Transforming Systems through Humanistic Management: an Introduction to the Special Issue

David M. Wasieleski^{1,2}

Received: 20 November 2021 / Accepted: 22 November 2021 / Published online: 14 December 2021
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

In November 2021, the conference of the parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change met for the 26th time since 1992 in Glasgow, Scotland. The Cop26 is the latest iteration of the international congress where government politicians, scientists, activists, and business leaders meet and discuss plans for addressing the global climate emergency. It was labeled as the last real chance for the world's society to agree on measures to arrest the rise of global temperatures at 1.5C. Before the Summit, the meeting was hyped as being crucial for the future of our planet. In no small measure, global leaders were called upon to enact transformative change in our systems, economies, as well as business and society relationships.

In the spirit of this urgent need for transformative change in business for the survival of our planet in the wake of the Anthropocene (Steffen et al., 2011), this Special Issue on “Transforming Systems through Humanistic Management” speaks to this global crisis of humanity by presenting articles that promote and instill change at different levels of analysis. The logic is that in order to generate large-scale transformations in our world, efforts must be made across all levels of analysis. It is not enough to address social issues at the individual level. Transformative changes must also be made in organizations as well as systemically. As defined by Steve Waddell (2016), *system transformation* refers to change that has breadth, depth, and scope and which alters the fundamental parameters of relevant systems or subsystems.

We live in a time fraught with existential crises the ultimate lever of innovation is the way we think about management and organizing. Humanistic Management presents a perspective that allows positive changemakers to engage mindfully with the world around us providing solutions to the large social and environmental problems. The International Humanistic Management Association (IHMA) provides a platform for all interested and passionate to protect the inherent value of all life and want to contribute to the well-being of all. This Special Issue was generated out of a desire to promote human flourishing in the modern-day condition.

One of the goals at IHMA is to build community around the principles of protecting dignity and promoting well-being. Thus, towards this end, this project began as a Thought

✉ David M. Wasieleski
Wasieleski@duq.edu

¹ Duquesne University, 600 Forbes Avenue, 918 Rockwell Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15282, USA

² ICN Business School, Nancy, France

Leadership Conference co-sponsored by IHMA and the Albert P. Viragh Institute for Ethics in Business at Duquesne University. The conference serves those purposes by bringing together a diverse set of top scholars and impactful professionals who all share the desire to further our understanding about how to improve the relationship between business and global society. Our topics are arranged around individual, organizational, and systemic levels of inquiry. The articles borne out of the conference address the transformative theme from changing mindsets to expanding worldviews, from the exploration of social justice to the proper stewardship of the ecological environment.

Building on the first Thought Leadership Conference in Tarrytown, NY in 2018, this theme goes further than social innovation. According to Sandra Waddock, system parameters include the system's purposes, evaluation, power and resources distribution, and core operating practices. The tracks in this year's conference address aspects of these parameters for the purpose of the betterment of society. Ultimately, we are looking to establish a community of learning based on humanistic management principles with organizational partners (businesses, NGOs, government entities) to explore, learn, co-create insights and solutions designed to address the deep challenges business and society are facing.

In particular, the goal of this invited Thought Leadership Conference was to bring together approximately top scholars and visionary business practitioners in the various field to share and develop ideas for promulgating innovative ways of thinking about our world. The goal of the conference was to create original research in the humanistic management space for initiating change in our institutions and worldviews. As a fundamental premise, we believe business models need to be revised and improved to reflect the new challenges facing business and society. The best way to address and promote human flourishing in the wake of global social and environmental crises is to change the assumptions underlying business and economy (Pirson, 2017).

Articles in this Special Issue

This Special Issue is organized around general levels of analysis. We begin at the systemic level of analysis, followed by pieces that focus more on organizational-level topics. Our final pieces address individual-level concepts. Thus, the issue starts broad and narrows its focus throughout the issue. We are grateful to have an elite set of international thought leaders as our contributors.

Our opening piece is co-authored by Chris Laszlo, Sandra Waddock, Anil Maheshwari, Giorgia Nigri, and Julia Storberg-Walker. Their article, "Quantum worldviews: How science and spirituality are converging to transform consciousness for meaningful solutions to wicked problems", emphasizes the transformation of worldviews for addressing the societal challenges facing the world. They invite us to contemplate different ways of knowing by synthesizing insights from science and spirituality. A quantum way of thinking can assist leaders in developing a new consciousness necessary for devising imaginative solutions to social and environmental issues.

The next article, "Seven principles for seven generations: Moral boundaries for transformational change", takes an aspirational approach for reaching a more sustainable life by reframing how societal institutions and organizations interact with their social and natural environment. Nuno Guimaraes Da Costa, Gerard Farias, David Wasieleski, and Anthony Annett offer a set of seven principles for present and future generations that establish moral boundary zones for business and society. The authors argue that if these moral boundaries

illustrated in their model are not violated, a more socially and environmentally sustainable world is possible.

