

Responsible management

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Apparently echoing the slogans "People, not profit" or "Save the planet" chanted by activists for more than a decade on the streets of Seattle and Göteborg, or at the World Social Forums of Porto Alegre or Nairobi, many multinational firms have launched campaigns, devised propaganda and activities that seem to project social and environmental responsibility. In the space of a few years, Corporate Social/Sustainable Responsibility (CSR) has become a new managerial buzzword and a major focus – if not an industry in itself - for managers, consultants, auditors, journalist, teachers and students. But this CSR rests on 'responsibility' determined by the firms. (We ask/consider) h/How is such responsibility experienced at the level of managers as individuals or representatives of a collective?

While the same word responsibility is used, the meaning varies as one moves from corporate responsibility to individual responsibility. The formal processes of corporate responsibility differ from those of individual responsibility: the expression of preference or reticence is unlikely to be symmetrical. Moving from formal decision-making to discourse, standardised CSR messages are casually passed around corporations, with more or less practical implications; at individual levels, though, they may entail complex trade-offs and conspicuous risks.

While engaging fully with the meaning of responsibility – beyond limited or professional liability – seems to be repudiated at a corporate level (for evident legal and economical reasons), it is a matter of growing concern at a moral and democratic level. Responsibility is not only a matter to be determined by corporations. It is also - indeed may be even only - a critical matter for the human being that every manager is, in and out of work. We claim that such discussion merits emphasis in research, teaching and civil society debates.

The purpose of this track is to explore the conditions for, and the possibility of, truly responsible management: the responsibility of the individual and the responsibility of managers as agents of the firm.

We invite contributions from all perspectives - positivist, appreciative, interpretive and critical. We are keen to hear from authors inspired by phenomenology, action research, practice theory, appreciative inquiry, critical management studies, public policy, (corporate) governance, organisation studies, anthropology, sociology, clinical psychology (and other possible fields without limitation).

