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**THE ROLE OF HUMAN DIGNITY AS A VALUE TO PROMOTE ACTIVE AGEING IN THE  
ENTERPRISES**

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*“When an old man dies, it is a library burning”*

*Amadou Hampâté Bâ*



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## INTRODUCTION

The organizations have always taken care of the workers' careers from two points of view: on one side, the individual one and on the other side the organizational management. As a matter of fact, the employee is responsible for his career and he must manage his employability to develop his identity according to the working environment around.

At the same time, the organizations play an important role as they offer growth prospects to their employees in line with their business goals.

In the current landscape, what I have just mentioned is the core of a farsighted human resources management that today must face the challenges of an ageing population as well.

Since the ageing workforce is increasing in number and the legislative reforms are answering this problem moving the line of retirement, companies are obliged to keep people active and motivated at work as long as possible.

The older workforce is usually seen as a factor of diversity and potential discrimination: anyway, I will try to argue that a conscious policy age oriented could transform the idea of ageing into an opportunity.

Older workers as young employees are first of all people and the starting point of my dissertation is that the respect of human beings, regardless of the age, must represent the core of a business organization.

In the first chapter, the respect of human beings is justified in the light of the topic of dignity. I will deepen this concept remembering and thinking about its origins and its meaning through the history.

For example, in the ancient era, Greek dignity, as well as the Roman one, was a fundamental value in the society, a matter of respect people accorded to one another. The idea of mutual respect depends on the assumption that dignity is an inner value of the person, an absolute value of human beings.

Later, in the modern age, the philosopher Kant will mark a decisive turning point in conceiving human dignity that he considers the common character to all human beings. If they are equal, it is due to their dignity.



Immanuel Kant thought that human beings occupy a special place in creation. Of course he was not alone in thinking this. It is an old idea: from ancient times, humans have considered themselves to be essentially different from all other creatures and not just different but better. In fact, humans have traditionally thought themselves to be quite fabulous. Kant certainly did. In his view, human beings have “an intrinsic worth, i.e., dignity,” which makes them valuable “above all price.” Other animals, by contrast, have value only insofar as they serve human purposes (Rachels, 1986, pp. 114-17, 122-23).

Animals are merely as means to an end. That end is man. Here I do not want to compare the human beings condition with that of animals. I just aim at clarifying that, according to Kant, humans might never be used as means to an end. He even went so far as to suggest that this is the ultimate law of morality.

After arguing about sense and meaning of the human dignity, in the second chapter I am going to discuss the relationship between dignity and workplace. Nowadays, if it is said that the workplace is a community of people, an important dimension of the dignified life of a person rather than a mere instrument for profit, that is due to the way of conceiving dignity according to the Greek idea: dignity is an inner value and a social value as well.

Thus, the respect of human dignity is a crucial point for today’s organizations, but it is often misunderstood.

In the era of globalization where money embodies the absolute value, the human beings, the workers risk of becoming a means to reach wealth and they have lost their real worth. Otherwise, the respect of dignity, of an anthropological richness later on discussed, is the underpinning of a workplace «conducive to human growth and fulfilment» (Giovanola, 2009, p. 432).

Dignity can be operational at work if its value is understood and not forgotten. In the second chapter, the concept of a humanistic management will be introduced as the practice to preserve dignity of the worker and for promoting the development of an economic system at the service of human flourishing.

At this point, the topic of Corporate Social Responsibility will arise. Indeed, the humanistic management, a human-centred philosophy is the core of a socially responsible enterprise which thinks that work is one of the places where people can express themselves, their identity, skills and knowledge. Furthermore, since nowadays the workforce is ageing and young people are hiring, today’s

organizations are communities for all ages. In such a situation, to be completely responsible for the needs of the surrounding environment, an enterprise must take care of all workers, regardless of the ages. That is its biggest challenge. Organizations must pay attention to older workers' needs that are different from those of young people.

Thus, in the third chapter, the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility is analysed in its link with the topics of active ageing and the workplace diversity. There are many reasons of difference at work because of gender, culture, ethnicity, skills and knowledge of people but the age is the one I will focus on. It could be obvious that older workers have an idea of the work that is not the same as young employees and that their attitude to work is different. This depends on their experience, their longer life but the idea that they have is neither worse nor better than the one of young people. A socially responsible enterprise knows it and starts to use practices and tools which create a collaborative working environment where there are no intergenerational conflicts. In addition, thanks to the theory of Diversity Management that will be introduced, the organizations can enhance the performance of all employees and when the reason of diversity that they must manage is the age, the most useful theory to apply will be Age Management. It concerns some human resources practices which enable older workers to remain active at work and share their skills and knowledge.

