



Rediscovering local roots and interactions in management

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Rediscovering local roots and interactions in management

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Short Papers

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To the reader,

this volume contains the short papers of the Sinergie-SIMA 2023 Management Conference, hosted by the LUM University and University of Bari at Mercure Villa Romanazzi Carducci (Bari) on June 29th and 30th 2023.

Theory and practice in the field of management have been challenged by the emergence of deep transitions such as those driven by globalization, the rise of social and environmental issues, and the diffusion of digital technologies. Events such as the ensuing geopolitical crises and the pandemic further contribute to spur management scholars to feel the call to produce impactful research with theoretical and managerial implications on the relationship between location and strategy (Bathelt and Li, 2022).

As a consequence, scholars and practitioners have been asked to design new business models and rethink value chains in a twofold direction (Mazutis et al., 2021). First, the relevance of local roots sheds light on the way people create and shape places, as much as places shape people and their organizations, suggesting a need to rethink how all lives 'take place' in places, as well as how all business happens in paces (Sternad et al., 2017). Second, a need for new interactions emerges, suggesting that businesses are deeply connected to their roots, that are their homes, from which they draw inspiration, identity, and sources of competitive advantage (Soderstrom and Weber, 2020).

Rediscovering local roots and specific assets, as well as developing new ways of interaction among the economic actors and their stakeholders, can help firms to design effective and innovative strategies to create and share values (Mair et al., 2016), with positive economic, social, and environmental impacts (Attig and Brockman, 2017).

Several research questions stimulate an interdisciplinary debate in the field of management. These questions relate to the ability of firms and managers to move, among the others, between global and local relations, near/physical and far/digital interactions, reshoring and offshoring activities, omnichannel competition and retail interactions, market transactions and system operating structures, traditional and innovative approaches, social/local benefits and financial/global performances, business ethics and ethics in business.

In the same way, different theories, methodological approaches, and units of analysis are required to generate scientific research that has an impact not only in terms of theoretical contribution but also on the real business world.

The Sinergie-SIMA 2023 Management Conference was a great occasion to discuss about the research efforts of our research community on thematic tracks related to the Conference theme (the function of territorial or cultural roots and of operational interactions in management) and the SIMA thematic groups (Entrepreneurship, Innovation & technology management, International business, Marketing, Retailing & Service management, Small & family business, Strategic communication, Strategy & Governance, Supply chain management, logistics & operations, Sustainability, and Tourism and culture management).

The Conference call for papers gave the opportunity to submit either short or long papers. Overall, the editorial staff received 215 short papers and 63 long papers.

For the *short and long papers*, the evaluation followed the peer review process, with a double-blind review performed by two referees - university lecturers, expert about the topic - selected among SIMA and the community of Sinergie members.

In detail, the referees applied the following criteria to evaluate the submissions:

- clarity of the research aims,
- accuracy of the methodological approach,
- contribution in terms of originality/innovativeness,

- theoretical and practical contribution,
- clarity of communication,
- significance of the bibliographical basis.

The *peer review* process resulted in full acceptance or rejection of the submissions. In the case of disagreement among reviewers' evaluations, the decision was taken by the Chairs of the SIMA thematic groups or conference track. Each work was then sent back to the Authors together with the referees' reports. The suggestions received by the referees were used by the Authors during the presentation of their research works at the Conference.

The evaluation process ended with the acceptance of 215 short papers and 62 long papers, which were published in two distinct volumes.

All the short papers published in this volume were presented and discussed during the Conference and published online on the web portal of Sinergie-SIMA Management Conference (https://www.sijmsima.it/).

While thanking all the Authors, Chairs and participants, we hope that this volume will contribute to advance knowledge about the rediscovering local roots and interactions in management.

