

Rethinking Sustainability: UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the Good Life in Management and Leadership

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This paper presents a vision of responsible management and leadership to contribute to the good life of prosperous societies in sustainable development. Focus is the application of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) in European businesses to develop progressive business models for organizations and corporations, that contribute to a global transformation towards what the famous philosopher Paul Ricoeur calls the “good life with and for others in just institutions”

We face the emergence of new business models and a transformation of capitalism, which implies new ideas of sustainable management, business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) facing the need for ecological economics. The question is how we can develop these business models to transform our economy towards a global economy of the good life of the common good.

In this context, the paper discusses how the use of such UN tools of world goals (SDGs) can be applied in the perspective of creating shared value for business, society and environment in sustainable business and ecological business development. The idea is that the vision of the SDGs focusing on partnerships, stakeholder involvement and holistic engagement of all citizens help to develop a new economy of sharing and participation.

The research questions are “What are the theoretical foundations of the concept of sustainability and the good life in the SDGs?” “How does management and business make sense of SDGs for new and better sustainable business models?” “What are the implications for business ethics, corporate social responsibility and business legitimacy of SDG leadership in relation to the concept of the good life?” What does this mean for the creation of an ethical economy of the common good?

The presentation combines theory and practice with a case-studies of the ongoing processes of implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals in European and global businesses. On this basis the theoretical research objective is to contribute to the research literature on philosophy of management and leadership, business ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR)

The hypothesis of the paper is that the involvement of Danish private business organizations and/or partnerships between business, governments and NGOs for the SDG’s has potentials for developing more sustainable, social, responsible, ethical and progressive business models. European societies search for responsible economics where business and its stakeholders find good solutions for responsible business and authentic sustainability by employees, consumers and society.

With this global environmental challenge of the protection of both people, planet and profits the UN SDGs function as a *mediating frame for visions for the good life* in new business models and ecological economies. Therefore, the presentation aims at rethink our concepts and models of sustainable development and for innovative ideas of sharing, ecological and circular economy with focus on the just and the good in European and global businesses.

Short Biography

Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, PhD and Dr. Scient. Adm. is professor of philosophy of management and ethics at the Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University, Denmark. Rendtorff’s research covers business ethics, bioethics, ethics and law, and social theory. Rendtorff’s recent publications are Handbook of Business Legitimacy, Responsibility, Ethics and Society, Springer 2020; Sustainability and Philosophy of Management, Emerald 2019, Cosmopolitan Business Ethics. Towards a Global Ethos of Management, Routledge 2017. Rendtorff is a president of the EXCOM of EBEN (European Business Ethics Network) and member of the Steering Committee of FISP (International Federation of Philosophical Societies). Rendtorff is editor of the Springer Series Ethical Economy, Presently, Rendtorff’s research interests are values-driven management, corporate responsibility, business ethics, sustainability, and cosmopolitan business ethics.