Finally, the fourth and the last chapter is about the case study of my research. During my PhD program I have worked both with Macerata University and with Loccioni, an Italian company. Thus, I could study an enterprise interested in the issue of active ageing and which is developing a project focused on older workers. The project is called Silverzone and it can be proposed as a way to answer the problem of retired people' employability.

Silverzone is a network of retired (or almost retired people) above 65 years old who are still active after their retirement. They are working for Loccioni and with Loccioni collaborators.

To justify this project like a practice of older workers' involvement, I conducted two qualitative surveys: one to managers and the other one to "Silver men".

The aims of the interviews are mostly two: knowing how many Silver men work in this network and which are the projects that they are developing; in addition, understanding if people involved in it can test dignity at work.

In the last chapter, I am going to show the results of these surveys (See the questions in the appendix) just as to show the answers that silver men gave to other questions.

The interviews allowed me to assess the quantitative and qualitative impact of the project on Loccioni discussed later on.

## CHAPTER I

### HUMAN DIGNITY: SENSE AND MEANING

#### 1. The dimensions of Human Dignity

The notion of dignity seems to have an elusive meaning, as it is often used in different ways.

On the one side, dignity can be considered as a fundamental principle: it is the core idea underlying the debates on respect, rights, bioethics and workplace challenges, among others. On the other side, dignity seems to be a rhetorical device without substance.

It is therefore important to better investigate the notion of dignity, in order to grasp its meaning and identify its defining features. This is the aim of this chapter. For this reason, the discussion will be started by asserting the dimensions of human dignity according to the Greek philosophy.

In the ancient Greece, it seems that there were no words to express the meaning of dignity as we mean today. Rather, philosophers speak about value, prestige and reputation.

Thus, starting from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, we will see that the main ideas about “dignity” in the ancient times were mainly two.

First of all, what emerges is the public and social dimension of dignity. Dignity is not an innate quality of man as such; on the contrary, it depends on the relationship of everyone with others and involves the duties that each human being faces towards his community.

Secondly and consequently, dignity must be conquered: it is not an ontological quality, so it must be achieved. Since dignity identifies with value and honour, it can be increased or decreased according to the actions that are being performed. It is a dynamic concept depending on human behaviours and actions and, for this reason, it is susceptible to graduations and differentiation among people that can be distinguished by virtue of their own greater or lesser prestige.

Prestige can take on different meanings according to the rational abilities of human beings, their courage and physical strength.

In particular, during the classical era, the real *Anthropos*, the real man was just the one engaged in the social life and who defended his city from possible attacks of enemies. The real Anthropos loves his country and his military commitment, his devotion, his courage are the features of the prestige that he deserves because he is completely devoted to his country. In that case, prestige becomes an index of his being a dignified person.

Despite this, what we have to underline is that there had not been a universal idea of dignity in the ancient Greece, yet. Dignity does not belong to all human beings: just someone deserves it for different reasons. Women, servants and children, for example, can not conquer dignity as we have just mean.

As a consequence, dignity just belongs to worthy men, and it depends on many factors, as we will see; but since it is a richness and a conquest of someone and not of all humankind, it creates a hierarchy between people.

Later, I will clarify in which way to deepen the meanings that dignity has hired during history.

It will be suggested that it is possible to think about dignity of each, of all, of a community, but finally I will assume that just the dignity of all justifies the equality among all human beings. It is the one that underpins my work.

According to some scholars, the scope of ascription of human dignity «is universal in the sense that it applies to all human beings» (Düwell, Braarvig, Brownswod & Mieth, 2014, p. 27) and makes them all equal.

The idea of that universality is something we will discuss after introducing the Church Fathers.

Conversely, now we want to reflect on the meaning of dignity as it appeared when the philosophers began to think about it for the first time.

As a matter of fact, at the beginning of the discussion, dignity was not considered as a universal value, but something owed someone rather than someone else.

Socrates, for example, speaks about human beings involved in a kind of introspection of themselves to improve their soul and get closer to moral truth. Furthermore, this disposition belongs to valuable and dignified men who know how to use their reason in order to attain knowledge and pursue a good life.

