

Seeking New Managerial Perspectives for Value Generation

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Abstract

In this article, we take up some of the suggestions presented in the call for papers emphasizing the connections between the concepts of new management and transdisciplinarity.

Since the aim of the special issue is to explore experiences and studies related to the development of managerial thought, the innovation in managerial activities, and the overcoming of neoliberal managerial mainstreaming approaches, we solicited contributions connected to ways that management may support the overcoming of critical situations, facing the evolution required to reconfigure existing working, professional, and organizational cultures, and how it may be able to deal with an incoming challenging, paradoxical, and contradictory scenario.

Keywords: Leadership, management innovation, transdisciplinarity, organizational learning, social sustainability

On one hand, the emergence of a syndemic era calls for a renewed **interpretation of management** at the institutional, organizational, social, and operational levels. This era refers to a set of interconnected issues related to health, the environment, the economy, society, and biology, arising from the synergistic interaction of two or more diseases and their underlying causes. The evolution of the workplace, marked by the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions, along with the impact of macroeconomic models driving AI diffusion and the changing dynamics between humans and machines, requires innovative organizational development. Additionally, a series of dramatic crises—including the 2001 terrorist attacks, the 2007 financial crisis, demographic and migration challenges, the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and other emerging disruptions—demands organizational learning to address the profound transformation in how people live, work, produce, consume, participate, and exercise their citizenship, alongside their lived work experiences and expertise.

Thinking and developing new forms of management is no longer a luxury but a looming and pressing necessity to deal with volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments (VUCA- Bennett and Lemoine 2014). Furthermore, it is necessary to generate ever more fractional organizational processes (Law 2002), with increasing exposition to uncertain and contradictory conditions (Engeström 2008), which seek to change daily practices (Czarniawska 2008) and develop processes of learning from practice and experience.

At stake is the ability of organizations to manage people and dynamic changes as a strategic issue (Carroll and Conboy 2020), as well as the creation of new relationships to work and new models to generate value and productivity (Stiegler 2014).

This requires embracing the gradual emergence of agile work patterns (Harris 2015, 2016), aligned with adhocratic organizational structures (Mintzberg 2009) and hybrid professional cultures (McGivern et al. 2015). To establish and develop these approaches, significant and targeted expansive learning paths are essential (Engeström 2015).

On the other hand, addressing this impending evolution requires **a paradigm shift** at both the economic and theoretical levels.

Regarding *the economic aspect*, there is a need to move beyond traditional management principles and consider as well as reflect on new guiding principles and behavioural models that prioritize individuals/persons and the social sustainability of organizational activities. Significant insights in this direction come from sources such as the 2019 Business Roundtable and from the United Nations Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME):

- Delivering value to customers by upholding the tradition of pioneering companies that meet or exceed customer expectations.
- Investing in employees through training and education to help develop new skills for a rapidly changing world.
- Promoting diversity, inclusion, dignity, and respect within the workplace.
- Engaging with suppliers fairly and ethically.
- Supporting the communities where companies operate by respecting and addressing social needs as well as adopting sustainable practices to protect the environment across all organizational and entrepreneurial activities.
- Shaping work, professional, and organizational cultures to tackle the challenge of generating collective value amid the unprecedented complexities and changes that demand radical transformation.

The challenge is to translate these principles into consistent practices that become deeply ingrained habits—whether for a construction worker in Dubai, by ensuring fair pay and skill development, or for a stockbroker on Wall Street, by promoting ethical rather than fraudulent behaviour—while recognizing the distinct nature of each work environment.

At stake is a reconfiguration, renewal, and regeneration of management, which must address cross-cutting and transversal phenomena and challenges such as generational and cultural differences, digital transformation, work-life balance, new ways of working, innovative and sustainable organizational practices, and the generation of collective value and common goods. The aim is to shift away from traditional managerial models—such as global competition,

mass customization, and neoliberal approaches to management and organizational processes—towards the development of services, new ways of sharing, and a circular and generative economy (Butera 2017; Stiegler 2014).

From a *theoretical perspective*, this paradigm shift involves epistemological and methodological stances.

Epistemological approaches involve reviewing and refining the theories currently used in organizational and managerial studies (Scaratti and Ivaldi 2021; Tsoukas 2009) and developing critical contributions to the field (Bondarouk and Brewster 2006; Janssen and Steyaert 2009). This shift is supported by a growing body of research (Frey and Osborne 2017; Makridakis 2017; Peters 2017) that examines the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on employment, unemployment, and the skills needed for the future workforce, as well as identifying the best training tools and methods for developing those skills (Hecklaua et al. 2016).

A significant, though not exclusive, source of inspiration for future studies and research stems from a theoretical and epistemological foundation rooted in the following areas: the critical management studies perspective (Alvesson and Deetz 2006; Alvesson and Sandberg 2014; Alvesson and Willmott 1992; Alvesson et al. 2008, 2009); theoretical frameworks related to adhocratic and pluralistic organizations (Denis et al. 2001; Mintzberg 1985, 2009; Tapiklis 2005; Whitley 1984); processes of work and professional hybridization (Battilana and Casciaro 2012; Blomgren and Waks 2015; Gümüşay et al. 2020; McGivern et al. 2015; Noordegraaf 2015); and organizational and expansive learning methods (Engeström 2015, 2020; Engeström and Sannino 2021). These approaches seek to discover new and as yet unexplored knowledge that is not currently available or actionable (Scaratti and Ivaldi 2021; Scaratti et al. 2021).

