



GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

New models and approaches to achieve sustainable living

14th ABIS ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM CALL FOR PAPERS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Convenor:

ABIS – The Academy of Business in Society

Host:

SDA Bocconi School of Management, Bocconi University, Milan, Italy

Date:

20 and 21 October 2015 (* plus Annual PhD Conference on 19 October)

Submission Deadline:

16 May 2015

Background Context: The 2015 Milan Universal Exposition

“Is it possible to ensure sufficient, good, healthy and sustainable food for all mankind, while respecting the Planet and its equilibrium?” This is the central question of the 2015 Milan Universal Exposition: **Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life**. Underlying this theme is the awareness that Planet Earth “requires nurture, in the form of respect, sustainable behaviours, the application of advanced technologies and new political visions that will allow us to strike a new and better balance between our resources and our consumption” (EXPO 2015 Theme Guide).

The Milan Universal Exposition 2015 and recent research highlight four key issues:

- Climate change, global sustainability, hunger, inequality, poverty, water accessibility and global health are interdependent macro issues, on which food production and consumption have a major impact.
- Behaviour, lifestyle choices and culture have a considerable influence on global sustainability. A wide range of societal costs, including emissions, can be substantially lowered through changes in consumption patterns, adoption of energy savings measures, dietary change and reduction of food waste.
- Any private and public organisation, and indeed citizens themselves as user innovators, can play an active role in finding new solutions for the common good and make a positive contribution to global sustainability.
- Regardless of organisational profiles, the complexity of sustainability and sustainable lifestyle issues poses key challenges in terms of strategic thinking, planning and implementation, with a focus on longer-term anticipation of future trends and needs.

This is a profound change of perspective. Sustainability issues have been traditionally focused on the production, logistics and operation side of large firms. Today, the challenge is to have real impact on production & consumption systems, as well as customers’ behaviour, and to promote more sustainable societies and economies.

As such, companies, firms and governmental agencies are not simply producers or service providers but part of the culture of our communities, and they have major roles to play in shaping and affecting it. Their strategic choices are also influenced by civil sector organisations which represent the concerns and needs of society, and which also have an important mediating role between the market, governments and the behaviours of consumers and citizens.

The Milan Exposition will explore in depth the link between food and energy production and consumption, and the sustainable stewardship of planetary resources. In doing so, it will ask fundamental questions about the nature of livelihoods and lifestyles in the years to come. The Expo seeks to develop an open dialogue between international players to exchange views on these major challenges which are relevant to everyone.

2015 ABIS Colloquium: Central Theme

For the reasons outlined above, the theme and objectives of the 2015 ABIS Colloquium link closely with those of Expo 2015: “**Global Sustainability Strategy: new models and approaches to achieve sustainable living**”.

The 14th ABIS Colloquium will be an integral part of the 2015 Expo dialogue. Our specific focus is on the implications of these global sustainability challenges for strategic management. The rationale for this is the following: in the years to come, organisations of all types will be increasingly confronted with a complex set of strategic dilemmas against a backdrop of resource and growth constraints, systemic and market uncertainty, social change and geopolitical shifts. These issues will play out at multiple levels, from global to regional and local, and affect all actors.

The core issues of sustainable development have become a subject for global concern in recent years, which has been reflected in the field of strategic management. (Indeed, ‘Corporate Sustainability, Strategic Management and The Stakeholder View of the Firm’ was the theme of the 2006 Colloquium, also staged at SDA Bocconi.) However, the unit of analysis in the field has predominantly been the multinational enterprise. A decade ago, the fundamental questions addressed how corporate strategy would evolve to include sustainability and responsibility – in itself, a relatively new field of enquiry.

Yet the aftermath of the financial and economic crises has highlighted an urgent need for new strategic management and decision-making models which nurture smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and deliver shared value for business and society. The same issues apply universally to MNCs, SMEs, government agencies, NGOs, and others. The challenge is how to empower and equip as many actors as possible to manage them going forward.

Thus, as in previous years, the 2015 Colloquium will leverage ABIS’ model of corporate-academic partnership to focus on ways in which companies, business schools and universities, and other actors can collaborate more effectively to define and develop new frameworks in knowledge, talent and learning that contribute to lasting solutions.

New Strategies for Sustainability & Sustainable Living

Strategy is what links a company with its market (economic, financial and technological) and non-market (social, political and cultural) environments. A company is inextricably linked by a dynamic process of interaction with a diverse set of stakeholders in this environment, where the boundaries between market and non-market have become increasingly blurred. Therefore, corporate sustainability is based on the capability of the firm to generate long-term value through mutually beneficial relationships within its entire ecosystem.

However, profound changes in the nature and dynamics of the global business context have challenged our understanding of how this long-term shared value can and should be created. Rapid shifts in political and economic climates, and the emergence of new technologies, including social media, have all influenced the dynamics of strategies for growth. Users, consumers and entrepreneurs have an increasingly important role to play in innovation systems and value chains.

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Emphasis has also moved from competitive to collaborative advantage, as companies recognise that they cannot confront market failures and societal issues in isolation. Business, governments and others urgently need a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between natural resources, human needs, technology, economics, ecology, and the physical system focusing on consumers' values and behaviour and their consequences.

