

THE LOCCIONI MODEL OF “RESPONSIBLE ENTERPRISE”. TERRITORY, CULTURE AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

Francesco De Stefano, University of Macerata

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, in the age of “knowledge economy”, one of the most important social questions on which we have to reflect is the relationship between enterprise business practices and the respect for human beings and environment. This work aims at investigating the case of a technological enterprise from Marche (Italy), Loccioni Group, in relation to its engagement in developing a model of social innovation that meets social and environmental needs of the area in which it is rooted, and wants to promote, preserve and spread its cultural heritage. Analyzing Loccioni’s cultural and environmental projects from ethical-anthropological point of view, even in relation to the recent European strategy for development (“Europe 2020”), we can testify the real possibility to combine economic growth, cultural heritage enhancement and respect for the environment, demonstrating that a model of “responsible enterprise” can exist.

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INTRODUCTION

In front of the current challenges of social-economical crisis, climate changes and globalization, we must reflect about a different model of development, focused on social and environmental responsibility and on the enhancement of cultural resources of the territories. In particular, we need to understand how to develop an enterprise model that does not consider the economic profit as the only purpose of its activity, but it is committed to promote social and ecological values through the revaluation of environmental and cultural assets of its own territory. This model of development can be realized especially by small and medium-sized enterprises, which are often characterized by a close connection with the features of the specific territorial area in which they operate.

This is the case of Loccioni Group, a family enterprise from Marche (Italy), rooted in the territory of the Vallesina. The Group develops high-tech measurement and test solutions in various business sectors (mobility, humancare, home, environment, energy), with the aim of improving the quality, efficiency and sustainability of products, processes and buildings. Until now, the case of Loccioni Group has been studied mainly for its particular entrepreneurial history (Bartocci, 2013) or for its specific organizational system (Bonti, Cori, 2006). What is lacking, then, is a *combined perspective* which will be able to underline Loccioni’s ethical values (social responsibility, sustainability and attention for the territory) in relation to its concrete business practice. A similar perspective was carried on by Niccolini (2008, 199-221), even if with a particular attention on Loccioni’s organizational system. Thus, the purpose of this work is to show the Loccioni model of “responsible enterprise”, analyzing it from an ethical-anthropological point of view. Here is the originality of this research: combine the organizational practices of a specific enterprise with its own philosophical sense, which should be for the enterprise itself the main aspect to be considered.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From CSR to Corporate Social Innovation in the Time of Knowledge Economy

During the Eighties it has been starting to state that contemporary economics is based not so much on the production of material goods, but above all on the value of knowledge. Today, almost all theories of management considers knowledge as the main source of a competitive advantage that allows organizations to adapt themselves to continuously changing realities (Drucker, 1993, 1994). From this awareness, the modern concept of *knowledge management* was originated, especially by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), with the aim of developing systems of organization, learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978) and dissemination of knowledge in enterprises. In particular the practice of *knowledge sharing*, especially in order to create new knowledge and accelerate innovation processes, is now studied and developed (Nonaka and Nishiguchi, 2001, Davenport and Prusak, 2000).

If the positive potential linked to the development of knowledge and its sharing is undeniable, the dynamics of “cognitive capitalism” (Moulier-Boutang, 2007, Fumagalli and Vercellone (ed.), 2007) must be analyzed not only from the point of view of economic competitiveness, but also through the lens of an anthropological and ethical reflection. Indeed, to obtain a “good integration” between work and knowledge inside of business practices, the development of knowledge has to lay its foundations on values which promote respect for people and for the environment in which they live.

In this sense, we have to consider the recent strategy called “Europe 2020” (ec.europa.eu/europe2020/). Through this strategy, indeed, the EU aims at delivering a growth that is: *smart*, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation; *sustainable*, thanks to a decisive move towards a low-carbon economy; and *inclusive*, with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction. Thus, “Europe 2020” is the main way by which the EU wants to reaffirm the necessity of *Corporate Social Responsibility* (ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sustainable-business/corporate-social-responsibility/).

