sustainability

Editorial

Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among Walking and Talking

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The last years have seen an increasing consciousness about the need to rethink the global economy. This paradigm shift was driven both by stakeholders' external pressures and by the increasing attention paid by regulators toward sustainable themes. Furthermore, many organizations and entrepreneurs started to integrate sustainable and ethical principles within their business models [1,2].

Within this scenario, a central role is covered by management scholars. This Special Issue aims to fill in some of the main theoretical gaps caused by the publication of original studies about the pivotal role covered by organizations within society [3]. Furthermore, we tried to favor the field's advancement through theoretical contributions that analyzed the shift from different perspectives [4,5].

The first paper consists of an empirical analysis of the main factors that impact the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the non-financial reports prepared on a mandatory basis by 134 Italian organizations. The authors underlined the central role covered by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Committees that represents a signal of orientation toward sustainable development [6].

The second paper analyses SDG Reporting practices in Spain. The authors showed that the adoption of Integrated Reports favors disclosing information about specific contributions to the SDGs. Furthermore, the analysis extended the scientific debate about the effects caused by the Directive 2014/95/EU in Spain [7].

The third paper underlines the relationship between corporate governance and SDGs. Building on a sample of Italian organizations listed in the Italian Financial Market (MTA), the authors showed that greater gender diversity on board of directors (BoD) has an overall positive influence on non-financial erformance, while CEO duality negatively moderates the preceding relationship [8].

The fourth contribution assesses the Hospitality and Tourism sector, which represents a sector of activity with several impacts on society. To favor the transition to more sustainable business models, the authors developed a methodological framework with a multi-stakeholder approach and a SDG perspective to enable them to contribute to the wellbeing of people, the community and the planet [9].

The fifth contribution was built through a case study about the ILVA Steel Plant. The case study investigated the different aspects of sustainable development in the four phases of the steel plant development, from public direct management to private management. The analysis, based on a series of unstructured data, was carried out by applying a triple bottom line approach and the total interpretative structuring model (TISM). The evidence shows how—in the absence of stable, coherent, strong and present public institutions, capable of reading the forces of the local and international context and of intervening with regulatory actions inspired by a planned and interiorized economic strategy—the market, left in the hands of the private entrepreneur only, is destined to fail, and the paths of multidimensional sustainable development stray away from the ambitions of modern states [10].

Citation: Caputo, F.; Leopizzi, R. Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among Walking and Talking. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 2553. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13052553

Received: 23 February 2021
Accepted: 25 February 2021
Published: 26 February 2021

The sixth contribution analyzes the Chinese contribution to the SDGs. The authors found that Chinese organizations only prioritize a few SDGs within their strategies. Thus, their contribution is limited due to the need to adopt a holistic approach based on integrating all the 17 SDGs [11].

The seventh contribution consists of the analysis of the contribution provided by European Banks to the SDGs. Following a methodological approach based on mixed methods, the authors tried to identify the main determinants of SDG reporting. In particular, the authors highlighted that country of origin, the legal system, and adoption of an integrated report seem to differentiate banks in terms of contribution to the SDGs [12].

The eighth paper analyzes the enabling role covered by Education Institutions on the SDGs. Building on research methods based on non-experimental ex post facto investigation based on a questionnaire, the authors found that SDGs education can support the SDGs' achievement [13].

The ninth paper provides interesting insights about the need to consider financial reporting practices in research on organizations' contribution to the SDGs. The authors highlighted that there is a slight negative relationship between sustainability engagement and earnings management (EM) practices. Furthermore, they show that companies characterized by higher sustainability engagement levels are less prone to advancing EM practices [14].

The tenth paper discussed the relationship between corporate governance and integrated reporting practices in South Africa. Building on a quantitative approach based on panel data, the authors found interesting insights about South African organizations' main material topics in their integrated reports [15].

The eleventh paper discussed SDG 6 through an analysis of the Spanish context. In particular, the study analyzes the evolution of the efficiency of Spanish local governments and their determining factors in the achievement of the SDG-6. The results indicate some of the main determinants that could favor the achievement of the SDG-6 by local governments [16].

The twelfth paper analyzes the value relevance of SDG reporting practices. Building on a sample of Italian Public Interest Entities (PIEs), the authors found an interesting relationship between non-financial reporting practices and indicators such as the Beta and firms' size [17].

The thirteenth paper consists of an empirical evaluation of the relationship between tax aggressiveness and contribution to the SDGs. The study emphasizes the critical role of gender diversity in the CSR approach's growth and companies' reputations. Therefore, governments and policymakers of major countries should promote gender diversity in corporate decision-making bodies, contributing to achieving the SDGs [18].

The fourteenth paper considers State-Owned Enterprises, which represent a research topic that has been widely analyzed during the last few years. Building on a counterfactual approach, the analysis conducted on a sample of European organizations highlights the major impacts caused by regulations on integrated reporting practices [19].

The fifteenth paper consists of an empirical evaluation of the relationship between structural capital and risk disclosure. The authors found a positive relationship between the two dimensions. In this context, they underline the need to integrate financial dynamics in non-financial evaluations [20]

Finally, an interesting literature review about the relationship between climate change and accounting was published. The authors found that: (1) the main perspectives addressed in the selected articles relate to sustainability accounting and reporting in a broad sense; (2) there was a lack of contributions about the management of climate change-related aspects, with specific reference to strategic and operational planning, accounting, and control of the actions implemented by the management of firms to counter climate change problems. The authors suggested that accounting scholars should focus their future research upon and underscored the social responsibilities of accounting scholars to increasingly integrate climate change mitigation into their accounting foci [21].

As can be seen in this brief review, the Special Issue covered a vast number of research topics. However, the field requires further studies to increase the scientific knowledge about the enabling role provided by private and public organizations towards the SDGs. In this context, the publications included in our Special Issue can represent a first step in developing new studies about the need to rethink the global economy.

Author Contributions: F.C. and R.L. planned, wrote and reviewed this editorial. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The Special Issue is available at: https://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/special_issues/Achieving_SDGs.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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