The dialogue of Plato, called Republic, focuses on the idea that the authentic human life is fulfilled when one progressively approaches, through the use of reason, the world of Ideas, that is, transcendent and immaterial entities of which sensible objects are only images. The most important idea in this world is the Idea of the Good, by which a person can possess an advanced ethical understanding to achieve a good life (Republic, 508, 2-3). As Plato maintains when someone shows the capacity of thinking and acting according to the world of ideas, especially to the idea of the Good, in that case the person is leading a dignified and virtuous life. In addition, the philosopher Plato believes that «a person should develop the qualities of character and intellectual abilities that would enable him to know and act in a truly good manner, hence making the most of his social existence» (Dierksmeier, Amann, Von Kimakowitz, Spitzeck & Pirson, 2011, p. 21). Each individual action is socially connotated and this is the reason why human growth and realization can be achieved only within a relational context. Achieving good is the commitment of a social reality where the human being is a *zòon politikòn*. According to Aristotle, it means that man has a natural predisposition to sociability and aims to happiness. «Individuals realization requires therefore a relational context, in which human reason – in accordance with human emotionality – is applied to attain common good» (De Stefano, 2016, p. 72).

If the actions of people go in this direction, everyone must be respected insofar as his action approaches the world of “Ideas”, particularly the Idea of the Good, the common Good.

This common good is nothing but the *ethos*, the rule, the idea that leads the actions of human beings. It is the social good that can be reached when the values of respect, reciprocity and support become the core of human beings’ relations, founding a real community.

Thus, the common good is a mutual assistance order among people whose behaviour is inspired by the same values.

Only this virtuous path makes each person such to have a dignity that is recognized to him.

Moving ahead, also Aristotle connects the idea of dignity to belonging to a community: particularly he refers to *family*.

Family is the mutual and primordial society called *oikos* by Aristotle. Every family is composed by four characters: father, mother, daughters and/or sons, slaves and this is the reason why different relationships of authority arise within it. The father has a power over his wife not because woman is lower than man; as a matter of fact, she is free as her husband, but not having the character of the command, she must maintain a subordinate role.

The father has a temporary power over his children until when they become older and then he has a power over the slaves, a permanent power.

Nowadays, the concept of slavery is far from us and seems puzzling because it is in conflict with the idea of dignity but Aristotle tries to provide valid arguments about it, even if he sometimes notes some contradiction.

He states that slavery is something natural and necessary and unlike Plato, who tries to imagine a world different from the real one, a world as it should be, Aristotle accepts the state of things. How does he justify slavery? He argues that men can be born free or slaves and the condition of slavery is linked to the fact that some people are neither able to use the reason nor to choose.

Aristotle compares the relationship between the slave and his owner to the link between body and soul. Soul exerts a despotic control on the body because while the latter can be tempted by emotions, pleasures, physical needs, the first one is stronger and looks at the eternal goods, not at the phenomena. In the same way, the philosopher justifies the slavery.

Each person has *in power* the skills to choose the Good, to do rational choices but not all people manage to put them *in act*.

Having said that, Aristotle explains that it is better not only for the owners but also for the slaves to be slaves. A person who does not know how to manage herself only draws benefits from being governed by another. At this point, Aristotle adds that the slave is an "inanimate tool" and society needs slaves because they are the only ones that can do heavy jobs in order to allow "free men" to dedicate themselves to politics and philosophy. Nevertheless the real problem is that you do not always become a slave because you have no reasons: you can become slave because of the wars, too. Those who lose, become slaves, those who win, become owners. In addition, in the society that Aristotle has in his mind, the status of

citizen is assigned to all people except slaves, metics, young people under the majority age, women.

It is possible to see that Aristotle admits the existence of the dignity and of the dignified people but the biggest problem lies in the fact that even if dignity belongs to all human beings, the philosopher talks about different levels of dignity.

The topic of the different levels of dignity mentioned by Aristotle might also be explained in the light of the distinction between two *status*, made by Jeremy Waldron in "*Dignity, Rank and Rights*". Indeed, Waldron distinguishes a *sortal status* from a *condition status*.

Sortal status categorizes legal subjects on the basis of the sort of person they are [...]. Sortal status represents a person's permanent situation and destiny so far as the law is concerned. It is not acquired or lost depending on actions, circumstances or vicissitudes. The idea behind the sortal status is that there are different kinds of person [...] (slaves and free; women and men; commoners and nobles, black and white. (Waldron, 2009, p. 54)

In a society where the idea of the sortal status is admitted, it follows that there are different kinds of people and consequently different roles that everyone, just because of his specific sortal status, can play. The sortal status justifies the existence of "slaves and free, women and men, commoners and nobles, black and white". But Waldron is not convinced of it, though.