Methodological approaches focus on problem-oriented, problem-solving, and transformative experiences that address societal and environmental issues and challenges. These approaches foster collaborative, action-oriented research across traditional knowledge boundaries through mutual learning processes (Cunliffe et al. 2020). From this methodological perspective, the creation of relevant knowledge begins with the concrete situated experiences of individuals in specific work contexts, enriching our range of observations (Brush et al. 2009; Cassell and Symon 1994). Adopting a prac-

tice-based lens (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011) and a sensemaking perspective (Maitlis and Christianson 2014) in work and organizational studies enables the identification of knowledge embedded in social and organizing life. This knowledge is seen as an ongoing process that is increasingly recognized as complex, dynamic, distributed, mobile, transient, and unpredictable.

At the core of this approach is an *ecocentric perspective* (Allen et al. 2019), which is essential for reshaping traditional views and practices in management, learning, and education. A key element of this strategy is the transdisciplinary approach, where people from different fields collaborate to develop conceptual and methodological frameworks focused on a common issue (Klein 2006). While this process may lead to potential divergences and conflicts, it also fosters the creation of actionable and sustainable knowledge related to the issue under study.

By developing research based on workplace experiences and professional or organizational practices, and moving across and beyond disciplinary boundaries (Nicolescu 2010, 2012), it becomes possible to connect civil society, media, universities, government, industry, and the natural environment. This process generates cognitive knowledge (abstract representations), embodied knowledge (feelings, intuition, imagination), and enacted knowledge (experience and know-how) (Dieleman 2017).

This strong link between creating new managerial trajectories and adopting a transdisciplinary approach highlights that the more complex the managerial challenges, the greater the need for a transdisciplinary approach. Such an approach promotes multistakeholder participation, broadens knowledge and expertise sources (both academic and non-academic), and fosters collaboration, integration, and alignment that go beyond conventional practices.

The contributions presented in this issue exemplify this transdisciplinary effort, working at the intersection of academic players, groups, and communities to develop suitable and relevant knowledge related to organizational and societal challenges.

“Examining the interplay between positive and negative bureaucracy characteristics and job satisfaction: The moderating role of resistance to change for neo-managerial approaches,” by Barbara Barbieri, Diego Bellini, Giuseppe Scaratti, Marina Mondo, Roberta Pinna, Maura Galletta, and Silvia De Simone, examines the relation-

ship between positive and negative bureaucratic traits and their impact on job satisfaction, while also considering how resistance to change moderates these effects within the context of neo-managerial approaches.

“What makes me stay here? An action research approach to organisational change,” by Maddalena Gambirasio, takes a qualitative approach to understanding the meaning of the good life in a situated organizational context, addressing the possibility of staying at work as a good enough place facing critical events (turnover, large resignations, and widespread mergers and acquisitions). The article presents a case study of an Italian tax and legal firm formed in 2020 from the merger of two accounting firms, encountering problems retaining and attracting experienced talent.

“Is it possible to develop regenerative leadership in the financial sector through action research?” by Lone Hersted explores the development of regenerative leadership through action research. It presents a specific action research project conducted in the financial sector on regenerative leadership, and examines and discusses how action research can be used to foster and develop regenerative leadership.

“An operationalization of TEAL: A catalyst for creating public welfare in a complex society?” by Lykke Mose examines the TEAL paradigm as a neo-management style that fosters more agile, network-based collaboration to enhance public welfare in a complex society. It presents a three-year decentralization experiment in a Danish municipality, where trust and reduced central legislation are expected to increase local autonomy and improve welfare through the implementation of the TEAL approach.

In “What are the potentials of interorganizational collaborative management research in mobilizing leadership agency?”, Jan Rohwedder and Søren Frimann explore interorganizational collaborative management research (ICMR) within a Danish research and development project, involving leaders from five major public and private organizations dedicated to leadership development and leadership capacity building, provide a comprehensive review of CMR as a research approach, and offer methodological hints for future interorganizational collaborative management research.

“Generating social capital between people management and dynamic change,” by Emanuele Testa and Silvia Ivaldi, presents an

action-research experience that exemplifies innovative ways to create value and organizational models. The focus is on the management of Italian nursery schools, where civil society takes responsibility for microprocesses that ensure the generation of collective value for the community and the maintenance of a connective tissue or social cohesion. The findings emphasize the elements of social capital that were developed, as well as the critical issues that emerged when working within socio-organizational and community contexts.

“The letter of the law: Insights from Italy’s anti-poverty measures about managing in social services,” by Armando Toscano and Giulio Bertoluzza, examines the impact of newly implemented Italian anti-poverty policies, specifically the inclusion allowance, on the functioning of public–private partnerships. The study also considers third-sector organizations contracted to manage the poverty fund. The findings reveal that the introduction of a new anti-poverty measure has caused significant disruptions in the coordination between public and private social organizations.

A common theme across the various contributions, as noted by Cunliffe et al., is the new managerial perspective as a multifaceted approach in which diverse subjects “work collaboratively and reflexively across boundaries (discipline, functional, community, etc.) in order to address society’s problems” (Cunliffe et al. 2020, p. 5).

In this context, the creation of value can be understood as a principle that involves the shared use of public and private resources for the pursuit of public benefit. The challenges lie in supporting the independent initiative of various actors—citizens, associations, public and private players, institutions, foundations, and others—who come together, often in collaborative forms, to pursue the common good, enhance active citizenship, and promote social cohesion and protection. The value generated is the achievement of civic, solidarity, social, organizational, economic, and institutional goals through the capability to manage diverse and often complex forms of collaboration.

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