

EDITORIAL: Organizational governance in a cha(-lle)nging world: A critical perspective between potentials and fears

Dear readers!

In a society increasingly pervaded by advanced and disruptive technological systems, with the emergence of a 6.0 industry vision, of holistic interconnection beyond human-machine interaction and of human empowerment thanks to technology, the emergence of increasingly stringent and performative networks, oriented towards resilience and overcoming crises, here the rediscovery of mutuality and the self, of a corporate social responsibility, which however hides dark sides, in the necessary flexibility and strategical governance adaptability, of the dynamism inherent in remote working, of the “death of distance”, especially after exogenous shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on the one hand provide key elements to support human evolution, on the other they converge into fears regarding its involution, cognitive, relational and due by job substitution (Bresciani, 2016; Vijay et al., 2024; Kumar et al., 2021; Ziemba, 2013; Johannsen, 2009; Seeger & Mitra, 2019; Kieffer, 2018; Modarelli, 2023, 2025a, 2025b; Raniero & Modarelli, 2021; Janssen & van der Voort, 2016; Cairncross, 2002; Röglinger et al., 2022; de Barros, 2024; Kaufmann & Modarelli, 2025; Frey & Osborne, 2017). A society that I myself have defined as VUCA-D (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity — digital) (Modarelli, 2025a), broadening the horizons proposed by Drucker (1999). That is, a society characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (VUCA), and exacerbated digitalization. In such conditions, fears broaden, also extending to the condition of difficulty or the perception of inability and impossibility of governing tools with potential that are not yet fully imaginable and not yet fully expressed in their extensive capacity. Such is the reason why recent regulatory movements (Pehlivan, 2024) focus their attention precisely on the emergence of relevant critical issues from extreme technologicalization, demarcating the legal boundaries of a necessary humanistic and human-centric rediscovery. This perspective is also found in scientific literature (Modarelli et al., 2025). The growing emphasis on stakeholder engagement has radically reshaped the corporate governance debate, as *Fernando Camastra*, *Giacinto Coniglio*, and *Antonio Blasotti* confirm in this issue, challenging the traditional focus on shareholder primacy. Shifting stakeholder engagement from ambitious rhetoric to governance reality has thus become the fundamental watershed that differentiates corporate-organizational relationships (Fine, 2021). Relationships that currently seem at risk (Kaufmann & Modarelli, 2025), first by social distancing, subsequently by the continuation of smart working and the dematerialization of physical community places to share and work (Pianesi, 2021; Angelici & Profeta, 2024; Modarelli, 2025a), then habitually virtualized by the use of social media, delivery platforms that send dinner or lunch to our home, online shopping platforms where our every desire is couriered to and from any part of the world with a click. All this operational flexibility, which opens up more space for the performative dimension of work, becomes a dissonant individual, indeed individualistic, propensity for an identitarian isolation where self-efficacy is redefined in terms of immediacy, possession, feedback, etc., thus, “I exist because I desire, ask, and possess” immediately (Belk, 2013). In these terms, the relational dimension between consumer and brand, between consumer and objects of consumption, inevitably shifts from the satisfaction of more or less primary needs to the generation of often inconsistent and identity-based needs. The relationship with the brand transforms into a relationship of love, of care, yet still profitable and therefore susceptible to getting sick (Batra et al., 2012). Thus, our human relationships get sick in the pursuit of self-proposition in a shop window (Malone & Fiske, 2013), impoverishing the Cartesian “*cogito ergo sum*”, “I think, therefore I am”, in favor of “I am because I act”. Often, it does not matter how, but what matters is to do. So much so that we forget the private and socio-organizational relational aspects of care and dedication in the face of superficial architectural embellishments. So much so that we forget that companies, the main economic operators, are first and foremost social institutions. And now we are also forgetting the way in which organizations are governed and how true leaders can be considered as such (Foss & Klein, 2022), increasingly replaced by actors on virtual stages, where relationships and decisions are conveyed via e-mail and by screens. And it is in this pursuit of perfectionism, distant from the human, heterogenetic in its goals, that the need to rediscover ourselves as humans in relationships arises; the need to rediscover ourselves in the others, to self-determine ourselves in relationships, inserted into a contextual, emotional, relational, and holistic work involvement. This is an important insight derived from the contribution of authors *Carolin Buttkeireit* and *Tim Alexander Herberger*, and *Dimitra Zygouri* and *Kalliope Kaltsonoudi*, in this issue, to say it alternatively with the words of Bakker (2011), work involvement is that which includes “*arms, head and heart*”. Another insight in this direction is provided in this issue by *Dimitra Zygouri* and *Kalliope Kaltsonoudi* and *Carolin Buttkeireit* and *Tim Alexander Herberger* with reference, respectively, to perseverance and engagement which, in my view, not too surprisingly takes on a relational value, noting that married employees reported significantly higher levels of work engagement than single employees, presumably because they are accustomed to the (care) relationship.