As a matter of fact, he criticizes the topic of the sortal status as it is linked to the idea that men were born as static and stereotyped kinds of people who have different levels of dignity. There are those that were born free, others slaves, there are men and women, blacks and whites but the worst thing is that these "kinds" are sometimes source of discrimination and misunderstanding of the unconditional and absolute value of each.

In addition to the topic of sortal status, Waldron introduces the concept of condition status as well.

There are legal statuses that apply to individuals in virtue of certain conditions they are in, that they may not be in forever, or that they may have fallen into by choice or happenstance: they embody the more important legal consequences of some of the ordinary stages of human life (infancy, minority), of some of the choices people make (marriage, felony, military service, being an alien), or some of the vicissitudes that ordinary humanity is heir to (lunacy) or that through bad luck or bad



management may afflict one's ordinary dealings with others (bankruptcy, for example). I call these condition statutes. They tell us nothing about the underlying personhood of the individuals who have them: they arise out of conditions into which anyone might fall. (Ivi)

Remembering the aforementioned idea about the Aristotelian concept of slavery, we can see a substantial difference with Waldron. As a matter of fact, according to Aristotle, slavery is not a sortal status as Waldron tells us, but a condition status. It is not a status where we were born but something that can happen to us (because of the war for example).

If it is taken Waldron's point of view is taken as a useful framework, a little criticism to Aristotle can be moved, it will be possible to get out of the vicious circle of the slavery that denies the dignity. As Waldron states, the concept of dignity denies the existence of distinctions grounded on the status of human types (whether it is talking about sortal status or conditional status). There are not different human types to which different rights ought to be accorded. Rather, all human beings are equal and have the same worthy and dignified status.

Waldron agrees with the Kantian philosophy. He follows Kant, who is the first philosopher to speak about the centrality of human dignity, accepting a "human-centred" system which makes human beings free and equal. The principle that Kant argues is that man is not a means to reach either this or that end but he is himself the bearer of his own end.

Hence, the state to be an end in themselves is the common denominator of all human beings and it is the ground for their equality and their mutual respect.

Dignity aims at affirming human beings' uniqueness and worth even when there are differences in ethnicity, gender, race, nation, social status, or culture between them.

## **2. Dignity Vs Hierarchy?**

As we have seen before, originally the concept of dignity took an exclusive meaning. It means that dignity has not any absolute and unconditional worth, it is not an underpinning but just a good status held by somebody rather than

somebody else. Dignity depends on contingency, luck, richness, skills, knowledge and this is the reason why it is not universal: it looks like something that one deserves or does not deserve for some reason. At the beginning, it was argued that Greek-Roman dignity was a social value that could not be reduced to an internal state of the individual. «Dignity is on this view, a matter of the respect we accord to one another» (Düwell et al., 2014, p. 54).

At first glance, the sentence “to one another” seems to tell us that dignity is universal.

This expression betrays a certain reciprocity but the reciprocity which arises from the ancient thinkers, as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, sometimes is a false one.

«Dignity that is held in common by an extensive yet bounded body of citizens stands between the personality and exclusivity of meritocratic dignity and the impersonality and universality of human dignity» (Ivi).

Now the topic of meritocratic dignity starts to be a problem. As a matter of fact, in this scenario we are not speaking about the positive meaning that meritocracy can assume when some merit is attributed to a man for his valuable behaviour or his success.

Here,

meritocratic dignity is best construed as respect and recognition accorded to persons of high standing, which that high standing arising from the exclusive possession of characteristics regarded by relevant observers as meritorious [...]. In a system of meritocratic dignity, my dignity or lack thereof is determined by the place. Meritocratic dignity admits of equality among those of equally high rank. (Ivi)

In Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the merit to be recognized as a dignified person is due to the human ability to prove the social dignity in order to achieve self-realization. And self-realization is proper to all those knowing the common good, becoming virtuous, aiming to happiness in order to live a worthy life.

According to this, true equality is acknowledged only among those who have the same goal.

