



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI BERGAMO
DEPARTMENT OF
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

3rd BERGAMO-WHARTON JOINT CONFERENCE

STAKEHOLDER THEORY(IES): ETHICAL BASES, MANAGERIAL APPLICATIONS, CONCEPTUAL LIMITS

University of Bergamo, Italy
1st-2nd July 2010

CALL FOR PAPERS

The stakeholder approach to management offers a theoretical framework that aims to widen the perspective from which corporate strategies are formulated, shifting the focus away from shareholders to all those who are in some relevant way involved in the business enterprise. A basic idea in stakeholder thinking is that the company's survival and development are conditional upon its ability to take care of the network of relationships occurring among stakeholders.

There exists both confusion and controversy about the concept of a stakeholder. These problems may be traced the contentious nature of the theory and the use of the concept for conflicting theoretical and managerial purposes. It is, therefore, important to investigate the concepts and practices of stakeholder management, and to assess the prospects of giving determinate meaning to stakeholder ideas.

The essential nucleus of principles on which the stakeholder management theory (SMT) is based may not involve a specific normative core founded on comprehensive general ethical theory, but instead may involve a diverse variety of context-dependent principles. Indeed, Freeman (1994) speaks about "the reasonable pluralism" of the ethical bases of SMT and Phillips et al. (2003) mention eight different possible "normative cores" of SMT.

These considerations raise many questions from a business ethics perspective:

1) *Is SMT relativist?*

The statement that SMT may be based on different ethical views (Freeman 1994; Phillips, Freeman and Wicks 2003) raises questions of ethical relativism; do differences in ethical views imply differences in stakeholder theories, or is stakeholder theory sufficiently expansive to embrace different ethical views?

2) *What are the relationships among ethics and competitive success strategies?*

Is being ethical always advantageous? How does one connect ethics and competitive success in business action? What are the conditions under which SMT leads to competitive success?

3) *What are the implications of SMT for different ethical bases on human rights considerations?*

If SMT is based on different ethical views, might there nevertheless be a common basis for human rights? Even if SMT involves a diversity of moral views, might it allow a consensus about human rights?

4) *How can different ethical theories influence on the managerial application of stakeholder thinking?*

Can managers with different ethical and religious views cooperate using SMT as a managerial approach?

5) *What are the relationships between stakeholder theory(ies) and CSR ?*

What kind of view of CSR can be supported applying SMT? What are the differences and the similarities between SMT and various approaches and concepts of CSR?

6) *Are there alternatives to SMT that provide superior ways of dealing with the facts of moral diversity?*

What are the alternatives to SMT? How could one determine that SMT is false or otherwise defective? Does SMT harmfully oversimplify managerial decision-making?

The 3rd Bergamo-Wharton Joint Conference aims to address the above questions.

Some tentative topics connected with these themes include:

- The nature of stakeholder theory(ies)
- Ethical bases, relativism and truth
- Enlightened or/and ethical management
- Stakeholder ethics and general, environmental and social accounting
- Stakeholder management and CSR
- Stakeholder management, ethics and business strategy
- The separation thesis debate
- Ethical aspects of stakeholder approach to environmental issues
- Stakeholder management and religious views
- Stakeholder management and not for profit organizations
- Skeptical views of stakeholder theory

However, any related research is welcomed, from both conceptual and empirical perspectives.

Keyspeakers:

Have already confirmed their participation: A.Argandoña, E.Freeman, H.Nien-hê, D.Robertson, G.Rusconi, A.Strudler.

Style guidelines and publication

Length suggested for papers: not more than 8.000 words, references included.

We propose using Times New Roman 12 point font and a 1.5 spacing lines. Employ endnotes, place page numbers in the lower right corner, and use the style guidelines of the Journal of Business Ethics for paper style and references.

The Scientific and Organizing Committees will consider the possibility to select papers for a publication in a international review or book. Further communication will be provided in the future.

Language

The official language of the conference will be English.

Conference Date and Venue

The conference will be held on July 1-2, 2010 at the University of Bergamo, Italy - Faculty of Economics and Business Administration (Via dei Caniana 2 – Bergamo).

Deadlines

- **March 1st, 2010:** Paper proposal of about 500 words including references
- **April 15st, 2010:** approval or rejection of the proposals
- **June 15st, 2010:** Deadline for receiving full papers.

Organizer Committee:

Gianfranco Rusconi (University of Bergamo)

Alan Strudler (Wharton - University of Pennsylvania)

Silvana Signori (University of Bergamo)

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Web site:

All information on registration, travelling and accommodation will be published on the conference website:

www.unibg.it/bwconference

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