

INCORPORATION OF SUSTAINABILITY INTO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this paper is to investigate implications of integrating sustainability for leadership development. We identify components of sustainable leadership development, including care for individual, organizational, social, and natural well-being. We also examine how the incorporation of sustainability influences leadership development. This study upgrades existing sustainable leadership development theory by considering the process how integration of sustainability affects leadership development by incorporating a wider range of leadership influence. Therefore, this study is novel in presenting an alternative to the majority of prior studies that focused on a more limited influence of the leader, whereas our study proposes sustainable leadership development based on symbiotic capital.*

Keywords: *sustainability, mission, sustainable leadership, case study, leadership development*

JEL Classification: M1; M12

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INTRODUCTION

The research subject of this paper refers to the implications of integrating sustainability into a company's mission for leadership development. We asked ourselves whether sustainable leadership development is a result of the influence of the company mission, of the systematic and organized activities, or both. Sustainability has attracted growing attention in the practical and theoretical spheres in recent years. We argue that implications of sustainability for leadership development have become more evident as a consequence of changing business environment challenges (natural disasters, recession, ethical crisis). In times of uncertainty, the need to systematize activities to enable sustainability becomes even more important. Also, the need for intergenerational solidarity becomes more evident. Contemporary organizations face challenges posed by constant change, natural disasters, civil riots, globalization, increasing cultural differences, and constant need for efficiency and achieving ambitious goals on a daily basis, which causes turbulent velocity of competitive action and poses a direct challenge to employee well-being and an indirect challenge to organizations, society, and the natural environment. Under daily pressure to achieve innovative results, it is easy to forget that organizations are human communities and, as such are incurred because a sufficient number of people have expressed concern to achieve commonly desired goals (Senge et al., 2008). The emergence of changes in the

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global business environment has transformed the dynamic of leadership development. The focus of the paper is the whole process of including sustainability in a company's mission that, in the end of this process, also transforms the dynamics of leadership development into sustainable leadership based on the definition of the Institute for Sustainable Leadership (2015). Incorporation of the sustainability mission contributes to collective leadership development through taking into consideration the interests of not only internal stakeholders of the company but also wider external stakeholders. Leadership is a social process that depends on leaders and followers (Lord and Maher in Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999) where the dynamics of leadership development represents not only leaders influencing followers but also the effects of followers on the leader (Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999). Sustainable leadership considers leaders and followers as stakeholders that share and distribute their influence into the natural and social environment. The future impact of their decisions is at the center of their attention. Rapid transmission of information, economic and political uncertainty, and a rapidly growing global market threaten the ability of individual managers to face all challenges successfully; therefore, it is necessary to develop collective leadership skills (Cherniss, Grimm & Liautaud, 2010), which are the central focus of sustainable leadership development. Sustainable leadership development is carried through instruction and experience gaining in synergetic interactions with the social and natural environments (Bergsteiner, Avery & Neumann, 2010).

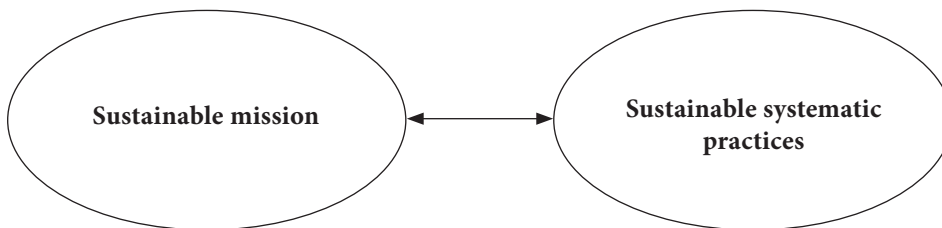
Leadership is a process (Morgeson, Lindoerfer & Loring, 2010) and source of competitive advantage (Graen, Rowold & Heintz, 2010); therefore, investing in its development is vital for organizations (Hrivnák, Reichard & Riggio, 2009). Leadership capability, as well as intellectual ability, was initially conceptualized as an inherent trait (Chemers, 2002). Developing leadership competencies was subsequently narrowly focused (Quatro, Waldman & Galvin, 2007); however, contemporary leadership scholars (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Hollenbeck, McCall & Silzer, 2006) have emphasized the need to reform leadership development and the disparity between practical development techniques and scientific findings (Carroll, Levy & Richmond, 2008).

Because leadership development is the least developed field in the framework of leadership theory, sustainable leadership development models need to be developed comprehensively (Avolio, 2011). Research integrating the values of contributing to the welfare of the Earth at an individual level within organizations is modest; however, even less is known about the ecological effect of voluntary participation of employees in environmental management research (Lülfes & Hahn, 2013). In practice, however, many specific master's programs (e.g., University of Cambridge) and specialized corporate academies (e.g., Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana) develop competencies of sustainable leadership. Practical implications (Taleo, 2011) of the »*baby-boomers*« generation retirement and demonstrated leadership crisis during the recession even strengthened the importance of integrating sustainability into a company's mission and developing sustainable leadership (Strang & Kuhnert, 2009).