Slaves, metics, women, people who can not find the good because of a difficulty or who are not interested in finding good but rather in loving material goods, pleasures and something like these, do not deserve any dignity and are not worthy

of the same human status. The fact that they have dignity only in power is enough to discriminate them. No matter even that people not always are the masters of their destiny. A slave, for example, is not such for his choice but because of something else. Nevertheless, he can not belong to “high rank”.

According to the ancient thinkers, slavery can also depend on the lack of will to seek the Idea of the Good. In addition, a person can become a slave of the laws and of his guilty when he commits a crime. There are different topics but all of them lead people to a marginalization.

At this point the problem becomes that dignity is no more something universal but a matter of rank and something extremely fragile. Anyway dignity comes before slavery, before luck, before lack of willingness, before rank and even before crime. Dignity comes with life and therefore it belongs to all human beings and all human beings deserve respect. People can lose sight of the dignity because of the slavery, because they are guilty of a crime, but this is not a real loss. Human dignity can not be lost but it can be violated and this should be prevented from happening or it could be safe to find a way to restore and then protect it.

Thus, there are many problems associated with the idea of dignity as a matter of rank, of hierarchy. «For the Greeks and Romans, living with dignity means, figuratively and literally holding one’s head up in the company of others and being properly acknowledged by them» (*Ibidem*, p. 53).

There is a concept of meritocratic dignity that is clearly manifest in archaic societies. For example, «the society depicted in Homeric epic provides a model case in that the distinguishing features of meritocratic dignity – its grounding in personal relations and the fragility of equality at the top, are starkly to the fore» (*Ibidem*, p. 54). In this system, those who deserve dignity are those at the top of the society and they can only be considered as equal. «True equality is acknowledged only among those who are equal in every relevant particular. In Homeric society, this includes ancestry, military prowess, number of retainers and wealth. Equality among elites is precarious because there is limited room at the top and because the ultimate goal is to excel, to be best» (*Ivi*).

But who is “the best”? For example, “the best” of the Achaeans can be Agamemnon because he commands most men or Achilles because he is the

greatest warrior. Anyway, «meritocratic dignity is a scarce social resource and it is distributed by high-stakes contents». For this reason «society is therefore characterized by systematic expressions of disrespect (sometimes ritualized and sometimes violent) towards inferiors, who must be “kept in their place” if they are not to threaten the standing of those above them (cf. Odysseus’ beating of Thersites in Book II of the Iliad)» (Düwell et al, 2014, p. 55).

The topic of dignity does not necessarily concern only human beings. There are many lines of thinking proving that it belongs to all creation, including animals and plants but in my work, the reference framework is anthropological.

Assuming the human being as the core of my dissertation, does not necessary mean that I do not believe in the dignity of animals and plants, for example. On the contrary, I can assert it but here, my purpose is not trying to justify the dignity of all living.

As a matter of fact, I will argue that dignity is an inner value of the person, as the philosopher Kant maintains. The recognition that it belongs to all human beings, makes them all equal. On the basis of this equality a society can arise where the respect that a person has for herself is the same shown towards the other ones. The mutual respect is the ground of each coexistence, of each place where human beings live, whether it is private or public; thus, as I will say later, it is also the ground of a dignified workplace.

Having said that, it follows that my discourse on human dignity presupposes a specific anthropology in order to investigate the human nature.

Returning to the history of human dignity, in the Middle Ages, the essence of a human being is his being the image and likeness of God. In this period, many authors consider the likeness to God to be grounded first and foremost in their rational nature. We can mention Hugo of Saint Victor (c. 1096-1141), Anselm of Canterbury, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventura and also Thomas Aquinas. The first one, for instance, argues that the human being is «image according to reason, likeness in accordance with love» (De Sacramentis I, 6,2).

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) states that the better humans know themselves, the better they know God. «Even Augustine (354-430) had already repeatedly emphasized this relation, which manifests the dignity of human beings

in a special sense – in a famous passage in the Soliloquia, he writes that if a person were to recognize himself, he would recognize God: “Noverim me, noverim te” (Soliloquia II,1,1)» (Düwell et al., 2014, p. 65).

On the other hand, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) has a different opinion and says that it is freedom that designates humans as the image of God. Human dignity exists in freedom: «For the human being, I consider dignity (dignitas) free will, through which it is given to him not only to be superior to other creatures, but also to rule them<sup>1</sup>» (Ivi).