The Conference Chairs

Angelantonio Russo, Savino Santovito, Arabella Mocciaro Li Destri and Marta Ugolini

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When, Where and What of Corporate Purpose: a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer

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Framing of the research. It is argued that we are currently experiencing a "syndemic" crisis, considering the interaction among the social, economic and environmental dimensions that characterize a variety of global challenges (Horton, 2020), Consequently, an integrated approach is required, with the involvement of many different parties, including companies. In fact, the rising of a number of global challenges (e.g., pandemics, climate change, inequality) prompts for a new role of the business in society (Schlag and Melé, 2020), Confirming that, purpose-driven companies – but all companies more in general – are expected to increasingly manage problems and act with a global and integral vision, cooperating with institutions and communities in the pursuit of the common good and in safeguarding common goods (Albareda and Sison, 2020), Although on purpose-driven companies there is not a unique definition, by them we refer to such companies whose members are inspired by a corporate purpose, which is itself able to respond to specific societal needs (Quinn and Thakor, 2018; Rey et al., 2019), Nevertheless, purpose-driven companies are key to drive transformative innovation needed to address climate change and other societal issues (Henderson, 2021),

Consequently, among the many recent academic contributions aimed to rediscover companies' alternative routes from more than profit's maximization, there is also a re-conceptualization of corporate purpose (Porter and Kramer, 2011; Mayer et al., 2017), Purpose is more and more regarded as the key to deal with the complex world we face today, "where strategy is ever changing and few decisions are obviously right or wrong" (Craig and Snook, 2014, p. 4), For these reasons, far from being exhaustively condensed, the topic of the nature, antecedents and consequences of corporate purpose has acquired a new wave of interest both for practitioners and scholars (Mayer, 2021), There is still need of research on the role of companies in the contemporary and in the future of society (Mayer et al., 2017), and contributions that underline the importance of purpose in orienting companies in that sense are at the early stage (Mayer, 2021), In fact, a variety of questions are rising "about what purpose means, how it is implemented, and how it gains legitimacy and credibility" (Mayer, 2021, p. 898),

Purpose of the paper. Since its origins, the conceptualization of corporate purpose placed in difficulty management scholars, causing problems in exploring what is purpose, from what data it can be identified and what are relationship between purpose and other organizational features (Warriner, 1965), The ambiguity of the concept of corporate purpose is recognized also in practitioners-oriented debate. For instance, the concept is still equivocal and misunderstood, although "setting, communicating, and delivering an organization's purpose is at the heart of governance" (Hurth, 2017, p. 4), George et al. (2021) proposed a definition of purpose in for-profit firms as "the essence of an organization's existence by explaining what value it seeks to create for its stakeholders" (p. 7), However, the authors stressed overriding responsibility of scholars to commit our scarce resources to a research and education agenda that acknowledges the wide role of firms in society and to speak for those stakeholders whose voices otherwise risk being unheard (George et al., 2021),

The aim of this research is to outline "when" and "where" corporate purpose is framed and "what" are the main topics to which it is addressed, contributing to actual debate by highlighting some possible horizons for future research with a bibliometric analysis on the literature. More concretely, the bibliometric analysis involves exploration of three main areas: (1) "when", that highlights the time trend of publications on corporate purpose; (2) "where", that shows the main outlets that welcome research and stimulate debate in the literature on corporate purpose; (3) "what", that presents and discuss main topics related to corporate purpose research.

Methodology. According with the end of the research, we performed a keywords-based search in Scopus and Web of Science databases, based on the terms: "organization* purpose*", "business* purpose*", "corporat* purpose*", "firm* purpose*" and "compan* purpose*" in the abstract. After removing non-English documents, and limited the research in the management area, a final sample of 741 publications has been disclosed. We use this sample for the first part of the analysis aimed to explore the "when" of corporate purpose.

Then, we selected 100 contributions to review, among which 20 were chosen using snowball sampling approach, for a more in-depth analysis of the "where" and "what". The exclusion/inclusion criterion was aimed to concentrate efforts only on publications where corporate purpose represented the main topic of the study and the term was treated

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non in a trivial way. Accordingly, we performed a bibliometric analysis for two main reasons: first, studies based on retrieved data are considered more relevant than subjective researcher's interpretation and second bibliometric methods help to obtain clear overview of the debate on a specific topic (Zupic and Čater, 2015), In addition, we used VOSviewer software (van Eck and Waltman, 2010) to generate, visualize and analyse trends and networks in research outlets. Out of a total of 2350 cited sources from the 100 contributions selected (including journals, proceedings, books, manuals, newspapers, and websites), we removed and/or manually repurposed 167 sources that were not appropriate (e.g., typos) for the analysis, leaving a sample of 2183 cited sources. First, we implemented a co-citation analysis of the main research outlets "where" there are publications on corporate purpose. The overall co-citation is done two by two, analysing two sources that are both cited by the same contribution. Then, we performed a keywords co-occurrence analysis, setting the minimum threshold of word frequency statistics as 2, based on keywords that occur at least once. We obtained the map in the Figure 3, in order to show and discuss "what" are the critical leading related topics connected to corporate purpose.