Intergenerational development goals mean implementing the principle of sustainability as a quality measure in a wide field of development. Casserley and Critchley (2010) claimed

that sustainability has never been so important as it is in contemporary society; therefore, the study of leadership needs to move toward a larger, all-encompassing perspective of the world in which we live, and adopt a sustainable approach to developing leaders. Although sustainability is gaining attention as a value, little is known about sustainable leadership development in the business environment. Hargreaves (2003, 2007) presented sustainable leadership in educational environments; however, sustainable leadership theory still needs to be conceptualized and research needs to be conducted as to how the process of sustainable leadership development is carried out in business settings. Hargreaves (2007) defined sustainable leadership as maintaining and developing in-depth learning in a way that does no harm, but rather generates positive effects for all stakeholders, present and future. The Institute for Sustainable Leadership (2015) stated that sustainable leadership is presented in »behaviours, practices, and systems that create enduring value for all stakeholders of organizations, including investors, the environment, other species, future generations, and the community«. Our paper aims to provide an understanding of the process that starts with stating the sustainability mission and implementing it through the leadership tools (such as, experience-based learning, mentoring, coaching, integration into local community, teambuilding with prosocial behavioral components, and feedback component of all activities within the Re.think initiative). It is a matter of a dynamic process and cyclical relationship. Company's sustainability mission needs to be supported with sustainable systematic practices (Figure 1).

Figure 1: *Sustainable leadership development*



Longitudinal sustainable leadership development in a case study, company Si.mobil, that expanded its environmental influence toward local and global stakeholders, such as Telekom Austria Group, is presented. Company Si.mobil's Re.think initiative represents the philosophy of reconsidering all activities toward responsible living.

We investigated Si.mobil's activities within Re.think's sustainable leadership development and established that the year 2008 was the beginning of a systematic and organized effort to implement sustainability in its mission and execute it through sustainable leadership development, firstly within their Eco team and afterward through different Re.think activities, in and out of company borders. The main research question was as follows: How does a sustainability mission influence the implementation of leadership development tools, especially with respect to how it influences future generations? This paper discusses the evolution and vital dimensions of sustainable leadership development in the presented case study.

1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Conceptual evolution of the leadership theory takes place from the theory of a great leader, which stresses the qualities a leader needs to be successful and includes modern definitions of transformational leadership theories, such as authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), which argues that a leader must behave authentically in all circumstances (Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang & Avey, 2009). Sustainable leadership also stems from transformational leadership theory based on the value of sustainability. The theory of leadership development (Lord & Hall, 2005) has advanced and assumes that changes in leadership skills are understood in the terms of the general theory of learning and the acquisition of expertise and considers changes in information processing and knowledge structures that occur when skills are being developed. McCauley, Kanaga and Lafferty (2010) stated that leadership skills are developed by learning from experience and reflecting on development processes (McCauley, Van Velsor & Ruderman, 2010). Cunliffe (2009) added that developmental experiences derive from evaluation and enable challenges and support participants in the developmental process in a way that this process occurs through involvement in the wider environment.

Day and Harrison (2007) claimed that leadership development is theoretically weak. Leadership development is an extension of the collective capability to form orientation, alignment, and commitment, which means changing beliefs and practices (Drath, Palus & McGuire, 2010). Leadership development theory (McCauley in London & Maurer, 2004) also emphasizes developmental experience and learning opportunities, the ability of learning and motivation, personal attitudes, skills, and organizational support for this development, which includes a number of contextual factors, such as leadership development methods (Lord & Hall, 2005). Conger (in Sinclair, 2009) identified several approaches to leadership development, including a conceptual approach, development of skills, personal growth, and programs that emphasize on feedback.

Review of contemporary leadership development (Day, 2001; Day et al., 2014; Mumford & Manley, 2003; Mumford et al., 2012; Gagnon, Vough & Nickerson, 2012) demonstrates a pragmatic approach (Mumford et al., 1993) with an emphasis on techniques that lead to the acquisition of individual leadership skills. A key reason for the leader development crisis (Probert & James Turnbull, 2011) is a focus of leader competence frameworks on measurable, objective, technical and tangible aspects of leading (Carroll et al., 2008; McCauley et al., 2010), which do not consider subtle, moral, emotional, or social aspects of leadership development (Bolden & Gosling, 2006). Mumford and Manley (2003) indicated that a mechanistic focus of leader development was alarming and emphasized that a broader theoretical framework is needed. In accordance with their call to the research community to produce a theoretically-based approach to leadership development, we contextualized sustainable leadership development. By addressing Fulmer's model (1997, p. 60) of the evolving paradigm of leadership development, we position sustainable leadership development as highly concerned with action of today that will impact the future (Table 1).

Table 1: *Sustainable leadership development as future paradigm*

	Past	Future
Participants	Listener	Learner
Program design	Event	Ongoing process
Purpose	Knowledge	Action
Period	Past	Future
Players	Specialists	Partners
Presentations	Style	Process/Outcome
Place	University campus	Anywhere

Source: R. M. Fulmer, *The Evolving Paradigm of Leadership Development*, 1997, p. 60.

Sustainable leadership development is based on experiences that build community, foster collaboration among stakeholders, and promote long-term value (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011b) that we perceive as a new form of capital - symbiotic capital which means the advancement of human and social capital together with natural capital. Sustainable leaders integrate human and social well-being with consideration for the natural environment. Creativity is embedded in achieving this demanding and long term mission of connectivity. If we consider the interconnection of social and natural elements in the business model we come to the realization that symbiotic capital – due to the relational complexity – needs to be extensively considered. Contextualization enables relevance of the conducted research, and personalization enables sensemaking for the people involved in the process (Petriglieri, 2012). Sustainable leadership development needs to be derived from stakeholders' needs; therefore, it is always contextualized. In some cases, it is focused more so on the social environment and, in other cases, on the natural environment if the context demands such development of sustainable leadership.

