

Sustainability Transformation, the challenge is now!

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Dear friends of Sinergie,

This issue of the Journal contains the best papers presented at the Sinergie-SIMA 2019 conference "Management and sustainability. Creating shared value in the digital era", which took place last June at Sapienza, University of Rome, Italy.

The Conference had a large participation, with around 350 participants, 51 full papers and 101 extended abstracts presented, and offered a rich and profound perspective of investigation on a theme that is of crucial importance at all levels: for institutions, for businesses, for people's lives.

The relevance and urgency of sustainability - environmental, social, and economic - in recent years have finally found increasing confirmation also in important political-institutional forums, translating into action plans, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its Sustainable Development Goals, and the European Green New Deal.

In the face of the imminence of major crises, such as that relating to climate change, there is a significant mobilization of thought and conduct, which however still appears not sufficiently incisive to determine a clear change of direction.

In recent months, in the spring 2020 which unfortunately we will remember for a long time, new events have significantly changed the scenario. The Coronavirus pandemic has led to a very serious health crisis, with a dramatic tribute in terms of human lives, and caused a huge economic crisis, bringing about changes in the living conditions and routines of billions of people.

To face this moment of crisis, a truly extraordinary effort will be needed, in terms of public intervention (at national and international level), of entrepreneurial initiative, of sacrifice and contribution from citizens. From the problem, then, an opportunity emerges: to convey this huge commitment within a new vision of sustainable development, which can respond to the challenges of our times and the real needs of human society and people.

This vision must contemplate the environmental dimension of sustainability, in the wake of the green economy and the circular economy, to face the great challenges of the conservation and healthiness of the natural environment through lowering emissions and developing renewable energies, reducing the use of natural resources, the reduction of pollution (soil, water, air), the elimination of waste, the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystems, and so on.

The new development model must also embrace the social dimension of sustainability, adopting themes such as ethics, human rights, employment, diversity, security, welfare, education, community. And of course, today more than ever, intergenerational solidarity and health.

At the same time, the new development model must cover the economic dimension of sustainability, impacting on the purpose of companies,

which can no longer be profit maximization. The economic dimension of sustainability leads to adopting a multi-stakeholder approach and a long-term orientation, considering also the economic impact that companies and organizations return to society and their communities.

The new development model should support and incentivize companies that integrate sustainability into their business model, and therefore in strategies, governance mechanisms, objectives, performance evaluation systems, processes, customer and business partners relations.

In the business world, this major transformation with a focus on sustainability requires a profound cultural change, to start and manage which the company must have adequate dynamic capabilities, which allows it to create, integrate, reconfigure the available skills (internal and external) to be able to face the challenges posed by the changing context.

The Sustainability Transformation, in particular, requires a Sustainable Leadership, namely a managerial action based on specific and defined qualities. The Sustainable Leader is a manager capable of identifying, inspiring and implementing strategies, policies, managerial behaviours consistent with the principles and purposes of sustainability. He must hold certain values (i.e., environmental sensitivity, human solidarity, quality of life, economic and social justice), he must be endowed with certain personality traits (such as openness, empathy, generosity, courage, holistic thinking), he must follow a defined managerial style (i.e., visionary, creative, open, inclusive). Besides, the Sustainable Leader must have specific technical skills, directly tied to the role, and also particular managerial skills, such as understanding and managing complex and interdependent contexts, long-term vision and management of change, orientation to stakeholders and creation of shared value, creativity and aptitude for innovation and redefinition of business models.

Cultural change in the business world is a critical success factor in the Sustainability Transformation process, and this underlines the responsibility that the Academic system must take on it.

Our community of management scholars and teachers must be aware of the role it is now called to play in the Sustainability Transformation challenge. The impact on cultural change that our action in the field of research, training, teaching and third mission – together with our personal example - can provide is significant. Each of us should strive to contribute in this direction. We have before us a splendid opportunity to give substance to the mission that we assigned to our profession some time ago, that of "creating value for society and the economy". For the 'Sustainability Transformation', the challenge is now!

Enjoy th reading.

Alberto Pastore e Marta Ugolini



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