Then, mentioning Bonaventura (1117-1174), we have to say that according to him the three main activities of human mind – remembering, cognizing and willing – are directly dependent on God. Finally, «in Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224-1174) anthropology, the human likeness to God is the very goal of the creation of rational creatures; the rational nature of human beings allows them to imitate God through self-knowledge and self-love (Summa Theologiae I, q. 93, Art. 4) » (Ivi).

In this way, reason accounts for human dignity and reason is what makes human being greater than the other creatures. This statement betrays an anthropocentric point of view according to which man is more powerful than any other creature. Obviously, it could be a problem because in this way, for example, we are introducing levels of dignity that justify the subordination of animals and plants. Even if I do not agree with an absolute anthropocentric point of view, as I wrote above, I can not discuss it here.

Rather, starting from the idea that the human beings were created for their own sake and therefore they have inherent worth, I am attempting to get to a notion of human dignity which would be independent from any comparison with animal life or God and lays its foundations on the idea of self-definition character of human beings. It means that human dignity is something depending merely on human attributes. According to this perspective, human being reveals his intrinsic value and his capacity of being his self-former and maker through the exercise of

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<sup>1</sup> De Diligendo Deo II, 2, Opera 3, p.121: “dignitatem in homine liberum dico arbitrium, in quo ei minimum datum est ceteris non solum praeeminere, sed at praesidere animantibus”

freedom. His attitude is the reason why he is the core of society, a unique and privileged being.

Saying that dignity is an inner value of each human being and that it makes people all equal, creates the conditions to assert that dignity is not only an individualistic value but also a relational value. It establishes the sociability of a human being who recognizes the other one as dignified as he is.

This widespread sociability is the topic that allows us to start thinking about the different dimensions of dignity in human beings' life, especially about its link with the workplace.

## **2.1 What is human dignity?**

Kant (1724-1804) marks a turning point in thinking about human dignity. In his view, the idea of dignity as personal value totally matches with the idea of dignity as relational value.

Kant's main themes were these: all person, regardless of rank or social class, have an equal intrinsic worth or dignity. Human dignity is an innate worth or status that we did not earn and cannot forfeit. Rather, we must strive to make our individual choices worthy of this moral standing, which elevates us above animals and mere things. A fundamental principle of reason and morality, the categorical imperative, tells us to treat humanity in each person never merely as means, but always as an end in itself». And more «we must act as if we were both law-makers and subjects in an ideal moral commonwealth in which the members, as ends in themselves, have dignity rather than mere price. (Düwell et al., 2014, p. 215)

Dignity represents a value in itself that belongs to me and to the others: in other words, "to all livings". It is an inner value for me and also for the other one and such a sharing represents the common ground of sociability and of being relational people.

According to Kant, humanity is itself dignity, which means that no human being can be treated by another human being only as a means. Everyone is an end in himself.

The human being regarded as a person is above all price, that is he can never be considered as a means either for the purposes of others or for his own ends.

Human dignity, therefore, consists of an "absolute intrinsic value" that imposes respect to all other reasonable beings: of your own person and of the other person. The respect I have for others is the recognition of the dignity that is in others: thus, to treat the others as means results in the denial of respect generally due to everyone.

Kant supports his point of view adding that there is the moral law within us which preserves our dignity making us respectful of ourselves. For this reason, dignity is not only an individual value but also a social value, the main value that connects men because the mutual recognition and respect among people is possible just by virtue of the dignity which belongs to all human beings.

Kant believes that the source of normativity of moral claims is found in the agent's own will. Indeed, he identifies the moral law (in the form of a categorical imperative) with the human will. Moral obligations are self-imposed, giving us a kind of authority over ourselves which provides the normativity to moral claims. These arguments are intended to show that if we take anything to have value, then we must acknowledge that we have moral obligations. In this moral system, human beings can only be ends, never the means to an end. According to this view, humans belong to the "Kingdom of Ends". They are distinguished by their ability to reflect consciously on their actions. The self-conscious human mind is essentially introspective and reflective.

This reflexivity generates feelings of guilt or resentment when our deeds or the acts of others are seen to be immoral. Obligations and values are "projections" of our moral sentiments and dispositions.

We can better understand the topic of the moral law and of the reflexivity, reading Christine Korsgaard, a Kantian moral philosopher who works on the problem of value. She searches for the source of normative moral obligation, the answer to Kant's question "what ought I to do?" and the meta-question "why should I do what I ought to do?" Why should we be moved by any motives provided by morality?

She wants not only to explain the moral obligations we have to one another, but also justify those obligations.

