., and Walsh, J. P. (2007), *Does it pay to be good? A meta-analysis and redirection of
1005 research on the relationship between corporate social and financial performance*, Boston: Mimeo, Harvard
1006 Business School.
- 1007 Markusson, N. (2010). 'The championing of environmental improvements in technology investment projects', *Journal
1008 of Cleaner Production*, 18, 8, 777-783.
- 1009 Matos, S., and Hall, J. (2007), 'Integrating sustainable development in the supply chain: the case of life cycle assessment
1010 in oil and gas and agricultural biotechnology', *Journal of Operations Management*, 25, 6, 1083-1102.
- 1011 Mayrhofer, W., Sparrow, P., and Brewster, C. (2012), 'European Human Resource Management: a contextualized
1012 stakeholder approach', in *Handbook on research on comparative human resource management*, eds. C. Brewster
1013 and W. Mayrhofer, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, pp. 528-549.
- 1014 Michaud, V. (2014), 'Mediating the paradoxes of organizational governance through numbers', *Organization Studies*,
1015 35, 1, 75-101.
- 1016 Midttun, A. (2007). 'Corporate responsibility from a resource and knowledge perspective towards a dynamic
1017 reinterpretation of C(S)R: Are corporate responsibility and innovation compatible or contradictory?', *Corporate
1018 Governance*, 4, 2, 401-413.
- 1019 Miles, M. B., and Huberman, A. M. (1994), *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*, Thousand Oaks, CA:
1020 Sage.
- 1021 Muthuri, J. N., Matten, D., and Moon, J. (2009). 'Employee volunteering and social capital: Contributions to corporate
1022 social responsibility', *British Journal of Management*, 20, 1, 75-89.
- 1023 Paauwe, J., Boon, C., Boselie, P., and Den Hartog, D. (2013), 'Reconceptualizing fit in strategic human resource
1024 management: Lost in translation?', in *HRM and Performance: Achievements and Challenges*, eds. D. E. Guest, J.
1025 Paauwe, and P. Wright, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 61-78.
- 1026 Paillé, P., and Boiral, O. (2013), 'Pro-environmental behavior at work: construct validity and determinants', *Journal of
1027 Environmental Psychology*, 36, 118-128.
- 1028 Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- 1029 Pearce, J. A. I. I., and Doh, J. (2005). 'The high impact of collaborative social initiatives', *MIT Sloan Management
1030 Review*, 46, 3, 29-39.
- 1031 Perrini, F., Russo, A., and Tencati, A. (2007), 'CSR strategies of SMEs and large firms. Evidence from Italy', *Journal
1032 of Business Ethics*, 74, 285-300.
- 1033 Poole, M. S., and Van de Ven, A. H. (1989), 'Using paradox to build management and organization theories', *Academy
1034 of management review*, 14, 4, 562-578.

- 1035 Probst, G., and Raisch, S. (2005), 'Organizational crisis: The logic of failure', *The Academy of Management Executive*,
1036 19, 1, 90-105.
- 1037 Putnam, L., Myers, K.M., and Gaillard, B.M. (2014), 'Examining the tensions in workplace flexibility and exploring
1038 options for new directions', *Human Relations*, 67, 4, 413-440.
- 1039 Quinn, R. E., Kahn, J. A., and Mandl, M. J. (1994), 'Perspective on organizational change: Exploring movement at the
1040 interface', in *Organizational behavior: The state of science*, ed. J. Greenberg, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum
1041 Associates, pp. 109-133
- 1042 Renwick, D. W., Redman, T., and Maguire, S. (2013), 'Green Human Resource Management: A Review and Research
1043 Agenda', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 15, 1, 1-14.
- 1044 Russo, A., and Tencati, A. (2009), 'Formal vs. informal CSR strategies: Evidence from Italian micro, small, medium-
1045 sized and large firms', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85, 339-353.
- 1046 Ryan, G. W., and Bernard, H. R. (2003), 'Techniques to identify themes', *Field methods*, 15, 1, 85-109.
- 1047 Schutz, J. (1999). Organising diversity. In J. Kohn, J. M. Gowdy, F. Hinterberger, & J. van der Straaten (Eds.),
1048 Sustainability in question: The search for a conceptual framework (pp. 101-123). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar
1049 Publishing.
- 1050 Schwandt, T. A. (1994), 'Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry', in *Handbook of qualitative
1051 research*, eds. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 118-137.
- 1052 Sheehan, C., De Cieri, H., Greenwood, M., and Van Buren, H. J. (2013), 'HR Professional Role Tensions: Perceptions
1053 and Responses of the Top Management Team', forthcoming to *Human Resource Management*, DOI:
1054 10.1002/hrm.21574.
- 1055 SHRM - Society for Human Resource Management (2011), *Advancing Sustainability: HR's Role Survey Report*,
1056 available at www.shrm.org.
- 1057 SHRM - Society for Human Resource Management (2013), *Sustainable workplace practices*, available at
1058 www.shrm.org.
- 1059 Slawinski, N., and Bansal, P. (2012). 'A matter of time: The temporal perspectives of organizational responses to climate
1060 change', *Organization Studies*, 33, 11, 1537-1563.
- 1061 Smith, K., and Berg, D. (1987). 'Paradoxes of group life'. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- 1062 Smith, W. K., and Lewis, M. W. (2011), 'Toward a theory of paradox: A dynamic equilibrium model of organizing',
1063 *Academy of Management Review*, 36, 2, 381-403.
- 1064 Spradley, J. P. (1979), *The ethnographic interview*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- 1065 Suddaby, R. (2006), 'What grounded theory it is not', *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 4, 633-642.
- 1066 Sundaramurthy, C., and Lewis, M.W. (2003). 'Control and collaboration: paradoxes of governance', *Academy of
1067 Management Review*, 28, 3, 397-415.
- 1068 Vince, R., and Broussine, M. (1996), 'Paradox, defense and attachment: Accessing and working with emotions and
1069 relations underlying organizational change', *Organization Studies*, 17, 1, 1-21.
- 1070 Warner, M. (2009), 'Making sense' of HRM in China: setting the scene', *The International Journal of Human Resource
1071 Management*, 20, 11, 2169-2193.
- 1072 Westenholz, A. (1993), 'Paradoxical thinking and change in the frames of reference', *Organization Studies*, 14, 1, 37-
1073 58.
- 1074 Whetten, D. A. (1989), 'What constitutes a theoretical contribution?', *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 4, 490-495.
- 1075 Wu, Z., and Pagell, M. (2011), 'Balancing priorities: Decision-making in sustainable supply chain management', *Journal
1076 of Operations Management*, 29, 6, 577-590.
- 1077 Yin, R. K. (2003), *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 1078 Yoon, S. J., and Chae, Y. J. (2012), 'Management of paradox: a comparative study of managerial practices in Korean
1079 and Japanese firms', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23, 17, 3501-3521.