The greening of black gold: towards international environmental alignment in the petroleum industry
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Preface and acknowledgements

The process of writing a Ph.D. can be symbolised as a hunt through the woods: sometimes one sees from afar the coloured ribbons marking the trail and progress is easily made; at other times, one is somewhat lost and does not know where to go next. Those are the moments of deep thinking, doing the washing-up, of reorganising and, ultimately, discovery. Looking back and having found out which trails led to the completion of this book, the combination of all these activities represent to me the true joy and challenge of the research process: both pleasantly hiking along and digging in the data as well as picking my own brain and moving on to 'the edge of the unknown'.

Several similarities to this process can be found in 'improvisation theatre', one of my interests. Phrased as the challenge 'Taking the risk to fail', experience shows that going onto the stage with a blank mind often results in beautiful scenes. This effect may be a matter of some talent, but is also related to some other rules of the game: Saying 'Yes, and' instead of 'Yes, but' to stimulate the scene, and 'Make the other shine', which, among other things, relates to the importance of teamwork. To what extent these rules and the aforementioned challenge exactly apply to academic work may well merit discussion. For now, 'Make the other shine' means putting the spotlight on a number of people and companies: they were the coloured ribbons I was sometimes looking for.

Starting with the external context and the subjects of analysis, I want to acknowledge the interviewees from Shell, Statoil, BP and TotalFinaElf, the companies that participated in the case studies. Some other companies (ARCO, Chevron, Conoco, Occidental Petroleum and Texaco) are thanked for their contributions in an early stage of the research. The time investment made by those companies was considerable, and the fact of their opening up makes those companies more vulnerable and transparent than others. Without their cooperation, the knowledge gained in this study would have been far less. Conscious of the public debate about the industry and the political complexity of the subject, it may be important to add that the study has been carried out in an independent fashion. In relation to the huge quantities of oil and gas that the world still uses, an analytic, descriptive, point of view was chosen to find out about the ruling mechanisms in those companies with regard to environmental issues.

In academia, I especially want to express my appreciation to both of my supervisors, Ans Kolk and Rob van Tulder, for their input: to Ans, for, amongst other things, the conscientious way in which she commented on my work as well as her ability to do this at a remarkable speed; to Rob, for his admirable and inspiring capacity to put issues in a broader, cross-linking perspective. Together, you made up an interesting and challenging supervising team. In addition, I wish to thank all the committee members, Danny van den Bulcke, Gerd Junne, Lucas Reijnders and Hans Jägers for reading my manuscript. More extended acknowledgements go to Hans for indispensable encouragement and the pleasure of co-teaching organisational design.

Within the sustainable management group of the Faculty, I wish to give a solo to Anniek Mauser for valued friendship, both in the office and out in the city. Mark van der
Veen and Paolo Perego are thanked for comic support and insightful discussions. To my other (former) colleagues (Onno, Vanessa, Anouk, René, Jonatan, Bas, and others) within the Department of Business Studies, I would like to say thanks for the sharing of cups of coffee, and for helping out on various occasions. In addition, I want to express my appreciation to Jeroen van Wijk for his interest in my work and valuable advice over these and earlier years. I wish to thank Douglas van den Berghe for his encouragement and for his management earlier on of the SCOPE database at Erasmus University Rotterdam. This study draws considerably on its data; thanks also go to Fabienne Fortanier for her help on that account. Further acknowledgements go to Reinko Hallenga for his design for the cover of this book and to Patricia Ellman, who edited its English. I am indebted to the J.E. Jurriaanse Stichting, the Stichting Leergang Bedrijfskunde Amsterdam, and the Faculty for their financial support in enabling the printing of this publication.

The spotlight subsequently finds the (former) network of PhD students in environmental management (all of the Franks, Judith, Casper, and others) for creating an opportunity to share some of the Ph.D. process. Its chair, Nigel Roome, has been an essential link in this setting. My correspondence and meetings with Nicola Acutt, Verónica Medina-Ross and Peter Wells represent examples of the continuous benefits of participating in international conferences. Furthermore, the enormous help of Ingrid Seinen in the statistical testing of the survey results (the responsibility for which is all mine) has been greatly appreciated, as well as her friendship.

In the future of my professional and private life, I wish to preserve my goal to strive for the spread of knowledge, analytical skills, and a 'critical eye', whenever appropriate. In this respect, I value my friends (Michelle, Kysia, Olaf, Lilian, Matthijs, Sandra, Peter, Suzanne, Sander, Joeri, Arlette, Jan-Jaap, and others), my cousin Cynthia, and my family for their direct and indirect guidance, but above all, simply for being there and sharing a laugh, the most significant thing in life. In particular, I wish to single out my paranimfen, Ellen ter Gast and Robert van den Hoed for their friendship, plenty of (non-)constructive discussions, and joyful company. I also wish to mention 'impro'-performing friends, and, my fellow crewmembers from the traditional sailing vessels at the IJsselmeer and Waddenzee – may the wind continue to suit the sails!

I want to express my gratitude to my parents whom I love so dearly.