As Christine argues

[Reflexivity] sets us a problem no other animal has. It is the problem of the normative. For our capacity to turn our attention on to our own mental activities is also a capacity to distance ourselves from them, and to call them into question. I perceive, and I find myself with a powerful impulse to believe. But I back up and bring that impulse into view and then I have a certain distance. Now the impulse doesn't dominate me and now I have a problem. Shall I believe? Is this perception really a reason to believe? I desire and I find myself with a powerful impulse to act. But I back up and bring that impulse into view and then I have a certain distance. Now the impulse doesn't dominate me and now I have a problem. Shall I act? Is this desire really a reason to act? The reflective mind cannot settle for perception and desire, not just as such. It needs a reason. Otherwise, at least as long as it reflects, it cannot commit itself or go forward. (Korsgaard, 1992, p. 79)

This leads Korsgaard to an extended discussion of Kant's view of the link between reflexivity and freedom. It is because of the reflective character of the mind that we must act under the idea of freedom. Kant says that «we cannot conceive of a reason which consciously responds to a bidding from the outside with respect to its judgments» (Kant, p. 448). If the bidding from outside is desire, then the point is that the reflective mind must endorse the desire before it can act on it, it must say to itself that the desire is a reason. As Kant puts it, we must make it our maxim to act on the desire. Then although we may do what desire bids us, we do it freely.

The law of the reflective mind leads human being to a rational and moral action and this is the reason why it preserves human dignity. As a matter of fact, this law is the foundation of human actions and all human beings are equal because of it. It is followed by all human beings and determines the criteria of the mutual respect that inspires their actions. Everyone who acts according to this law, acts in a valuable way.

When Kant argues about a valuable way to act, he means that there is a way to act in compliance with that dignity owned by human beings.

Now, saying that something has dignity means that it has a certain kind of value but values come in very different shapes; it is important to distinguish the kind of value that dignity is from other kinds of value.

As Kant argues, both in the "*Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*" and in the "*Metaphysic of Morals*", dignity refers to things having some value and not to those having a relative and exploitable value but to those having an unconditional and absolute value.



He states

But suppose there were something whose existence in itself had absolute value, something which as an end in itself could support determinate laws. That would be a basis—indeed the only basis—for a possible categorical imperative, i.e. of a practical law. There is such a thing! It is a human being! I maintain that man—and in general every rational being—exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be used by this or that will at its discretion. Whenever he acts in ways directed towards himself or towards other rational beings, a person serves as a means to whatever end his action aims at; but he must always be regarded as also an end. Things that are preferred have only conditional value, for if the preferences (and the needs arising from them) didn't exist, their object would be worthless. That wouldn't count against the 'objects' in question if the desires on which they depend did themselves have unconditional value, but they don't! If the preferences themselves, as the sources of needs, did have absolute value, one would want to have them; but that is so far from the case that every rational being must wish he were altogether free of them. So the value of any objects to be obtained through our actions is always conditional. Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature, if they are not rational beings, have only relative value as means, and are therefore called 'things' [Sachen]; whereas rational beings are called 'persons', because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves (i.e. as not to be used merely as means)—which makes such a being an object of respect, and something that sets limits to what anyone can choose to do. Such beings are not merely subjective ends whose existence as a result of our action has value for us, but are objective ends, i.e. things [Dinge] whose existence is an end in itself. It is indeed an irreplaceable end: you can't substitute for it something else to which it would be merely a means. If there were no such ends in themselves, nothing of absolute value could be found, and if all value were conditional and thus contingent, no supreme practical principle for reason could be found anywhere. (Kant, 1785, pp. 28-29)

The first feature of dignity that is worth pointing out is the distinctive logic that characterizes the attribution of dignity to a person. The most prominent distinction is the one marked out between a value that is to be promoted and a value that is to be honoured. In many cases and for many values, saying that a thing has that value means that it ought to be promoted. Saying that pleasure is good implies that it ought to be promoted (with qualifications, to be sure). We ought to try to bring about more of it because it is valuable. The same might be said of health and flourishing and with many instrumental goods.

In contrast, saying that a thing is dignified means to attribute a certain kind of value to it that does not imply in the first instance that the thing ought to be promoted. Instead the idea is that what has dignity ought to be honoured in attitude and in action.