Social capital is defined as »the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively« (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 225). Galli Bilhuber and Müller-Stewens (2012) shift focus from the emphasis of human capital in leadership development toward the development of social capital. They assumed that social capital develops through the stages laid down by contact, assimilation, and experiences of identification, and that the practices of leadership development differ in their potential role in contributing to the development of social capital; therefore, they need to be designed appropriately. Social capital development includes adopting an open-systems organic mindset, leveraging relational aspects of leadership development, building networks and story-telling skills (McCallum & O'Connell, 2009). In this paper, we adopted Day's (2001) broad definition of leadership development (human and social capital development), as sustainable leadership builds upon interpersonal trust (Riggio & Lee, 2007) and transparency to reduce the complexity of relationships and decision-making processes.

The paper is based on four assumptions (McCauley et al., 2010). First, people (internal and external stakeholders of an organization) participate in leadership roles to fulfill responsibilities to larger social entities. Second, instead of the classification of leader-follower, our thinking is based on the premise that people develop in different ways, which

makes us successful in a variety of leadership roles we assume (followers are empowered and considered valuable stakeholders). Third, leadership development (Conger & Fishel, 2007) is bound to the context. Fourth, leadership skills can be developed and are socially desirable.

2 METHODOLOGY

Case study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008; Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Thomas, 2011) is based on active and competent conceptualization, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information, knowledge, and insights gained through various forms of communication, observation, personal experience, reflection, and reasoning. As a main research method, case study (Yin, 2009) was implemented because of the purpose of this paper and the current stage of discussed concept development. Patton (in Boeije, 2010) argued that qualitative findings are strongly related to context, and case study aims to understand and expose important social dimensions, unlike generalizing from a sample to the population. The paper combines theoretical and empirical work (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Because of the need for in-depth longitudinal understanding (Gummesson, 1991) and the lack of existing comprehensive knowledge about sustainable leadership development (Hickman, 2010) we used qualitative research².

We used engaged management and organization research approach (Greig et al., 2013). Selection of case study was based on theoretical and pragmatic reasons. Theoretical justification, together with demonstrated sustainable efforts, were key reasons for selecting Si.mobil as the case study. Selection was also based on practical reasons of access and collaboration with lower, middle, and upper management in the company, as it is crucial for qualitative research to have good cooperation from participants. Case study included 15 in-depth interviews with organizational leaders at all three hierarchical management levels: two focus groups within the organization with organizational trainers and Eco team members, two focus groups with organizational stakeholders; three expert validation interviews, and three scholar validation interviews.

Data were collected and analysed using qualitative methods performed with Si.mobil's key informants (Boeije, 2010; McAlearney, 2006) through a snowball sample. The sample was expanded so informants in the role of storytellers were asked to suggest experts for further qualitative interviews. Gathered data was then triangulated using various qualitative methods, including observation, document analysis, and expert and scholar validation.

A multi-method research approach was used to ensure validity and reliability (Peräkylä, 1997) of qualitative research and to conduct triangulation. Data gathered from the qualitative interviews and focus groups were validated with naturally occurring data obtained through narrative analysis and observation. Two focus groups with employees were conducted to answer the research question. One focus group was conducted with

2 Period of data collection is 2011-2015.

internal trainers and one with members of Ecoteam. Key informants were managers interviewed and employees in focus groups. All qualitative interviews were transcribed. Data analysis was conducted by identifying the main topics in the transcriptions of the interviews and focus groups using NVivo software. We conducted three rounds of interviews with all three levels of management at Si.mobil. The first in-depth interviews were the longest, lasting from approximately 90 minutes, depending on the length of respondents' answers. The second and the third rounds of interviews were intended to fill in information we noticed was lacking from the analysis of the previous findings. We also complemented interviews with other research techniques to provide for the validity of the findings. Triangulation was carried out using different methods and asking respondents with different perspectives on the investigated matter of sustainable leadership development. We did not try to validate findings in a positivistic sense but present empirical data in order to enable a better understanding of researched phenomena (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). Gathered data and the research conclusions are tentative and open for further interpretations as the field progresses (Zhang, Macpherson & Jones, 2006).

3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

»Development of leadership skills was through the years conducted continuously at many different levels and the content was adjusted to the needs of the trainees as well as activities of the wider Si.mobil engagement. From group management skills we moved to individual business coaching with internal and external coaches. We also regularly take part in TAG Business School in Vienna. We test how employees feel inside their teams that are lead by our developed leaders. As our TAGisfaction reports are available for each individual leader they represent guidelines for leaders what needs to be implemented or improved in practice of leading.«

Si.mobil Employee 1: 2015

Research findings from primary and secondary sources present the developmental targets and the evolution of sustainable leadership development at Si.mobil by listing main activities that had the biggest developmental impact. The purpose of this study was to investigate implications of integrating sustainability for leadership development. Therefore, we needed to identify activities that provided the developmental environment for sustainable leadership development. The Re.think initiative is recognized as the internal and external driver of sustainable leadership development of Si.mobil's stakeholders.

Si.mobil, the second largest mobile operator and service provider in Slovenia, has gained the reputation as a socially and environmentally responsible company because of its sustainable behavior in the wider business and educational environment, which has also gained them many rewards in the professional community³. A case study of the

³ The appropriateness of Si.mobil as a representative entity for sustainable leadership development was identified in the most high-profile representational awards, including Slovene Best Employer Award Recipient; recipient of the Award of Excellence, awarded by the Si.mobil's maternal headquarters, Telekom Austria Group (TAG); Best Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative at the Level of the Entire TAG; recipient of awards in the

development of sustainable leadership at Si.mobil was chosen because of the universal interconnectedness of sustainable leadership developmental activities with the company's mission, which aims to increase its contribution to the well-being of the Earth and educate its stakeholders by developing an educational platform in cooperation with kindergartens, schools, and the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana. In the Slovene business community, Si.mobil and Re.think are references when researching and implementing environmentally socially responsible businesses. This study focused on the process that runs from a sustainability mission toward implementing a leadership development program in accordance with the main identified value—sustainability found to be appropriately dispersed into complementary values at the individual level. The activities of sustainable leadership development stem from the company's mission and were systematically strengthened in 2008.