Results.

When of Corporate Purpose

The Figure 1 depicts "when" corporate purpose is framed from 1965 to 2022. The first publication by Warriner, titled "The problem of Organizational Purpose" dates back to 1965. Among most cited and seminal articles, Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) pushed managers to think on a clear definition of corporate purpose with a perspective inside the organization, in order to give a meaning for working to employees. The number of publications seems to be stagnated until 2010, when there has been an exponential increase, as shown in Figure 1. However, considering most cited articles (i.e., Gartenberg, 2019; Mayer, 2021), scholars' perspective on the topic of corporate purpose seems to change toward a more outside the organization oriented one. For instance, Mayer (2021) argued that the underpinnings to the renovate attention on the topic is due to the changing in companies and market nature that push for the potential role of corporate purpose in promoting better social outcomes.

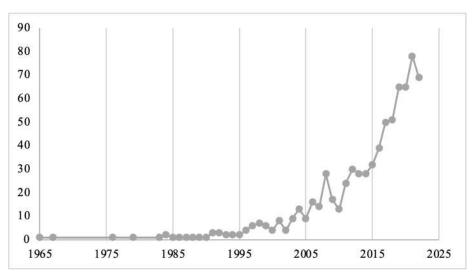


Fig. 1: Number of contributions on Corporate Purpose per year based on 741 publications

Source: Authors' elaboration

Where of Corporate Purpose

We implemented a co-citation analysis (Figure 2) among the sample of 2183 cited sources, based on the sample of 100 contributions selected for a more in-depth analysis, using the software VOSviewer to visualize the relationships between the most important research outlets "where" corporate purpose is framed. It seems quite clear that the concept of corporate purpose has spread into the language of multiple research outlets. In fact, most articles were published in journals focused on different areas, including mainly business ethics (e.g., Abela, 2001; Sison, 2007; Bhattacharya et al., 2022) and strategy (e.g., Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1994; Collins and Porras, 1996; Craig and Snook, 2014), Moreover, the analysis allows to visualize (Figure 2) journals with the larger number of citations, that are displayed with a stronger hint of yellow: Journal of Business Ethics is the most cited, followed by Academy of Management Review. The density visualization in the Figure 2 highlights also the relatedness among journals that is stronger the closer journals are located to each other. For instance, it is possible to identify two main clusters: Journal of Business Ethics that seems to be more related to Harvard Business Review; and the same for the relationship between Academy of Management Review, Academy of Management Journal and Organization Science.

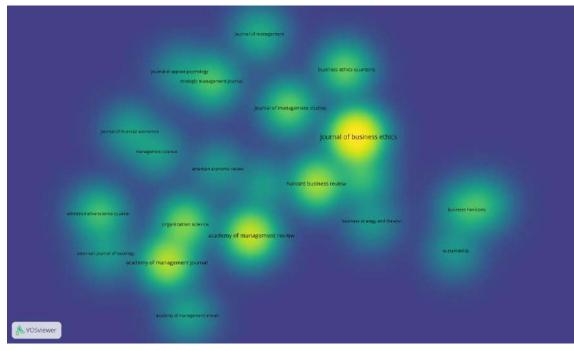


Fig. 2: Co-citation analysis with cited sources on Corporate Purpose

Source: VOSviewer (version 1.6.18)

What of Corporate Purpose

We performed a keyword co-occurrence analysis that can be observed in the comprehensive map below (Figure 3), The label and rim size of an item is determined by the weight of each keyword and each circle represents a node. The higher the weight of a keyword, the larger the article label and circle are (van Eck and Waltman, 2010), Overall, the keyword "corporate social responsibility" had the largest node and the highest frequency, followed by "sustainability". The connection among nodes represents their co-occurrence relationships, according to which, different research cluster are formed and displayed with different colors. We analysed each cluster, in order to depict "what" are the main topics to which corporate purpose is addressed.