Introduced formally on the agenda of the European Union on 2000, CSR is defined as *the ability to combine business with attention for environment and social issues*. Nevertheless, “Europe 2020” goes beyond the only concept of responsibility, focusing its attention mainly on *knowledge*, as the best way to promote *Social Innovation* (ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/social-innovation/).

This expression means that to address the emerging needs of contemporary society, such as social vulnerability and environmental sustainability, we need to identify new sources of knowledge and collaborative networks, promoting global challenges as engine of innovation.

According to *Social innovation*, then, the improvement of new technologies and the development of new knowledge must aim to meet people needs and take care of the environment in a sustainable approach. In this way it would be possible to give the benefits also to the generation to come (conspect.nl/pdf/Our_Common_Future-Brundtland_Report1987.pdf). Only following this ethical values enterprises can realize a “good integration” between work and knowledge. Just this conclusion leads us to analyze the reality of Loccioni Group as a concrete example of the engagement in promoting corporate social responsibility through social innovation.

The Loccioni Model of “Responsible Enterprise”: Territory, Culture and Social Innovation

Loccioni Group is a family company established in 1968 by Enrico Loccioni. Rooted in the tradition of monks and peasants of Vallesina, it has developed itself not performing repetitive tasks (manufacturing), but engaging increasingly in projects for the improvement of the *quality* of products, processes and buildings. The commitment of the Group is then *measuring for improving*, through the development of measurement and control automatic systems on the issues of health, energy, environment, safety and comfort. The Group's mission, “to integrate ideas, people, technology to transform data into value” brought it to

become early a “knowledge enterprise”, even though keeping intact the “metalmezzadro” culture of its tradition: the habit of working in uncertainty of the seasons, the strength to restart again and again, the learning from imitation, the crop diversification to reduce the risk. Therefore, Loccioni Group has organized itself according to the model of IBC (Sveiby, 1992): it solves complex problems that require creativity and different skills, its organizational system is “horizontal” and small-sized, it turns knowledge and information into practical *competence*, through the integration with universities, schools and research centres, it invests in Research and Development and in people’s training. Moreover, being a “knowledge enterprise” does not mean only having knowledge as the main competitiveness driving force. It involves indeed the conception of employees as collaborators, entrepreneurs, *knowledge workers* who actively invest their knowledge to reach shared objectives. Furthermore the Group is particularly focused on spreading an enterprise culture which values people’s realization, inviting collaborators to grow up together through responsibility, initiative, curiosity and passion.

In addition to that, the deep relationship with its own territory leads Loccioni Group to have a particular attention for the themes of social responsibility and sustainability. One of the specificities of the Group, then, is the connection between the aspects of business and technological innovation with those of environmental sustainability and promotion of the cultural heritage of the territory. The Group is indeed increasingly engaged in projects not aimed only at the economic profit, but also at the promotion and preservation of the beauty of the territory and its rich historical and cultural heritage.

In this sense, some very interesting Loccioni’s projects are: *Leaf Garden*, *LOV* and *Flumen* (see Loccioni’s *Social Balance 2012*: www.loccioni.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/2012-Social-Balance.pdf). *Leaf garden* is the garden of Loccioni Group, which offers season fruit and vegetables, natural odours and flavours that are typical of its territory to its guests and collaborators. This can be a virtuous way to promote the specific gastronomic culture of the area, and it becomes an important attractive force for visitors. *LOV – Land of Values* (www.loccioni.com/marche-region/welcome/), is a project for enhancing tourism, wine and food traditions of the territory, which manages a network of restaurants and tourist accommodation facilities, cultural associations and excellences of the regional tradition (see Cardinali, Gregori, Perna, Temperini 2012). This is the main Loccioni’s project about the promotion of the Vallesina culture and history, its charming villages with ancient churches and abbeys, small museums and wineries. The interesting fact about *LOV* project is that it isn’t directly linked with the business, but its function is mainly lead with the value of hospitality that Loccioni Group wants to spread out, through the relationship with its main interlocutors: clients, collaborators, suppliers and partners.