Moving to a more organizational-level frame, Harry Hummels, Matt Lee, Patrick Nul-lens, Renato Ruffini, and Jennifer Hancock discuss how to align business grammar with a grammar associated with love. In “The future on love and business organizing: An agenda for growth and affirmation of people and the environment”, the authors argue that the concepts of business and love are not dualities, but rather, can be integrated into a concept of love in business. Their essay translates the concept of love that business managers can understand and utilize for a more responsible management approach.

Tae Wan Kim, Fabrizio Maimone, Katherina Pattit, Alejo Jose Sison, and Benito Lopez Teehankee present a piece that addresses the growing issue of artificial intelligence in business organizations and society. Their article, “Master and slave: The dialectic of human-artificial intelligence engagement” speaks to transformative change by arguing that humans must remain the masters of AI, rather than having machines and technological advances hold dominion over human beings. As AI has become a ubiquitous issue in society, this important work examines how human flourishing can be achieved through proper human-artificial intelligence engagement.

Next, Reut Livne-Tarandach, Erica Steckler, Jennifer Leigh, and Sara Wheeler-Smith reimagine the workplace for achieving social justice and limiting human suffering. “Cultivating organizations as healing spaces: A typology for responding to suffering and advancing social justice” is motivated by countless historical inequities in society. This article takes a trans-disciplinary perspective by integrating research from multiple different fields for the generation of a holistic definition of healing that enables organizations to become spaces that limit suffering. Their work presents a typology for responding to social injustices harm to individuals. The identification and synthesis of four perspectives on healing in this article demonstrates how healing may be enabled at different levels of analysis.

Combining also organizational and individual levels of analysis, “People mattering at work: A humanistic management perspective” uses humanistic management and humanistic psychology as drivers of ensuring that people are valued and matter in organizations. Utilizing a dignity framework, Anne Matheson, PJ Dillon, Manuel Guillen, and Clark Warner include moral and spiritual aspects of lived human experiences to help managers understand what it means for individuals to matter at work and have a more fulfilling experience. Thus, they address transformative change on how organizational contexts are conceived and how they can be re-envisioned.

The following article focuses on how humanistic management can be applied within a fascinating industry, tourism. Maria Della Lucia, Frederic Dimanche, Ernestina Giudici, Blanca Carmago, and Anke Winchenbach try to transform and improve higher education programs in tourism in “Enhancing tourism education: The contribution of humanistic management.” Given tourism’s prominent role in the global economy, the authors offer a values-based, humanistic tourism for protecting societal well-being. They explain best-practice models for educating current and future managers and offer pedagogical suggestions for transforming higher education to enable more responsible management.

Finally, our Special Issue closes with another piece that is motivated by transforming business education through the adoption of mindfulness practices in organizations. Kathryn Goldman Schuyler, Lemuel Watson, and Elizabeth King conduct an extensive set of interviews and share personal experiences on how to include generative mindfulness in executive development. “How generative mindfulness can contribute to inclusive workplaces” shows how humanistic management principles incorporated in executive education can lead to the adoption of more inclusive workplace environments.

Beyond this particular Special Issue, IHMA will continue to strive to protect human dignity and promote well-being in all walks of life. This issue represents only one attempt at generating a forum for addressing holistic, global issues. This conversation for enacting transformative change in our systems must continue. We look forward to future thought leadership efforts to instill a more humanistic world.

References

- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/11/what-is-cop26-and-why-does-it-matter-the-complete-guide>
- https://www.economist.com/leaders/2021/10/30/why-the-cop26-climate-summit-will-be-both-crucial-and-disappointing?gclid=CjwKCAiAs92MBhAXEiwAXTi254JO94bBUDaOJYXr46EI4YRJLzo6RJc_aBaknTIzxiGUJp1dGTg-_BoCSpAQAvD_BwE&gclidsrc=aw.ds
- <http://humanisticmanagement.international>
- Pirson, M. 2017. *Humanistic management: Protecting dignity and promoting well-being*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Steffen, W., A. Perrson, L. Deutsch, J. Zalasiewicz, M. Williams, K. Richardson, C. Crumley, P. Curtzen, C. Folke, L. Gordon, M. Molina, V. Rmaanathan, J. Rockstrom, M. Scheffer, H.J. Schellnhuber, and U. Svedin. 2011. The Anthropocene: From global climate change to planetary stewardship. *Ambio: A Journal of the Human Environment* 40 (7): 739–761.
- Waddell, St. 2016. Societal Change Systems: A Framework to Address Wycked Problems. *Journal of AppliedBehavioral Science*, 52(4):422–449.

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.