• Cluster 1: common good, corporate social responsibility, mission

The first cluster include and strictly relate common good and purpose, with corporate social responsibility and mission. For instance, many authors, contributing to Humanistic Management theory, stress the fact that purpose contributes to the common good through the material and moral development of people at work (Sison, 2007), The final purpose of business organization is to serve the societal common good and satisfy the need of people living in the place where the firm operates (Melè and Schlag, 2015), The main idea is to consider the purpose of the firm as common good (Naughton et al., 1995), recognising the connection among the good of the firm and the good of the entire society, since the fact that firm are "community of person" (Melè and Schlag, 2015), This perspective implies managerial actions, by impacting on corporate social responsibility issues and mission statement (i.e., Alegre et al., 2018), Confirming that "purpose provides a clear definition of the firm's intent, creates the ability for stakeholders to identify with, and be inspired by, the firm's mission, vision, and values, and establishes actionable pathways and an aspirational outcome for the firm's actions" (George et al., 2021, p. 7),

• Cluster 2: climate change, capitalism, sustainability, corporate strategy

The second cluster welcomes contributions that confirm the positive impact of purpose in facing nowadays environmental crisis toward a corporate strategy that recognise the need for companies to be sustainable. In line with these considerations, Gartenberg et al. (2019) confirms that purpose impacts on strategy implementation and suggest that employees with strong beliefs in the purpose of their organization achieve better performance. Social and environmental crisis caused the proliferation of corporate purpose statements. Purpose has been considered more and more as a crucial organization features toward sustainability, which includes ESG (environmental, social and governance) dimensions and it is becoming an integrated component of purpose in the for-profit enterprise (George et al., 2021), George and Schillebeeckx (2022) suggest that corporate purpose can be strategical to deal with "geopolitical, organizational and market tensions induced by the pandemic, climate change and digitization" and it can be a factor that preserves companies' advantage.

• Cluster 3: benefit corporation, corporate governance, theory of the firm

The third cluster collects contributions around benefit corporation (B-Corps) phenomenon, as concrete entities that combine the goal of profit with a social-oriented purpose attested by a legal tool, causing change in the corporate governance setting of the company (Hurt 2017; Mayer, 2021), It means also rethinking the traditional theory of the firm toward a re-conceptualization of the organizational purpose. For instance, Mion and Adaui (2020) confirm that B-Corps pursue benefit in a responsible, sustainable, and transparent way and considering diverse stakeholder.

• Cluster 4: creating shared value, hybrid organizations, corporate objectives

The fourth cluster relates with the perspective of redefining corporate objectives, intending purpose as corporate objectives and goals (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1994), as creating shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2011), It permits the setting up of organizations that have a dual purpose, generating both social and economic value (Alter, 2007), To better understand this cluster, Lankoski and Smith (2018) offer a useful range of companies on the base of their objective, with a comprehensive classification on objective functions that goes beyond the dualism profit maximization/something different. In particular, the authors assemble the corporate possible objectives into five group, "based on the centrality of social welfare: (1) entirely absent from the objective function, (2) a process characteristic, (3) one of the end objectives, (4) the only end objective, adjusted by profit as a process characteristic, and (5) the only variable in the objective function" (p. 248), Among the third group, hybrid organizations allow their members to practice more of their internally held ideals and feel a common sense of organizational purpose (Gumusay et al., 2020),

• Cluster 5: transformation, leadership, ethics

The fifth cluster collects contributions based on the concept of transformational leadership and the role of leaders in defining corporate purpose. For instance, Craig and Snook (2014) argue that leaders' most important role is to be executives of the organization's purpose. Henderson (2021) confirms that transformational leaders have a powerful core set of ideological values: they are exceptional to balance social and financial responsibilities, catching new opportunities in the market thanks to an authentic corporate purpose. Kempster (2011) gives a comprehensive overview on how leadership and purpose are tied, since the fact that "leadership discourse could be framed as fulfilling a societal purpose in that it provides a connection beyond the organizational boundaries and is 'good for collective human wellbeing" (p. 325),

• Cluster 6: social enterprise, culture, human rights, business

The sixth cluster includes contributions that recognise that conceptualizing corporate purpose means building a common business culture. For instance, purpose has a particularly effective driving role in orienting sustainability behaviour of employee at work since it is an inspiring and collective call to ethical actions, rather than a generic guideline on how to behave (Bhattacharya et al., 2022),

• Cluster 7: values, business and society

The seventh cluster considers core values as drivers and intrinsic components of corporate purpose. For instance, Hollensbe et al. (2014) argue that, unless businesses have be seen more as 'consumer of trust' rather than 'generator of trust', values (i.e., dignity, solidarity, reciprocity) may help businesses to achieve purpose. Moreover, companies that have a strong set of core values and a fixed core purpose are more prompt to adapt in a changing world and to solve problems innovatively (Collins and Porras, 1996),