3.1 Framing the beginnings of sustainable leadership in Si.mobil

“Ecological initiative and Re.think philosophy have evolved together. 2005, 2006. Later Re.think overgrew only ecological initiative and became a framework for all the sustainable effort we share now. Ecological part is more focused on what we do with ISO standard. Re.think is everything we do in the ecological and sustainable field.”

Si.mobil Focus group: 2012

The year 2008 is acknowledged as the formal beginning of a long-term environmental impact by merging environmental activities under the initiative Re.think, created by Ecoteam, the first inventory of energy efficiency, established by the Si.voda Fund and the first room for victims of violence in Ljubljana, which was established with the funds from donations at the Party with a Cause.

In 2009, the public recognized the good practices of Si.mobil and awarded the chairman of the Si.mobil management board the title Manager of the Year in Slovenia. Si.mobil employees received the Most Innovative Staff Practice award for the Re.think project. Si.mobil opened its first environmentally-friendly store in Maribor and presented its Re.think project to the outside public.

In 2010, the first project of the Si.voda Fund (biological water treatment plant in Modraže) was implemented. Si.mobil started also with eco-electronic reports each year in an innovative ecological style that informed stakeholders about their engagement. Si.mobil started its orientation of business toward paperless communications and simplicity of

competition for Environmentally Friendly Company; founder and main financial source of Si.voda Fund, which is responsible for clean and healthy water; and recipient of an integrated Family Friendly Company Certificate. In 2009, Si.mobil obtained environmental certification ISO 14001 standards. Si.mobil received the award of Best HRM Project for Si.mobil's concept of innovation in October 2012. In October 2013 the company received the award of Slovene newspaper Finance for ecological transportation fleet. In 2013, the company successfully passed an external audit ISO 14001, and arrangements were made for entry into the EMAS.

administration procedures. The Telekom Austria Group awarded Si.mobil an Award of Excellence for Best Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative for a Re.think philosophy at the level of the business group TAG.

In 2011, Si.mobil obtained a permanent certificate as a Family-Friendly Company and received the Golden Thread award for the second time in a row for being the best employer in the category of big companies at the national level. The company also established an energy-efficient operational mobile network, organized the 10th Party with a Cause, took part in cleaning campaigns in collaboration with the Society of Ecologists without Borders, participated in the nation-wide campaign, Clean Slovenia, in one day and a nation-wide campaign, Used Paper for New Hope (recycling office paper).

In 2012, Si.mobil was active in age management with mobile and internet workshops for seniors. Energy-efficient renovation of the headquarters also began. The SIMPL Kidz mobile packet (sustainable education of mobile usage for children) was conducted to encourage responsible consumerism (book for children about the endangered European otter Luther and sustainability). The company also hosted a contest for recycling phones in a creative way and rewarded the opening of e-invoices. Si.mobil also implemented the first open call Youth for Youth fundraising at the Party with a Cause.

3.2 Further advancement of sustainable leadership around Si.mobil

“Usually these kinds of socially responsible activities are carried out systematically. Somebody prescribes what needs to be done and then he/she transfers it to all the rest in order for them to think in that way. Then rules are made and control checks if the work was done, accordingly. At Si.mobil we do not function in this way. We started to think in this way on our own. We did not have internal rules which would tell us how to think.”

Si.mobil Focus group: 2012

The implications of integrating sustainability for leadership development are demonstrated in the way how social skills are being developed. The focus is on leadership development having a positive effect on the community. Si.mobil was awarded a title »The most friendly company towards volunteering« in 2013. Slovene philanthropy rewarded Si.mobil for socially responsible actions in 2012, among others, Clean Slovenia action 2012, Simbioza computer lessons for elderly, blood donation, socially responsible teambuildings, donations and an employee system where every employee at Si.mobil can spend 2 working days volunteering in a chosen organization.

In 2013, Si.mobil upgraded ISO 14001 with measures that met the standards to enter into the EMAS system (EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme). Financial donations from the 12th Party with a Cause were given to Project for Youth House SRCe. Institute Nefiks (with the financial support of the Si.mobil) proceeded with the project »Job is not looking for me« where youth employment clubs strengthened youth employability. The

