

A Manifesto for the Future of Management Studies¹

Francesco Ciampi
Arabella Mocciano Li Destri
Alberto Pastore
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The project of a Manifesto for Management Studies stems from the need to foster a deep and shared reflection, both within and beyond our scholarly community, on the current and future challenges of our discipline. The goal is to identify new trajectories and perspectives of evolution of management thought and research (whether thematic, methodological, or of a different nature), in line with the emerging demands of business practice and, more broadly, of society.

Today, businesses and policymakers are confronted with a “new normal”, characterized by increasing instability, rapidly changing contexts, and the multidimensional (economic, social, technological, environmental, geopolitical, etc.) nature of ongoing transformations. This new normal of uncertainty exponentially amplifies the complexity of the phenomena we investigate, and challenges management scholars to question established theoretical and methodological paradigms, and develop new approaches capable of capturing the inherently multidisciplinary nature of such transformations (Reinecke *et al.*, 2024), and supporting the design of sustainable, equitable solutions oriented toward the common good, as well as the creation of economic value (Dencker *et al.*, 2023). For instance, the advent of artificial intelligence calls for new paradigms that can effectively interpret the challenges posed by the integration of the immense potential of these emerging technologies into business processes (Bliese *et al.*, 2024; Grégoire *et al.*, 2024). Similarly, the growing emphasis on purpose-driven business and the societal demand for sustainability and inclusion (Becchetti *et al.*, 2023; Caselli *et al.*, 2023) require frameworks that acknowledge and enhance the relations of mutual support between economic value, individual well-being, and collective welfare (Strategic Management Society, 2023). The complexity of contemporary contexts makes it urgent to overcome the persistent divide between academia and practice, thereby enhancing our capacity to generate “real impact”, i.e., practically relevant results for firms, policymakers, and society at large (Tourish, 2020).

The activities leading to the Manifesto published in this issue of the journal unfolded in four main stages. First, we conducted a review of the most recent literature (from 2020 onwards) addressing the prospective directions of our discipline. This review focused on articles published in journals ranked 4 and 4* by in the ABS list, as well as on position papers issued by leading national and international academic associations in the field of management. In the second stage, we developed an initial draft of

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the Manifesto, as the outcome of a shared and in-depth reflection within the proposing group. The third stage consisted of a series of exploratory interviews with a selected group of practitioners holding top management positions in large corporations operating in different sectors. The aim was to collect assessments, comments, and proposals from one of the key external stakeholder groups of our scholarly community. This step reflects our conviction that only through a systematic dialogue between theory and practice is it possible to develop research that is both scientifically rigorous and socially meaningful. Finally, the proposing group drafted and validated the final version of the document, which was officially presented on 13 June 2025 at the annual SIMA conference in Genoa.

The proposals set out in the Manifesto stem from a collective reflection within the group and are grounded in the conviction that our community is now called to focus on the real-world challenges confronting businesses, institutions, and policymakers, and to contribute to the development of timely and effective solutions for the future (Langley *et al.*, 2023; Muñoz & Dimov, 2023; van Gelderen *et al.*, 2021). In other words, we believe that our studies, while methodologically rigorous, must also be relevant, accessible, and timely (Chen *et al.*, 2023; Haenlein *et al.*, 2025; Houston, 2024; Pastore & Ugolini, 2023; Schmitt *et al.*, 2022).

The document outlines three major directions of development. The first concerns the need to enhance the impact of our studies on firms, institutions, and society by increasingly engaging in co-designed research with managers and policymakers, adopting more future-oriented and transformative approaches, and ensuring effective dissemination of results. The second highlights the need to evolve our methodological approaches toward greater interdisciplinarity, the integration of multi-method and multi-level perspectives, and the full exploitation of the potential of technology and artificial intelligence. The third proposes a renewed research agenda aimed at overcoming the trade-off between profit and purpose, promoting a new humanism in management, and making a significant contribution to defending and strengthening the competitiveness of the Italian entrepreneurial system.

The document concludes with a call to responsibility: in a world increasingly shaped by interconnected and complex crises, our scholarly community must commit to acting as an agent of change. The Manifesto we present is not a final destination, but the beginning of a journey, an open platform, a living document designed to foster ongoing dialogue within and beyond our community. Its ambition is to strengthen our capacity to interpret the current and future challenges of our discipline, to recognize their evolution, and to respond with rigor, responsibility, and effectiveness. The intention is to periodically review and update its contents, thereby constantly projecting it into the future and ensuring its responsiveness to the emerging challenges and opportunities emerging time from time in our field.

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Academic or professional position and contacts

Francesco Ciampi

Lead Proponent of the "Manifesto of Management Studies"
University of Florence- Italy
e-mail: francesco.ciampi@unifi.it

Arabella Mocciano Li Destri

Past President Sima
University of Palermo - Italy
e-mail: arabella.mocciano@unipa.it

Alberto Pastore

Editor in Chief of Sinergie Italian Journal of Management
Sapienza University of Roma - Italy
e-mail: alberto.pastore@uniroma1.it