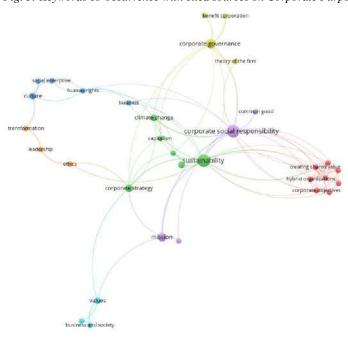


Fig. 3: Keywords co-occurrence with cited sources on Corporate Purpose

Source: VOSviewer (version 1.6.18)

A VOSviewer

Avenues for Future Research

There is still need of research to be done in order to better understand the results of the literature and the practice actions that might be observed among companies in the market to formulate and realize corporate purpose. Both increased attention on the topic along time (Figure 1) and the top quoted journal "where" it is framed (Figure 2) represents relevant results for feeding reasons in dealing with research on corporate purpose. For guidance in future

research, Table 1 presents a series of questions that can be explored by both scholars and practitioners, starting from "what" are the critical leading related topics to which it is addressed (Figure 3),

Tab. 1: Future research directions on Corporate Purpose

Cluster and Potential Frameworks	Keywords	Questions
Cluster 1 Humanistic Management Business ethics CSR	common good, corporate social responsibility, mission	What is degree of "fuzziness" among common good and corporate purpose? Does formalizing a clear and cascaded purpose make corporate social responsibility actions more effective?
Cluster 2 Strategy Sustainability Communication	climate change, capitalism, sustainability, corporate strategy	Does the presence of a corporate purpose that reflects a company's commitment to sustainability (often branded as greenwashing) enhance trust with stakeholders? What are the consequences of purpose on corporate strategy?
Cluster 3 Governance Institutional isomorphism Public goods	benefit corporation, corporate governance, theory of the firm	What is the role of corporate governance, related to benefit corporations, in achieving social impacts? How to create the organizational structures and governance routines that can contribute to the social impact?
Cluster 4 Goal-setting Agency	creating shared value, hybrid organizations, corporate objectives	How does defining a clear corporate purpose influence short- and long-term goals in an organization? How to help managers in moving beyond traditional corporate social responsibility approach to a shared value one?
Cluster 5 Leadership Motivation	transformation, leadership, ethics	How purposeful leadership occurs in practice, promoting ethical practice inside and outside the organization? How do ethical motivation of leaders guide the formalization of purpose in firms?
Cluster 6 Information asymmetry Equity and Justice	social enterprise, culture, human rights, business	What are internal and external factors that affect the formation and the evolution of a common culture socially oriented in social enterprises? Can the presence of purpose in the organization accelerate the processes of work democratization?
Cluster 7 Values, norms and ethics Expectation Trust	values, business and society	How do individual values affect the formation of corporate purpose? What are the societal expectation and attitudes on corporate purpose?

Research limitations. This study has some limitations, which open horizons for future research. First, it relies primarily on data retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science, so the limitations of databases may also apply to the study per se. In addition, bibliometric analysis involves technical decisions such as the selection of language and fields of inquiry, which may exclude relevant contributions to the analysis. Furthermore, the bibliometric approach provides an analysis that is eminently descriptive and may lack a content analysis to increase explanatory power and provide deeper analysis of results and implications.

Managerial implications. The conceptualization of corporate purpose is practitioners' oriented. The "Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation" signed by US Business Roundtable (2019) and the report "Principles for Purposeful Business" published by The British Academy are examples of the current managerial debate on the future of business. Consequently, this research may help leaders to direct the definition and the action related to their companies' purpose, taking into consideration the corporate features, strategy and values to which it is addressed.

Originality of the paper. The research contributes to management and business ethics literatures on the concept of corporate purpose. The keyword analysis is an effective method to identify hot issues and research frontiers on the topic and specially to map out the complexity of issues and declinations involving corporate purpose. The overall bibliometric analysis allows to provide insights into the state of the art of the concept of corporate purpose in the management field, by identifying when, where it is framed and what are key topics to which it refers.

Keywords: corporate purpose; bibliometric analysis; VOS viewer; business ethics; business in society

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