company celebrated its 3rd anniversary of obtaining a full Family-Friendly Certificate, among other activities, it introduced a new measure to provide free clinical breast and gynecological examination for women and urological ultrasound and laboratory analysis of hormone prostate PSA for men. They updated the 3G network in Slovenia to provide a more powerful and responsive network. Existing equipment was replaced with novel equipment, which was not only more energy efficient, but also ready for subsequent upgrades to LTE technology. The new technological infrastructure is efficient and more environmentally friendly. The Si.voda Fund has supported: (1) the formation of drinking fountains in Ljubljana kindergarten Mojca; (2) an initiative of the Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia for entering a carniolan wall (traditional technique of regulating streams) in the register of Cultural Heritage at the Ministry of Culture in accordance with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage; and (3) a biological water treatment plant for the branch school in Lučina. Because many elderly face obstacles in using their mobile phones, Si.mobile offers for all seniors free workshops where they can learn the basics of using mobile phones (Simbioza project and Senior Hours). Together with the Faculty for Security Science, University of Maribor, the Centre for Mediation in Network Incidents SI-CERT, the project coordinator of »Safe on the Internet«, the Ypsilon Institute and its project Simbioza of the intergenerational cooperation, Si.mobile prepared a brochure with advice and information regarding safe use of mobile phones. In collaboration with the pharmaceutical company Sanofi, Si.mobil also developed a mobile application for smartphones and tablets »I know what I eat!« The application is free and intended primarily for diabetics; however, it could be used by all who want to monitor their food intake and physical activity. Si.mobil was the winner of the tender ECO fleet in 2013 (by the average emission of carbon dioxide per kilometer - Eco transportation fleet) in the category of companies with a large fleet of over 35 vehicles: »Average carbon dioxide emissions of Si.mobil fleet, which consists of 62 cars is 132 grams per kilometer. To this outcome 20 Opel Astras with 119 grams of emissions are major contributors, while a few luxury cars (BMW 525d xDrive, Volvo S60 and V60) have economical engines with emissions below 150 grams.« (Milač, 2013, p. 14).

In April 2014, the company was registered in the EMAS directory and celebrated Earth day with activity Old paper for new hope by joining with Ecologists without Borders and collecting old paper. In May 2014, Si.mobil was rewarded for socially responsible practices of the Party with a Cause. In October 2014, they received »Certificate resources SAVED 2013« from the Interseroh ALBA Group in Germany. In 2013, Si.mobil gave 36.317 kg of waste (used electrical and electronical equipment) to the Interseroh ALBA Group.

Our findings of the Re.think evolution at Si.mobil, in collaboration with key stakeholders, indicate the need to move away from leadership studies that have explored heroic leaders over the last hundred years. This conceptual leap is presented in the Re.think initiative, which represents the internal and external sustainable leadership development environment and is based on bottom-up and top-bottom developmental approaches. This means that it builds its leadership potential and sustainability on the leadership development model for youth, employees, and key stakeholders from business, social, cultural, and natural environments. Top-bottom developmental approach is represented in an expressed

support of top management for sustainable leadership development and bottom-up developmental engagement is provided in the number of applications and participants in leadership development tools. Therefore, it does not only focus on developing internal top management leading potentials as in traditional leadership development models (Fulmer, 1997). The new model of sustainable leadership is a result of collective efforts. The case study indicates that sustainable leadership development (conducted in a wider community by satisfying the needs of stakeholders) results in (1) improved management of organizational challenges, (2) employee and customer commitment, (3) social integration, and (4) creative environmental protection.

Proof quotes (Pratt in Langley, 2012) were sought at Si.mobil stakeholders for each of the four dimensions to highlight and support the identified codes empirically.

3.3 Improved management of organizational challenges

»It is very hard to be a mobile only provider. Telecommunication companies have consolidated and all successful companies offer all services, therefore we are also starting to offer mobile service together with landline telephone services, TV and internet services. Educating people for safe internet usage is something close to us and connected to our core business. We sell it and the logic is that if we teach an elderly person to use internet without worries and safely both will benefit – the company will have relatively fast financial impact and the person will learn something useful – that is why we will keep investing in this.«

Si.mobil employee 2: 2015

The Re.think initiative brought together Si.mobil's in-company and market activities (Si.mobil annual report 2012) by strengthening the connection of generations through advanced technology and services they develop and provide. By strengthening their corporate culture around the mission of sustainability, their image on the outside became clearer and attracted similar-minded business partners and clients. A new segment of business—cloud technology—together with other innovative business practices, such as simplicity, provided the company with a competitive advantage. M2M (Machine to Machine) program developed by Si.mobil was awarded by multinational group TAG for an ecosystem that connects producers of appliances, mobile operators, platform suppliers and developers in order to collect data, analysis and automatization (Pollak, 2013-2014, p. 7). Special segments for elderly and children have enabled the company to develop, adjust, and connect services to sustainable marketing and spread the Re.think philosophy through their clients.

Guidelines for raising the quality of the work process in Si.mobil are manifested through the following activities that have incorporated sustainability: (1) working booths with acoustic armchairs allow phone conversations with greater privacy; (2) quiet rooms are suitable for work when the employee needs full concentration and peace; (3) ergonomic work chairs are fully customizable to every individual; and (4) since November 2013, the

delivery of products from local farms has been available, as Si.mobil joined the program »Home-grown«, which supplies employees with local food products.

The initiative of Re.think has grown into an environmental philosophy with educational and innovative components. Specifically, Foundation Si.water was founded and collaboration with the Faculty of Economics at University of Ljubljana was established, to raise awareness and carry out creative environmental projects.

3.4 Employees and customers commitment

»The biggest shift in leadership development happens when you start trusting people, their expertise and you set yourself as a role model of good leader that coordinates, gives »a big picture« perspective and expects results from his/her coworkers.«

Si.mobil employee 3: 2012

Si.mobil is present in the business community by communitating a commitment toward its employees and customers through education and development. The Family Friendly Company Certificate is one of the programs they follow internally to help employees balance private and professional responsibilities. The services and products provide a good user experience; however, they are also intended to provide a means to grow professionally and personally. As a beginning to expanding one's horizons in an environmentally friendly way, Si.mobil identified employees satisfaction as an important part of its organizational performance. To sustain satisfaction of its human resources, the company implements a variety of educational and well-being programs that instill the value of respecting human existence.