Furthermore, it is insightful that many companies are choosing a return from working-from-home scheme to the office (Scalise, 2025; Spagnol, 2023; Cappelli, 2021; Hill et al., 2003), despite the work-life balance benefits of smart working (Sung, 2021). In a society seeking self-efficacy and self-determination, plagued by organizational and geographical power struggles, non-hierarchical models are driving scientific discussion (Robertson, 2015; Risse, 2018). Stakeholder orientation, social responsibility, and internal/external relations have become prominent features of debates of the corporate and scientific worlds in the area, but they seem to have limited applications with respect to concrete and sincere reversals and paradigm shifts, as confirmed by *Fernando Camastra*, *Giacinto Coniglio*, and *Antonio Blasotti* in this issue. Shadow areas of opaque transparency with respect to organizational stakeholder relations practices that are not purely profit-oriented are increasingly hidden behind a “green” bulwark. Mainstream sustainable ecology is the measure of political correctness expressed through gender divergences, dissonances, and disparities in the market logic. And where

the market creates tensions, society creates ambiguity and complexity, new organizational and governance models take shape, from network organizations to overcome crises (Allal-Chérif & Maira, 2011) to holacracy (Robertson, 2015), where the goal is to eliminate the slow decision-making of hierarchy and give everyone the autonomy to act for the good of the company, responding “bossless” in real time to problems or opportunities.

A key reflection clearly emerges on the possibility of revolutionizing our way of thinking about organizations. But is it really a revolution or a rediscovery of intrinsic human constructs, set aside to meet different needs? And is virtual engagement truly engaging? (Šlapáková Losová & Orel, 2025). Are relationships still a human prerogative? Were we ready for this change? Did we impose it on ourselves? Did big-tech multinationals do it for us? Is this the near future of presence? An absent presence and a government without leadership? Is this perhaps a new chapter in history?

The critical invitation made by this issue of the journal is to reinforce the idea that resilience is based on adaptability and strong relationships. Businesses cannot truly survive and thrive without cultivating all their stakeholders, redesigning a technologically enhanced human governance trajectory into “doing well by doing good” (Sheth, 2020), with the solid reattribution of synergistic and reciprocal community value of an indissoluble coexistence between business and society, between organizations and people.

The study by *Dimitra Zygori* and *Kalliope Kaltsonoudi* explores the predictive power of perceived organizational support and self-efficacy on work engagement among Greek employees, using the job demands-resources model as a theoretical framework. The research employed a quantitative survey with a self-administered questionnaire, involving a sample of 180 Greek workers from both the public and private sectors. Employees in managerial positions reported significantly higher levels of work engagement than those in non-managerial positions. Similarly, married employees showed significantly higher work engagement than single employees. However, no significant differences were found based on gender or employment sector (public or private). These findings provide practical implications and concrete suggestions for employers and managers.

The study by *Fernando Camastra*, *Giacinto Coniglio*, and *Antonio Blasotti* examines whether adherence to the 2019 Business Roundtable (BRT) Declaration, which shifts corporate focus from maximizing shareholder value to maximizing all stakeholders, has led to concrete governance reforms. The research analyzes the governance guidelines of 39 of the largest BRT companies (by market capitalization) between 2019 and 2024, examining board composition and disclosures. The findings highlight a clear divergence between rhetoric and practice: almost all companies (38 out of 39) maintain their governance structures firmly anchored in the shareholder primacy model, as confirmed by official documents. Only a minority have undertaken a genuine transformation or adopted a hybrid model that balances interests. What the authors confirm can be read critically with respect to the editorial interpretation provided at the introductory level.

The study by *Carolyn Buttke* and *Tim Alexander Herberger* provides insights, especially in light of editorial interpretations regarding the fact that we live in pursuit of performance as synonymous with perfection. This sometimes dehumanizing perfectionism is considered a variable in a model in which the perspective of perseverance assumes a fundamental value in the logic of long-term orientation, especially for governance in the modern world. This appears to be the first empirical study focused on the media, information, and telecommunications sector to analyze the relationship between perseverance and positive leadership, considering perfectionism as a moderating variable. The main results confirm a positive and significant correlation between grit and positive leadership qualities. Manager perseverance can increase positive leadership, and this effect is partially moderated by perfectionism. The analysis revealed that grit is a significant predictor of positive leadership within a specific perfectionism range (32–51), particularly starting from adaptive perfectionism tendencies. Furthermore, the predictive strength of grit on positive leadership progressively increases with increasing levels of perfectionism.

The fourth and final contribution in this issue is a book review by *Patrizia Pastore*. The book (conference proceedings) reviewed by the author is titled *Corporate Governance: Scholarly Research and Practice*. It offers a multidimensional overview, starting from the premise that current governance models require greater flexibility than in the past, and above all, functional adaptability, a narrower decision-making chain, shorter reaction times, and a performative response to changing needs.

On this basis, as reported in the editorial introduction, provocative and critical with respect to current organizational needs, the themes addressed in the collective contribution offer a perspective on the forces that are shaping governance evolution on a global level, directing it towards the objectives of greater accountability, sustainability, and re-humanized competitiveness. So, corporate governance becomes a salvific archetype of good governance in a cha(-lle)nging world.

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