Against this backdrop, the Colloquium will seek to break new ground in understanding the new models of strategic management which will enable companies to shape and drive the sustainable living paradigms of the future.

In line with the themes of Expo 2015, particular attention will be paid to the dimensions of sustainable food and energy. More broadly, the Colloquium will welcome new insights and perspectives on related areas (with significant implications for business strategy and enterprise models, public policy, investors, and communities), such as mobility, urban development, circular economy, and more.

Key Themes and Questions

The Colloquium's programme, dialogues and debates will intertwine around the following:

Theme 1: Sustainability and Sustainable Lifestyles in the 21st Century

How can private, public and civil have real impact on customers' behaviour and promote a sustainable approach to personal actions? What are the future "must-haves" for sustainable living and lifestyles, from industry, governments and society at large? Which new approaches to production-consumption systems offer the greatest potential for developed and for emerging / developing markets? Which models of organisational leadership are needed to drive change?

Theme 2: Rethinking Core Concepts in Strategic Management for Sustainability

To what extent will global sustainability challenges transform current models of strategic management in MNCs in the next 5-10 years? What are the widely accepted concepts in the field which need to be fundamentally rethought and challenged? What are the implications for strategic change management inside the firm?

Theme 3: Innovation for Sustainability & Sustainable Living

What are the new approaches to innovation design and management – both within companies and within multi-actor R&I systems – that can inspire new strategic decision-making models? How can companies more actively engage with users and consumers in the processes of innovation for sustainable living and lifestyles? What are implications for good practice in global supply and value chains?

Theme 4: Sustainability, Strategic Management and SMEs

What are the greatest needs among SMEs to be able to manage strategic sustainability issues more effectively? What kind of management systems, tools and technologies will help to reduce vulnerability and support stable growth? How can the access and resource constraints of SMEs best be overcome?

Theme 5: Sustainable Entrepreneurship

What contribution will entrepreneurs, end users, innovators and consumers play in creating new sustainable living solutions and promoting societal change? With new technology empowering individuals to innovate outside of company value chains, what does this imply for corporate strategic planning and management?

Theme 6: Public Policies and Strategies for Sustainability & Sustainable Living

Which public policies can have a real impact on behaviour of citizens? Which strategic approaches are most effective for governments and law-makers to build consensus around sustainability objectives? How do public sector agencies balance short- and long-term considerations in sustainability policy and strategic planning? What emerging models of 'smart' regulation and governance can catalyse shifts towards sustainable living in developed and developing societies?

Theme 7: New Strategies for Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organisations

Which strategic planning and management factors are unique to NGOs and CSOs in tackling sustainability and sustainable living challenges? Do current strategy models and approaches support or hinder impact? What dynamic capabilities will NGOs and CSOs require to grow and collaborate more effectively?

Theme 8: Implications for Business Education

Are the dominant models of strategic management currently taught in business education still fit for purpose, in light of global sustainability and sustainability living challenges? Which new knowledge, values, and competences for strategic decision-making should business schools aim to develop in their graduates, and through which learning models? How can we better align corporate demand for strategic sustainability management capabilities with business school incentives and supply side reform and innovation?

Theme 9: The Role of Brands in Driving Sustainability

What will be the future role of brands in promoting more sustainable behaviours, attitudes and lifestyle habits? How will companies legitimately use brand power to create economic value, shape public discourse, and influence consumers? What are the returns on investment for brands that integrate sustainability, and what are the new approaches for measuring these ROIs? What are the new models of sustainability-based marketing and brand strategies as drivers of business transformation? Will these effectively help companies and organisations manage trust, reputation and legitimacy?

Type of contributions

We invite interested participants to submit extended abstracts of full academic papers, research-based work in progress, practitioner articles, case examples of organisational innovation (private, public and civic sectors), consulting studies or conceptual frameworks which relate to global sustainability and sustainable living issues and have clear implications for strategic management.

Contributions from scholars and researchers may be theoretical, empirical or methodological, or a combination. The 2015 Colloquium also has an Annual PhD & DBA Conference attached on 19 October, which means that we actively welcome contributions from doctoral students.

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We will welcome insights from all profiles of people engaged in this broad field, including but not limited to **business** (executives, consultants, opinion leaders and entrepreneurs), **academia** (deans; executive education and MBA directors; scholars and young researchers), **society and policy** (NGO executives; think tank figures involved in systemic change initiatives).

Post-Event Publication

As with previous conferences, ABIS and SDA Bocconi are working to secure a Special Issue of an internationally-recognised, peer-reviewed journal which will provide a valuable publishing opportunity for presenters of the most acclaimed works in Milan.

Submission guidelines and requirements

Proposals: a max. 500 words abstract is required for academic papers or other contributions

Submission opening: 16 March 2015

Submission deadline: 16 May 2015

Notification of acceptance: 1 June 2015

Registration deadline for accepted paper: 30 June 2015

More information on the Colloquium and Proposal Submission can be found on:

<http://www.abis-global.org/events/colloquium2015>

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