The year 2013 was a turning point in the definition and scope of social responsibility of Si.mobil, as they newly identified main directions to deepen contact with business users and the wider environment (not only employees and the local community). Among the activities were strengthened: (1) the provision of security (internally to employees and externally to user network security); and (2) efficient management of resources (e.g., quiet rooms, energy-efficient renovation of headquarters, where all biodegradable materials and old equipment were donated to start-up businesses or offered for employees to purchase. Si.voda Fund has earned a reputation, especially in professional circles. Its recognisability and recognition which is tracked through the number of proactive applications to its call for funding is growing. The interest of the media is also clearly evident through media coverage of Si.voda fund's activities.

3.5 Social integration

“We are the firm that will bring broadband internet all around Slovenia. This is something that is priceless in a sense of our responsibility toward the wider social environment.”

Si.mobil employee 2:2015

The time when companies demonstrated their social responsibility through only sponsorship and donations seems to be over. Si.mobil is led by sustainable leaders who actively seek innovative approaches of collaboration with stakeholders from their local environments that stimulate employees in achieving business goals. Re.think philosophy builds connectivity, which means that it enables its customers to connect to their loved ones and have all relevant information available to them through innovative technology. Programs »Internet for all« and »Happy Hours« are educating elderly and other excluded populations in safe internet usage. Si.mobil takes care of young people realizing their ideas (projects, such as youth employment, by raising social responsibility of young people through employment project of Institute Nefiks). Si.mobil undertook a special coverage obligation which means that it undertook the responsibility to cover 95% of Slovenia with internet and cover at least 225 white spots in Slovenia, i.e. areas completely lacking a broadband network, by 2017. Sustainable marketing activities are focused on e-business and ecologically made materials in customer relations. Part of sustainable marketing also aims to improve quality of life (e.g., educate parents and children about the appropriate use of mobile phone for children). SIMPL Kidz is a product that has several safety mechanisms in order to make mobile usage safe for children, such as the possibility to call their parents even with an empty account.

Sustainable leadership development efforts stemming from the Re.think philosophy have two main strategical priority fields: employee and environment care through a process of initiating, developing, nurturing, and communicating the initiative, as well as by rewarding responsible individual actions, which are a cause for wide public interest in Si.mobil's sustainable leadership development. It is evident that, through reflection with stakeholders, observation, identification, and demonstration of social environment values, the Re.think initiative performs the role of upgrading the educational dimension of its operations in the local community. Sustainable leadership development incorporates structured experience-based learning, mentoring, coaching, integration into local community, teambuilding with prosocial behavioral components, and feedback component of all activities within the Re.think initiative.

3.6 Creative environmental protection

“We have many things to demonstrate and I believe that even from small Si.mobil a lot of things can be learned. TAG took over many things, that we did, they renamed them, popularized them but Re.think and “Internet for all” program is something that TAG learned from us. In corporate social responsibility field we were definitely benchmark for them.”

“Establishing connections between generations is enabled through technology. Also, being an active employer of young people, that is certainly important. We have a very young workforce and continue to nurture collaboration with the university, especially natural science professions. Students have the possibility to visit us and see how we function inside the company. We need them and they like to interact with our employees who keep contact with professors at the university, this relationship is good.”

“The first thing we made for our employees was a cup for pencils that was made out of our recycled office materials. We go into details of our Re.think ideas.”

Si.mobil Focus group: 2012

We found the strong impact that the Re.think initiative (structurally founded in 2008 and grew into Re.think philosophy) has on bringing together environmental commitments of »recycle-reuse-reduce-rethink« with establishing social connections between generations. Connection of younger generation with the elderly generation is carried out through technology, active employment policy, contests in collaboration with the Employment office of Slovenia, developing youth entrepreneurial skills and educating the elderly in safe internet usage by corporate volunteering. In the area of social and environmental responsibility, Si.mobil's activities are guided by effective resource management, including (1) the development of youth and their social responsibility; Party with a Cause 2013 donated the collected funds to project SRCe House—house solutions for young people, and (2) renovation of headquarters; selected LED lighting in the renovated office building uses less electricity than conventional bulbs, selected floor does not release harmful fumes into the air, acoustic ceiling panels reduce echo in the room and provide cost savings for lighting, use of two-stage buttons for flushing toilets, sensor buttons for flushing urinals, and sensor taps and basins reduce water consumption.

Orientation toward the realization of ideas includes the following activities: (1) creative corners of open spaces were designed during the headquarter renovation to encourage thinking, creativity, open innovation, and speed of meetings and discussions with colleagues from different departments to strengthen coordination; (2) on the walls of workspaces, offices, creative corners, meeting rooms have »write – erase« walls to serve in brainstorming; and (3) SENIOR Hours: Si.mobil participates in project Simbioza and organizes workshops for the elderly where retired people learn how to use mobile devices (phones and internet).

Leadership development is based on theories that determine what makes a leader effective and what type of leadership an organization wishes to develop. At Si.mobil, responsible decision making for sustainable development of leaders is highlighted. In 2014, employees expanded sustainable leadership development by registering into the EMAS system, constructing a new biological cleaning plant in the educational environment, performing Senior hours, and organizing Party with a Cause that educates the younger generation about social and environmental issues through socializing. In the present case study, based on company's mission, the sustainable approach is clearly indicated. Sustainable leadership development in Si.mobil is gathered under the framework of the Re.think initiative, which has grown into the philosophy of the entire international business group TAG and pervades all interactions with stakeholders. Traditionally, leadership research has focused on individuals in positions of power, such as CEOs, and leadership has been perceived as an individual attribute (Kezar & Lester, 2011), while sustainable leadership development is based on sharing and expanding leadership responsibilities. Si.mind is the program that encourages all employees to think about everyday work activities and

contributes to resource savings. Employees are encouraged and rewarded for internal entrepreneurial ideas and provided help for the realization of ideas.

