




Editorial

# New Challenges for Sustainable Organizations in Light of Agenda 2030 for Sustainability

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## 1. Introduction to the Special Issue

Sustainability is one of humanity's most daunting issues at present. Increasing population, escalation of anthropogenic activities, industrialization, modern agricultural practices that pollute water, air, and soil around the world, and ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions mean that sustainability is now in doubt [1].

In response to these critical concerns, the world has come up with several initiatives including Agenda 2030. Agenda 2030 is a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development worldwide, ensuring that no one is left behind by 2030. Its adoption was a landmark achievement, providing a shared vision towards sustainable development for all. Its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets aim to end the plethora of development problems and deliver a better universe [2].

The SDGs are principally linked to country level implementation, but they are the most inclusive and all-embracing participatory global development policy [3–7]. To actualize Agenda 2030, it will be necessary to involve governments and parliaments, the United Nations system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community, and all the peoples [2]. Agenda 2030 is a partnering-centered global development agenda aimed at developed and developing countries and cannot be achieved without the contributions of the private sector and other participating constituencies [7].

Organizations have important roles to play in SDGs delivery [5–9]. Relatedly, corporate sustainability has become a critical area of debate in academe and practice [10,11]. Recent research studies show that organizations are responding by paying more attention to sustainability issues including accountability and embedding environmental plans into their corporate strategy. However, rightly integrating corporate strategy with SDGs and improving corporate sustainability practice entails unlocking new knowledge on corporate environmental sustainability know-how.

The purpose of the Special Issue entitled “New Challenges for Sustainable Organizations in Light of Agenda 2030 for Sustainability” is to explore new findings and approaches associated with sustainable culture in light of Agenda 2030 for sustainability, thus extending and developing previous academic and managerial knowledge. It encourages submissions investigating—but not limited to—the development and application of innovative and sustainable territorial and organizational models both in profit and in nonprofit organizations. It also welcomes articles that address ethical, legal, technical, territorial, and organizational aspects to support sustainability both inside and outside the organization. Finally, it favors studies that are novel and applicable, capture best practices, and reflect the state-of-the-art.



**Citation:** Morea, D.; Gebennini, E.; Mazzitelli, A.; Andreano, M.S.; Basile, G.; Dominici, G. New Challenges for Sustainable Organizations in Light of Agenda 2030 for Sustainability. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 1717. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13041717>

Received: 31 January 2021

Accepted: 3 February 2021

Published: 5 February 2021

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## 2. Form and Contents of the Thematic Issue

The content of this Special Issue focuses on recent advances associated with sustainable culture in light of Agenda 2030 for sustainability which can be explored at three levels of analysis: (1) European Union (EU) countries/regions; (2) National municipalities; (3) Organizations (for-profit and non-profit; private and public).

At the first level of analysis, Postiglione et al. [12] discuss the regional equality within countries and across the EU regions by studying  $\sigma$ -convergence and the conditional  $\beta$ -convergence process. The authors highlight the impact of the interdependencies that occur at the regional level between EU regions and point out that the speed of convergence is slowing down in the European Union. This is especially true following the 2008 economic crisis and the entrance of Eastern regions. Hence, they propose paying additional attention to regions in Eastern Europe in order to ensure cohesion and reduce regional disparities.

At the second level of analysis, Mastronardi and Romagnoli [13] investigate a specific type of Italian municipality, i.e., municipalities distant from the main service supply hubs and thus defined as “inner areas”. The authors discuss the role of a new entrepreneurial mode, called community-based cooperatives (CBCs), in contributing to sustainable development in those areas. According to the authors, this objective is achieved in a variety of ways: the strengthening of community wellbeing (social sustainability); the enhancement of endogenous potential (economic sustainability); the recovery of degraded or abandoned natural resources (environmental sustainability); and the creation of fruitful partnerships. Still at the municipal level, Mastronardi and Cavallo [14] open a discussion about economic inequalities. More specifically, the authors point out that inner areas show lower inequality levels with respect to densely populated urban centers. In those areas, the agricultural sector plays a fundamental role. Hence, Basile and Cavallo [15] focus on the nexus between rural identity and perceptive components of authenticity in order to understand the positive relapse of the territory’s changes and fruition influencing sustainable development.

At the organization level, four contributions investigate four different sectors. Bonacci et al. [16] focus on the healthcare sector by showing that a good organizational climate becomes a necessary (though not sufficient) condition to create an expert, structured, and balanced workforce (organizational innovation), capable of achieving great performances (working excellence) aligned with the organization’s interests and objectives. Poponi et al. [17] deal with spin-offs, typically defined as “Science Based” companies, and their role in the transition from the classic model of linear economics to the innovative model of circular economics. Cappa et al. [18] deal with cultural heritage organizations. The authors propose a visitor-sensing framework where visitors can contribute to generate new scientific knowledge concerning their behavior and preferences, by which museum managers can re-design the cultural offerings of their institutions in ways that generate major economic and social impacts. Finally, Myeong and Jung [19] discuss the potential benefit of blockchain technology in the field of public administration. By enhancing the level of security and transparency, blockchain technology could help to provide future sustainable administrative services (e.g., e-voting systems, individually oriented social welfare services, more transparent recruitment and procurement processes, etc.).

**Author Contributions:** The authors were Guest Editors of the Special Issue entitled “New Challenges for Sustainable Organizations in Light of Agenda 2030 for Sustainability” and contributed equally to this Editorial. Conceptualization, investigation, resources, and writing—original draft preparation: D.M., E.G., A.M., M.S.A., G.B. and G.D.; validation and writing—review and editing: D.M., E.G., A.M., M.S.A., G.B. and G.D. 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:** Data sharing not applicable.

**Acknowledgments:** We would like to thank the authors and reviewers for their valuable contributions and the Editorial Board of *Sustainability* for their help and guidance in the management of the Special Issue entitled “New Challenges for Sustainable Organizations in Light of Agenda 2030 for Sustainability”. A special thanks to Leanne Fan.

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

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