

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on Managing Complex Business Management Systems: Revised Papers from the 2nd B.S.Lab Symposium, Rome 2014

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1. INTRODUCING THE B.S.LAB 2ND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

The Second Business Systems Laboratory International Symposium (<http://www.bslab-symposium.net/>) on “*Systems Thinking for a Sustainable Economy Advancements in Economic and Managerial Theory and Practice*” was held in Rome (Italy) on January 23–24, 2014. More than 200 participants from 52 countries attended this conference and 109 presented their research in 11 sessions covering a wide range of topics in Business science: *Advancements In Systems Thinking, The Path Towards Sustainable Social Systems* (chair: Maurice Yolles); *The Viable Firm, Consonance, Value And Sustainability* (chair: Frank Stowell); Evaluating Sustainable Development (chair: André Martinuzzi); Sustainable Marketing (chair: Diane Martin); Technology And Smart Improvements For A Better Living (chair: Arabella Mocchiari Li Destri); Education For Sustainability (chair: Ockie Bosch); Business Models For Sustainability (chair: Arturo Capasso); Corporate Social Responsibility And Ethics (chair: Mauro Sciarelli); Economic Development In Time Of Crisis: Problems, Solutions And Sustainability - Workshop (chair: José Rodolfo Hernandez Carrion); Finance in Time Of Crises - Workshop (chair: Enzo Scannella) and the Poster Session (coordinator: Giancarlo Scozzese).

2. THE ARTICLES IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION

For this special edition we chose five papers (coming from researches presented at the B.S. Lab Symposium 2014) considering different perspectives and tools to business management studies.

The first paper of this special edition is *Assessment of Long-Term Effects of Marketing Mix Policies; A System Dynamics Approach* (Hajiheydari N & Khakbaz S. B.). The article aims to shed the light, through the lenses of System Dynamics, on the long term effects of marketing mix policies on firm's financial outcomes.

The authors develop a dynamic marketing system to investigate the effects of diverse marketing mix policies on firm's financial indicators. They propose two dynamic marketing models. The first model, is qualitative and aims to show the logic of marketing efforts based on system dynamic rules; while the second one is a quantitative model based on the five key loops of the first qualitative model. Given that the selection marketing mix is policy a complex process leading to nonlinear results, the authors suggests a dynamic simulation in order to analyze the effects of marketing policies on firm's financial indicators. The article concludes pointing out how system dynamics can be a useful tool for measuring and anticipating firm's marketing initiatives in order to successfully adapt marketing mix policies.

The second paper proposed is *Complex and dynamical social network analysis as a tool to support a sustainable organizational design and management process* (Drago & Sellitto). The article starts from the assumptions of the Viable System Approach, which depicts how the firm and its environment form a complex system, modeled as a network of networks to make a parallel to the notion of nested networks that is at the basis of the latest research in complex networks.

The authors apply the Complex Networks tools to the process of organizational design, guiding the restructuration strategies and the choice of a viable configuration for the firms.

They conclude highlighting how the application of CNT tools to the VSA domain can supply a unifying framework useful to support the decision making process for any kind of organization.

In the third article *"Be Excellent and Do More with Less": A Paradox behind Job Burnout Threatening Organizational Sustainability*, S. Evenstad points out how firms tend to downsize the human dimension of sustainability by merely focusing on cost competitiveness asking employees to "be excellent and do more with less".

The author highlights how the above mentioned request may lead to dysfunctional coping strategies. Employees may face depression, lack of motivation, absenteeism, and intention to run off. This may cause economic costs threatening the sustainability of an organization.

The study focuses on the experience of burnout among the workers of three ICT firms in Norway conducted as an interpretative phenomenological analysis. The article points out that the root cause of burnout may be pathological communication patterns in the organizational culture which creates antecedents that lead an employee to undermine organizational sustainability.

The conclusion is that "Be excellent and do more with less" policies may be effective when implemented at all the organizational levels through by employees who feel esteemed and empowered. Hence firms should exploit the full potential of discouraged employees removing all the organizational and cultural constraints to their personal development. Therefore, seeking sustainability implies to get rid of organizational routines and communication pathologies deriving from an inadequate organizational culture. When employees are engaged and involved in the goals with the organisation, they are eager to create resources rather than merely depleting resources, therefore employee engagement may be defined as the inner core of organizational sustainability.

The fourth article *Sustainable Development and the Sustainability of Socioeconomic Systems* (Tikhomirova O.) shows, through a literature review, how in the current global scenario, it is necessary to ensure the stability and sustainable development of the socioeconomic system. The

author points out that there is no clear understanding of the nature of the sustainability and development of socioeconomic system. Systems thinking may be the right approach for the transition towards sustainable development, providing a better understanding of the laws of development. Through the analysis of the theories of sustainability and sustainable development, the articles highlights the difference among the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. On these, assumptions the article proposes a holistic model of the development of socioeconomic systems. The author argues that the algorithm of development is based on the gradual transition from an unorganized set of small and medium enterprises to self-organized clusters and unions.

The conclusion of the author is that the crisis has a constructive essence and that development is possible through transition from stagnation to innovation.

Finally in the last article: “Recognising influences on attitudes to knowledge sharing in a research establishment: an interpretivist investigation” Penny Hart points out how Knowledge sharing in organizations is influenced by several interconnecting factors, but there is still a gap in research about on individual perspective of those involved in sharing. Through an interpretivist, action research methodology the author studied the members of a research organization in order to find out what knowledge and knowledge sharing means for them. It came out that the “knowledge-as-practice” was an essential aspect of their work, it was undervalued by the organization’s clients and fund-holders, causing difficulties for the maintenance of knowledge capability, and influencing organizational subcultures. The author concludes that an officially mandated culture of knowledge sharing is subverted by “you should know” and a risk-averse subcultures, affecting individuals’ motivation to share their tacit knowledge, their self-efficacy and consequent sharing behaviors.

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