The integration of sustainability into the company's mission influences the spill over process of framework value—sustainability into person-owned values identified and strengthened in (1) personalized leader development and (2) collective leadership development efforts specific to the Re.think philosophy. Si.mobil implements sustainability into its mission as a result of employee's dedication to creatively protecting the environment. However, over time, the initial enthusiasm of the first members of the Eco team faded away and the human resource management department identified the need to revitalize sustainable leadership development in a systematic manner. Our field study identified several factors that effect sustainable leadership development: (1) value-based motive for leading; not only does the sustainable leadership program at Si.mobil wish to develop leadership skills, but it also wishes to instill direction toward which these skills are needed to lead and this direction stems from clearly stated system competencies indicated in the mission of sustainability; (2) support of wider environment that encourages and accepts activities with wider social and ecological impact; (3) regular identification and coding of dispersed activities that are overall a part of sustainable leadership development; and (4) share gained knowledge, experiences and social network with interested stakeholders to further develop sustainable leadership.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

»We actually never conducted trainings of managerial skills without custom-made education adjusted to our needs and challenges in the company Si.mobil. We always emhasized learning for real situations, real challenges in order to equip and empower leaders for searching new knowledge, new approaches, new insights and consequently new behaviours, new successes of transferring trainings into practice. One of our values is »role modelling« which is very important for knowledge and behaviour transfer. Through 360-degree feedback about leadership standards we clearly provide a mirror to our leaders.«

Si.mobil employee 1: 2015

With the aim of understanding the process that starts by stating the sustainability mission and implementing it through leadership tools, we focused our qualitative research endeavour on a case study of Si.mobil's evolution of the Re.think initiative into a philosophy. Companies often have no difficulty putting a propeling mission on their webpages and into strategical documents; however, rarely are the approaches of implementing it so clear and »alive« as in the case of Si.mobil. Our research identified the results of that kind of mission and how it is sustained through leadership development tools. Stating a sustainability mission is a static act if it is not supported with continuous sustainable leadership development. Based on qualitative research findings from primary and secondary data we identified sustainable leadership development as the main construct in analysing the process of dispersing the sustainability mission to all Si.mobil stakeholders.

The incorporation of sustainability contributes to collective leadership development through the integration of different stakeholders and empowering them by providing them space for initiatives through different contests, programs and services. Sustainability mission is too complex and demanding a goal to be achieved by only one entity, therefore we claim that it is the network of stakeholders and the ability to connect their interests around the long-term value system that enables sustainable leadership development. That kind of leadership approach is sustained by appropriate leadership tools, according to the needs of the stakeholders.

Implications of integrating the sustainability mission into a leadership development program are demonstrated in refocusing the content and structure of leadership development planning, organizing, leading, and controlling at Si.mobil. The mission of sustainability influences the systematic and organized activities within and around Si.mobil. Empowering people with broadband internet networks is an operationalization of the mission that company Si.mobil connected with diverse Re.think initiative activities which all share dedication to empowerment of its stakeholders.

We propose that sustainable leadership development is based on symbiotic capital. Symbiotic capital is the advancement of human and social capital together with natural capital. Thus, symbiotic capital aims for the symbiosis of complementary human, social and natural systems. A new form of capital was evident in the data gathered inside of the company Si.mobil as employees are thinking about the symbiosis of their activities with the needs and well-being of wider stakeholders.

Sustainable leadership development is demonstrated through the imagination of a vision, building a strong mission, and the performance and use of the knowledge and skills the company possesses, collectively. Sustainable leadership development has been studied from the perspective of key participants and how they attribute meaning to their everyday experiences in which the phenomena is reflected. Implementation of leadership development tools, especially with respect to influencing future generations of leaders is specifically demonstrated in the Employee engagement 2.0 program that was awarded the 3rd place at the National HRM project contest in 2013. Si.mobil includes coworkers in different strategic initiatives that seek new business opportunities. The findings of the empirical work show that the implementation of the company's mission is most effective in sustainable leadership development where individuals are actively involved in realizing the mission and participate in creating goals where they can shape sensemaking of their development, rather than simply acquiring knowledge and skills without being involved in the entire developmental process.

Because of a worsening social situation of Slovenians, employees at Si.mobil felt the need to shift their Re.think efforts from ecological activities to social issues and help their surroundings; therefore, they focused on ecological and social aspects of their business. Leaders who participated in the case study label themselves as different from their competitors in the telecommunication industry. Additionally, the triangulation methods ensured that stakeholders working with Si.mobil really do see it as a »hippy commune«,

fresh collective, and creative organization that introduces innovations into the market. Hippy commune represents a metaphor (Morgan, 2006) that informants expressed many times when talking about the intangible aspects of Si.mobil. Meaning, they do things in their own way and always in collaboration with the local community and natural environment. A representative employee at Si.mobil is not posh but natural, easy going, a party lover, and enjoys work and fun, all together. Unique for Si.mobil are teambuilding activities that incorporate the mission of sustainability: »Si.mobil employees like to take part in teambuilding as they offer us the chance to do something good for those who need our help and good will« (Dragišič, 2015, p. 33). Si.mobil teambuildings are a way of corporate volunteering where employees grow personally and develop social and communication skills. If sustainability mission would not be incorporated in leadership development tools, then also teambuildings would only be focused on socializing and having fun instead of doing both of those things and also helping people in need.

