



2011 Medici Summer School

Beyond Performance: Business Sustainability in question

We are pleased to announce the organization of the 3rd edition of the Medici Summer School in Management Studies for doctoral students and young researchers which will be held in Florence, **June 5-10, 2011**. The school is sponsored in collaboration with organizing faculty from Alma GS (University of Bologna), HEC Paris (Society and Organizations Research Center and the HEC Foundation), and Stern School of Business (New York University).

Mission

The Summer School is designed to promote doctoral education and research in management studies and contribute to the development of enlightened practice in the management of business organizations. The Medici Summer School advocates a special focus on cross-fertilizing research across US and Europe traditions. The Summer School is a unique educational program for qualified doctoral students interacting with thought leaders in the management field who have shared their knowledge and wisdom on frontier research topics.

The Medici School combines lectures and research seminars by prominent international scholars with an active engagement of participant students. Every day of the one-week program is scheduled to end with the presentation of students' work related to the topic of the School, with a panel of senior faculty providing feedback. There is no fee to participate. Selected candidates will be fully covered in their accommodation expenses provided that they stay the full week. Note that transportation is not covered by the organizers.

The Summer School will begin on Sunday June 5th with a welcoming reception and will conclude the afternoon of June 10th.

Theme

The program of "The 2011 Medici Summer School in Management Studies" will focus on Business Sustainability, more precisely on the conciliation or antagonism between performance and business sustainability.

Companies face today more than ever the daunting challenge of over-performing their rivals AND meeting the demanding requirements of “sustainable development”. Articulating the logics that underpin a resistant alloy between economic interest and compulsory concerns for natural and social resources is a challenge for practice. It is a challenge for research too. Over the past decade, research investigated the links between ‘greenness’ or ‘corporate social responsibility’ and ‘performance’. Taking stock of the search for normative associations between these factors, research has evolved today into a new series of interests, which the Medici School will explore this year.

On the aftermath of traumatic events in the late 70s and the 80s (Seveso, Three Mile Island, Bhopal, Chernobyl, Exxon Valdez to cite a few), firms understood that they had to comply with certain amounts of norms and rules, some imposed by States and other self-defined by their industries for instance. However, the very function of environmental management has long been ancillary to more regular strategic and economic issues. Over the more recent period and the development of an economics of intangible assets, reputation and legitimacy happened to capture stakeholders’ attention. More global concerns mounted in favor of Earth preservation, in defense against how human activity affected climatic change, and the looming challenge of human exploitation in resourceful but ill-equipped countries. Being green or considerate for other interests (social, community, or nature itself) started to be associated with reputation building and gaining legitimacy –which markets value positively as well.

We will start our journey by reflecting upon the associations that does or does not exist between engaging in sustainable business activities and performance. Does it pay to engage in such activities as an early mover or latecomer? Or at all when more and more companies publish reports on their corporate activities targeted at healing these concerns? Is it the right question to ask after all? Shouldn’t we bypass this simplistic question and engage in more fundamental ones?

For instance, we aim at pointing how much managerial cognition and social psychology can explain why some companies engage in more sustainable activities than others. Deciding to pursue sustainability goals opens up a new way of viewing the world for managers and employees alike, potentially altering mental models or schemas and causing shifts in how attention is focused. We will explore some of the possible changes in cognition that might be associated with a focus on sustainability as well as how these cognitive changes might result in innovation. For example, what “organizational space” can a focus on sustainability open up for front line employees and middle-level managers? We will also consider how a focus on sustainability might alter how employees think about their relationships with their employers. Finally, we will examine the potential for other research opportunities in OB and OT.

Also, other relationships exist at the business level vis-à-vis the sustainability issues. How do managers and firm perceive the trade-offs between their immediate objectives and the longer-term considerations brought about by environmental and societal stakes? How to reconcile

different time spans? What are the practices that in different industries enable firms to articulate business level strategy, competitive advantage, and business sustainability?

Not only business sustainability matters at the business entity level. Firms, as corporations possess often multiple business lines and may be present in multiple geographies. What does research say about the corporate level implications of business sustainability? Is there any transferability of practices across divisions? Can an advantage be replicated in another geography? What is the right level of analysis within firms and across geographies to analyze, understand, and profess about business sustainability?

Finally, among many other possible issues of interest, one critical factor that explains why an entire Medici School is devoted to this subject is the tremendous influence that third party organizations played over the recent period to popularize the fundamental issues at stake today. Consumer associations, producer unions, NGOs, and activists all transformed the competitive environment within which firms compete. Hence, a close look at how social forces and institutional pressures constrain and can be used by firms and organizations is necessary to supersede the mere alleged association between business sustainability and performance.

Program

The goal of the Summer School is to bring together leading strategy and organizations scholars to explore these and other issues during the week we will be together. A typical day will feature a faculty member presenting the gist of the research during the morning and working with student participants in the afternoon to flesh out and develop key questions, both theoretically and empirically. This will be done by:

1. Exposing students to the cutting edge of research in this area.
2. Sharing with students some of their own recent work on related topics.
3. Offering their best advice on how to tackle complex questions of both theory and research on business sustainability.

Part of each day will be devoted to student presentations of their own ideas and relevant research projects so that feedback from peers and from faculty can be elicited. Each faculty member will be in residence at the School for at least a few days, allowing ample time for one-to-one sessions, knowledge sharing, and networking opportunities.

The five days of the Summer School will be tentatively organized as follows:

Day 1: Beyond performance and advantage. Rodolphe Durand, GDF-Suez Professor in Business & Sustainability, Strategy department, HEC Paris.

Day 2: Sustainability, Cognition, and Innovation: Opportunities in OT and OB? Frances Milliken, Professor of Management and Organizations, Stern School of Business, New York

University

Day 3: Business Strategy and sustainable business: New research challenges, Tima Bansal, Professor, Executive Director, Network for Business Sustainability, and Director of the Center for Building Sustainable Value, Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario

Day 4: Corporate strategy and sustainable business, Michael Russo, Lundquist Professor of Sustainable Management, University of Oregon

Day 5: Social and institutional forces, business sustainability, and performance. Klaus Weber, Associate Professor of Management and Organization, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University

Application procedure

The School will admit 20-25 student participants. Applications for these slots are welcomed from current Ph.D. students in Management and related disciplines from universities worldwide. Students for the Summer School will be selected in accordance with the quality of their doctoral curricula, research interests, and application materials.

There is no application or participation fee. Student participants will be responsible for covering their own long distance travel expenses to and from Florence, but the Summer School will cover all accommodation and board expenses during the week of sessions provided that students attend the entire week. Applications should include:

- a. A simple statement declaring that the applicant is interested in being considered for admission to the Summer School together with the applicant's contact information: email address, telephone, and mailing address. All of this should be in the body of an email sent to the address below.
- b. Updated curriculum vitae listing educational background, Ph.D. program, nationality, etc.
- c. A motivation letter (no longer than 1 page) clearly indicating the applicant's current research activities and his/her specific interest in the topic of the 2010 Summer School.
- d. A brief recommendation from a member of their dissertation committee
- e. Applicants are also encouraged (but not required) to submit an extended abstract or discussion note that he/she will present during the Summer School. The Selection Committee will evaluate the relevance of this paper to the 2011 School theme.

All application materials should be sent exclusively via email to the following address:

application@medicissummerschool.it

For any specific inquiry or clarification please contact: medicisschool2011@gmail.com

The deadline for applications is April 15, 2011. Admitted candidates will be notified by May 1st.

A waiting list of other candidates will be established.