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WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

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ABSTRACT

SETTING THE SCENE AND STATING THE PROBLEM

“Sustainability is becoming a driving force of economies and societies” (EU, 2019). Correspondingly, scholars have recognized sustainability as a central theme both from an intellectual perspective and a practitioners' viewpoint (Lüdeke-Freund, 2010).

Introducing sustainability in the business world implies considering it as a multi-level concept (Figge *et al.*, 2002) in which each level is co-determined with others. Actually, it encompasses sustainability from a shareholder' perspective (i.e., a focus on market value). Moreover, it takes into consideration the primary stakeholders' perspective that want to satisfy their expectations in long run. Furthermore, it calls attention to well-being and the planetary system. Definitively, it is crucial to identify mechanisms and contexts through which sustainability affects the business world and, more generally, society (George *et al.*, 2016).

Prior literature shows that, frequently, the quest for sustainability requires firms' interactions and combination, and recombination of resources among multiple actors, such as suppliers, customers, higher education institutions, research organizations, and others (Dagnino *et al.*, 2015). Then, each firm acts as a “change agent” by orchestrating diverse resources and knowledge toward an articulated problem (Ferraro *et al.*, 2015; George *et al.*, 2016). We are introducing, *de facto*, the *helix innovation model* (involving business, university, government) by stressing the centrality of firms in igniting the processes for sustainable innovation.

In the past decade, scholars have conceptualized an advancement of the Triple Helix innovation, i.e., the *quadruple helix model*, by adding civil society into the list of knowledge actors (Carayannis *et al.*, 2012). This more advanced version of triple helix leverages knowledge dispersed among stakeholders, fostering high degrees of democracy in knowledge exchange and innovation, and changes in power relations in this context (Jensen and Sandström, 2011). Recently, scholars updated also the quadruple helix model by including ecological content in the helix model. The new model is labeled the *quintuple helix model* (Carayannis *et al.*, 2012). The latest model represents an advancement of the preexisting quadruple helix framework as they include multiple groups of stakeholders and civil society among

the actors considered. It highlights the role of stakeholders' involvement, in terms of co-creation and responsibility, in promoting and implementing sustainable innovation.

Overall, an extant literature acknowledges that the quest for sustainability is a key driver of the quintuple helix model and, accordingly, we can find a *copious* research on firm's dialogue with stakeholders for facilitating sustainable innovation (Ayuso *et. al.*, 2006). Nonetheless, such literature is *fragmented* in linking and mapping diverse norms and "glocal" actions, and to fill in an existing governance and participation gap, that allows to leverage diverse expertise and decentralized flexible structures (Bäckstrand, 2006).

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this paper is to summarize the existing knowledge on the role of stakeholders' involvement in promoting and implementing sustainable innovation. The initial outcomes of this paper is to identify main cooperation objectives and stakeholders' involvement, in order to develop a framework of dynamic sustainable innovation practices. Then, we can structure a platform for future research and distill managerial implications.

METHODOLOGY

This paper offers a systematic literature review. We collect papers available on SCOPUS database. Specifically, our research is updated at 28 of February, 2020. We select papers on the basis of the following steps. First, we search in title, abstract and key words the following strings: ("sustainable innovat*") or ("innovat*" and "triple bottom line") or ("innovat*" and "hybrid organi*") or ("innovat*" and "hybrid corporation") or ("innovat*" and "quadruple bottom line") or ("innovat*" and "quintuple bottom line") or ("innovat*" and "stakeholder*"). Second, since Scopus includes papers published from the year 1966 and our research focus (i.e., "innovations related to sustainability") is a fairly new topic in management (Cillo *et al.*, 2019), a right truncation is not applied, a left truncation is included – the year 2019. Third, we apply the following limitations: (1) Subject Area: Business, Management and Accounting; (2) Language: English; (3) Document type: Article, (4) Source type: Journal, (5) Publication stage: Final. Fourth, we restrict our analysis to articles published in journals with at least 3 starts of the AJG 2018. The overall outcome is 361 articles. Fifth, we read all abstracts with the goal to select only the papers that contribute to understand the role of stakeholders in sustainable innovation processes. At this point, we perform the analysis of our data base by identifying for each paper: year, authors, journal, conceptual perspective(s), definition of innovation, definition of sustainability, definition of stakeholders' involvement, method, sample, findings.

EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION

This paper offers a map of stakeholders' cooperation objectives and involvement practices for sustainable innovation. Then, our first contribution is to link different research to connect copious and fragmented literature. Second, we propose future map for investigation on sustainable innovation by involving stakeholders. Third, we develop a set of implications about how firms can leverage on stakeholders' involvement to promote sustainable innovation.

Keywords: sustainability, stakeholders, sustainable innovation, systematic literature review.

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