Day et al. (2014) emphasized that, despite a long research history of leadership theory, the systematic study of leadership development has a moderately short history and a need exists for scholars to show direction for leadership development research. Implications of this paper for theory are in establishing and directing research of sustainable leadership development with a clear motive of nurturing environmental and social responsibility among leaders and their stakeholders. This paper establishes that practices of employee well-being and creative environmental protection enable systematic sustainable leadership development. What is interesting is that one first acts and later becomes a role model for others, which creates a cycle of sustainable leadership development with stakeholders (as demonstrated by spreading the Re.think philosophy to the multinational group TAG).

Codes in the NVivo qualitative research analysis program were identified as outcomes in the analysed research data and included: (1) improved management of organizational challenges, (2) employee and customer commitment, (3) social integration, and (4) creative environmental protection. The sustainable leadership development process starts with stating the sustainability mission and implementing it through leadership tools. At Si.mobil, the research into Re.think demonstrated that the process has been simultaneously running in both directions, bottom-up and top-bottom. The mission is dedicated to »What we want to achieve and develop in our company?« the leadership tools are focused on »How will we develop and achieve our mission/strategical goals?« The later question was answered in presenting the evolution of how sustainable leadership was developed over the decade examined at Si.mobil. Si.mobil is recognized for its sustainable leadership as it has acted continuously over the last decade in all three elements of sustainable leadership development: building community, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and promoting long-term value (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011b) through presented activities.

Sustainability mission influences the implementation of leadership development tools by incorporating long-term value into them and enabling the sharing of leadership responsibility. Sustainable leadership development is an ongoing process, not limited to an event or curriculum, where action that creates well-being for a wider environment is the

purpose of leadership development tools. Also, sustainability mission influences future generations through different initiatives that take place outside the corporate facility and university campus. Employment clubs for youth that function due to Si.mobil support from 2012 onwards in collaboration with Nefiks institution increase employability skills of future generations. Si.mobil leaders take the responsibility for empowering future generations, such as providing lectures and practice on how to find a job, network, present oneself, conduct a job interview. Si.mobil leaders also promote the value of entrepreneurship – outside and inside the company through different contests (eg., elevator pitch contest, internal entrepreneurship contest). Incubator program Start:Cloud for young start-ups in the field of business solutions in the cloud is organized in collaboration with different business partners in order to enable young entrepreneurs access to the market and enable the presentation of their products to the market (Škufca Zaveršek in Ažman, 2013-2014, p. 44). Implementation of leadership development tools is impacted by sustainability mission also in the activities dedicated to the outside stakeholders, such as children who use Si.mobil products and are born into the society that is technologically advanced – »internet natives« which means that Si.mobil is also dedicated to educating children how to safely use their appliances and services.

The implications of this research for practice are in fostering critical thinking about reasons for and effectiveness of environmental and social initiatives of organizations. The findings present the dimensions for effective sustainability of such initiatives and enable insight into how these initiatives can be started and managed over time. The paper strengthens the importance of coordination between activities of different departments within an organization to yield beneficial effects that stem from a mission focused on practicing sustainable leadership development agenda. The Re.think initiative is an exemplary case of the importance of balancing linkages among internal (employee-centered) and external (environmental and socially-centered) strategical efforts and actions. Our findings confirm the literature (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011a) that collective leadership development efforts strengthen the execution of a sustainability mission. Sustainable leaders operate based on competence (functional expertise), integrity (honesty and openness), and taking care of »compliance of interests« (among individuals, organizations, society, and the environment). Sustainable leadership development in Si.mobil is based on: (1) a set of internally identified competencies stemming from the company's mission; (2) wide support of developmental techniques (coaching, business academy Si.mobil, mentoring, experiential learning and internal rotation), and (3) engagement in meeting the needs of the wider environment and future generations.

Limitations of this study are connected to the qualitative research method of examining only one Slovene company. We think it would be interesting and valuable to conduct a comparative international study of sustainable leadership development. In the future, a comparative study is recommended in collaboration with the specialized professional group of sustainable leadership researchers at the Institute for Sustainable Leadership, based on the paper findings written about sustainable leadership practices at BMW (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011b). Also, a quantitative methodology is recommended to gain complementary data of the phenomena of sustainable leadership. As sustainable

leadership development is specific with respect to time, a longitudinal research endeavour over the next 20 or more years would be interesting.

When we talk about such a wide and overall present term, such as sustainability, it is even more necessary to be specific in designing and applying it into business reality. Goal alignment needs to ensure that every employee is aware of the company's values. Presentation of the incorporation of the sustainability into leadership development provides a theoretical basis for designing practical developmental programs for other interested companies. Recommendations for further research are in line with contemporary leadership development needs (Reichard & Paik, 2011) and include: (1) a systematic survey of early leadership development of identified potentials as a regular part of leadership development programs; (2) integration of theory and practice of comprehensive lifelong leadership development into sustainable leadership development; (3) a new conceptual framework of leadership development based on explicit (scholarly works) and implicit (ideals, metaphors and representations of leaders) leadership theories; (4) inclusion of the dimensions of diversity (age, gender, culture, interests, knowledge, and skills) in understanding and implementing leadership development; (5) examining mentoring as a key area of sustainable leadership development; and (6) examining the role-modelling function in sustainable leadership development process.

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