Editorial

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Biographical notes: Mark Esposito is Associate Professor of Business in Society at Grenoble Graduate School of Business in France and Senior Associate for the University of Cambridge Program for Sustainability Leadership in the UK. He serves at Harvard University as an Instructor for the Harvard Extension School as well as the Institute's council co-leader, at the Microeconomics of Competitiveness (MOC) program at the Institute of Strategy and Competitiveness, at Harvard Business School. He is an appointed Research Fellow for the Institute for Competitiveness in India as well as for the Center for Sustainability at Ashridge Business School in the UK.

Ayesha N. Khalid is a Physician and Sinus Surgeon, Instructor for the Harvard Medical School and Assistant Professor at Boston University, who is currently pursuing an MBA at MIT Sloan Fellows Program in Innovation and Global Leadership. She has a particular interest in systemic frameworks as they shape major change efforts in society and as such, is interested in healthcare re-design both in the USA and abroad.

This special issue of the *International Journal of Complexity in Leadership and Management* wanted to create a precedent, allowing several kinds of cross functional and transversal researchers to contribute to the discipline of complexity in the social sciences. From the early stages, the primary purpose of our special issue was to raise the flag on new frontiers that are being disentangled to us, as our societies continue to increase their complexity. From global supply chains, to the psyche, the largest as well as the smallest system of the world are currently suffering profound dilemmas, this being the title of our special issue.

The special issue starts with the analysis of Cavelzani and Williams on the ongoing discomfort of individuals when they fail and short-changed their role for a constructive leadership and they inadvertently initiate a series of locking behaviours, triggering severe dysfunctions in groups. Individuals are complex adaptive systems and their ability to

interact with the outside world generates a relational dimension, which cannot be ignored. This is particularly the case, when the dysfunctions infer the work environment and the intrinsic degree of complexity of all social nodes.

The issue continues its evolution towards two highly conceptual papers, which offer some of the most elaborated reflections on the rhetoric of business and complexity from Magrassi, who is able to exquisitely challenge some of the leading assumptions around the fact that complexity is diametrically opposite to linearity. Magrassi points out the degree of reductionism of this assertion, providing historical and formative examples of complexity and non-linearity as being different literary trends, with respective bodies of supportive literature, but not necessarily colliding constructs. His work is a great preamble to another paper, authored by Kowch, which shifts the conversation of our issue to the role that networks have, as part of their agency of organised complexity, this being a central aspect of any major works that has emerged in the field of social complexity, since 1960s onwards. Networks and the consequent theory of their formation, exchange and behaviour, is one of the key disciplines where complexity can be experienced, as we can see nowadays with the serial social media interaction, leading to some of the most rhizomatic structures of networks today.

The first three papers create the conditions for the subject to be approached, from a meta-structural perspective, starting from the persona all the way to the self-organisation and emergence of complex networks. The second part of the issue emphasises more some practical examples or applications of complexity, applied to specific industry or context. From the intricacies of the plague of piracy in music, taking Mexico as background for the investigation, to the lack of leadership in Japan, generating a vacuum in the belief systems of the country, unable to cope with an innate complexity of its society. While the above work are simpler in their formulation and represent a junior degree of investigation and research, less grounded in the literature and more anchored to a contextual analysis, the papers provide an ample look on the most pragmatic repercussions of complexity (or its lack), when reactionary and oversimplified strategies are in place.

Finally, the special issue concludes its journey with another set of junior research, which wants to explore limitation of current systems of appraisal, which differ in the scope of each respective paper, although the interface on the presumed challenge of standardisation is largely evident, and supported by both authors, uncoordinatedly.

While the seven papers we have chosen, do not share a common trait and scope but several, they all unanimously support the need for a major cultural shift to occur. Whether this shift is methodological, hence with a larger and implemented use of visual complexity tools, like systems thinking, or whether this is more conceptual, conscious and participatory, the findings seem to point towards the acknowledgement of a new emergence.

Leadership and management, as vital levers of business, are still trapped in the conceptual opacity of Taylorism, where measurement and specificity of outcome used to be the sole indicators of performance and success. This became aggravated by a pseudo-school of financial discipline, which brought an unrealistic perception of risk assessment and growth as part of a predictive game theory, sending signals of disillusioned certainty as a side effect.

Today business needs to live up to its own expectation and embrace complexity as an inevitable environmental condition, often distant from any controlled mechanisms. But then, after all, if we look deep into our own nature, humans are far from being simple, and their inescapable complexity is what determines societies as being constantly evolving systems and entities. If all of this supports the need for a more humanised configuration of management, then complexity and its dilemmas need to become necessary steps of our own determinism.