Flumen is the project for the “adoption” of the Esino river, aimed at securing and enhancing a 2-km river area. It involves a collaboration between public and private institutions in a laboratory for joint design, and it represents an investment for the future that also will lead to rediscover the river as an energy source and a cultural patrimony. From being a threat, the river has become a resource again, with its stories, its tradition, the work of “selcini” (stone breakers), the hidden beaches, the biodiversity of fauna and flora. In this way the river can start to be lived by the community again and it could become a place of relationship as it was in the past.

An Example of Loccioni’s Social Innovation: “*Leaf Community: 2Km of Innovation*”

Flumen project is a part of a bigger reality of the Group: *Leaf Community*. The first eco-sustainable completely integrated community in Italy, *Leaf Community* is a place in which it is possible to live in a carbon neutral house, move with electrical or hydrogen cars, bring children to a solar energy school and work in eco-compatible buildings. Energy is provided by renewable sources, granting the highest level of comfort and modernity (energy.loccioni.com/sustainable-community). *Leaf Community*, furthermore, is not only a “physical” place, but also a way of thinking and living, by which the values of energy saving and energy efficiency are shared, and new environmental improvement are designed, in relation to meet people needs and to take care of the territory. In the aim of implementing the *Leaf Community*, Loccioni

Group is realizing the *Leaf Lab*, the first class A+ industrial building, connective and fully in harmony with the environment. With it, and with storage and management energy systems, Leaf Community will become the *first micro smart grid* in Italy by the end of 2013 (<http://energy.loccioni.com/2013/09/>). This project, as *Flumen*, is a great opportunity to stimulate reflections on energetic, hydro-geological, fiscal and administrative question, moreover it gives visibility to the territory and its beauty.

Leading with its vocation of “open-air laboratory”, today the Leaf Community not only concerns environmental issues and energy efficiency, but also the larger ones related to social innovation, territorial development and corporate culture, from not only economical, but also historical, artistic and cultural point of view. The lens of the enterprise stands on the hills of its territory, imagining a land where there are no boundaries between the private and common goods, in which each element is treated and interpreted in an innovative way. Starting from the “adoption” of the Esino river, Loccioni Group wants to realize an area of permanent design, developing corporate culture and technological innovation through the reinterpretation of the traditions of the past. From agriculture to industry, from research to services, the company aims at generating visions, projects, actions, demonstrating the possible harmony between man and nature, public and private, profit and value.

This is the concept of *2km of innovation*. The idea of the Group is to continue in developing the environmental resources of the surrounding area, enhancing it through cycle lanes, green areas, training trails, and everything that could encourage cultural exchange and dissemination about the beautiful landscape of the territory. In addition to this, the Group is developing a research project with the University of Urbino, to analyze and enhance the historical and artistic heritage of the territory, developing and disseminating humanistic culture that distinguishes it, discovering its roots, traditions, customs, artistic excellence and cultural heritage.

Through this engagement, the area in which Loccioni Group operates can become a destination of an *international enterprise tourism*, by which spreading out its cultural heritage and attracting social and economical resources from all the world. Thus, the Loccioni model of “responsible enterprise”, which tries to combine innovation with social needs and environment care, can represent one of the exemplarities of Marche region, enhancing a kind of entrepreneurship that promotes the “good integration” between work and knowledge.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Through this research, we have analyzed some aspects of Loccioni enterprise model, demonstrating its engagement in social responsibility and sustainability through the description of its main *social innovative* projects: *Leaf Community*, *Leaf Lab*, *Leaf Garden*, *LOV*, *2km of innovation*. These projects show the possibility for an enterprise to go beyond the only economic profit, having people’s well-being and the environment preservation as the main goal. This work can be a starting point to analyze the Loccioni model from an *integrate perspective*, which considers all its entrepreneurial features in relation to their ethical and anthropological meaning.

The link between a “regional” dimension and “global” one, then, is another interesting element underlined by this work, that has to be sound out more deeply in future researches. Indeed, contextualizing the actions of a specific enterprise in the broader contest of “Europe 2020”, or into international debates about the theme of sustainability, leads us to a twofold advantage: on the one hand it ensures that the actions of a particular reality will contribute to the realization of a global objective, on the other it makes possible the dissemination of the good practices developed by enterprises of different territories, giving them visibility and increasing their interconnection.

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