On one hand, we have pleasures, health, wellbeing and these are instrumental values because they are linked with the satisfaction of desires. But the sense of satisfaction depends on things which are outside the human being. On the other hand, we have dignity that is not an instrumental value because it is connected with a moral condition and with the *respect* that a person has of himself. According to Kant, dignity is grounded on universal law that all rational beings can accept. The law we are talking about, says that *everyone* is to be never used merely as a means but at the same time as an end.

“Everyone” is the most important word in the latter sentence because it shows that there is nobody among human beings who do not deserve the recognition of their dignity. All men are dignified. The respect they have with each other’s is the basic standard for personal relations.

Act in accordance with a maxim of ends that it can be a universal law for everyone to have. In accordance with this principle a human being is an end for himself as well as for the others, and it is not enough that he is not authorized to use either himself or others merely as means (since he could still be indifferent to them): it is in itself his duty to make man as such his end (Kant, 1996). Here, the idea of humanity as an end is affirmed as a standard for the basic attitudes, aims and choices that we adopt as individuals. Kant repeatedly appeals to the dignity of humanity – or the ideal rational person within each of us – in support of his ethical principles, especially the duty to preserve and improve oneself as a rational being and the duty to respect other persons. (Düwell, p. 221)

The Kantian account might even provide a foundation for some appeals to dignity for the regulation of the social and political life.

Thanks to Kant, the human dignity becomes the principle of the legitimacy of political and legal ethics. As we have already read, it is expressed by the human self-determination of practical reason, a reason that conveys the idea of good. The Kantian reason has an end in itself and it can express moral acts. It follows that dignity is the result of the self-determination of human freedom according to the a-priori categorical imperative: the rationality of freedom is founded on that a-priori which determines the freedom of all human beings, as we read above.

The idea of dignity that Kant suggests us is linked to the categorical imperative which is the ground of freedom to act for the mutual respect among human beings and, consequently, for the common good.

Thus, human dignity and common good can be expressed just in a political and juridical context that guarantees human beings the power of self-determination.

To better understand the last statement, I could take into account the effects that the Kantian perspective has today on two fundamental documents: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) of the Federal Republic of Germany (1949); its primary role is highlighted by the prominent position he has held in both texts.

As Michael Rosen reminds us in his book "*Dignity. Its history and meaning*" (my translation), Article 1 of the Universal Declaration begins with the following words: «All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights». Then, Article 1 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, however, reads: «Human dignity is inviolable. It is the duty of all state authority to respect and protect it. The German people acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the foundation of every human community, of peace and justice in the world». Rosen starts from Kant's point of view though he is critical of a certain sanctification of the "moral law within us", which is the respect and, therefore, not to men as such, but only insofar as it conveys the moral law and are able to put it into practice.

If we take as true that our moral law prescribes how we should behave, as Kant says, we can reply to Rosen that since human beings are subject to the moral law and the moral law comes from themselves, they are not all means of law. On the contrary, they are autonomous and all equal in dignity because of their inner law. For this reason, according to Kant, and to Rosen as well, respect for themselves is that form of pride that is proper to the human race, it is a virtue that must not be confused with arrogance.

«Arrogance differs from pride (*animus elatus*), which is a kind of honour love, that is to say a care not to give up anything of our human dignity in comparison with others; arrogance instead demands respect from others but then it denies respect to them» (Kant, 1785. My translation).

Pride belongs to a mankind grounded on the idea of a moral equality among people, an equal status which makes ourselves respectful of each other.

The respect due to everyone is absolute because every person is an absolute value and the conviction linked to the moral law that the other one is as worthy as I am, «reveals the other as a wholly unique and irreplaceable person» (Düwell et al., 2014, p 269).

This shows a widespread sense of *community* among people: dignity is operative at the deepest level of respect which creates a *moral community* of cooperation. According to Kant, I can say that where there is a human being, there is something to be absolutely respected. The value of the human beings can not be counted and considered as immeasurable because it is an endowment that the man has owned since his birth. It follows that it is linked with someone and not with something. It is not the result of a valuable behaviour or the reward for a goal achieved, it is rather a human being's possession that was born with him. It follows that dignity is a value of all.

## 2.2 Dignity of each, of all, of a community

So far, I have distinguished different types of dignity:

- 1 Dignity of *each* as something associated with a particular status or rank.
- 2 Dignity of *all* as something equally shared by human beings as such.
- 3 Dignity of a *community* as something which marks out how we collectively think of ourselves.

I spoke about the “dignity of each” and I tried to give a first and simple definition. It entails hierarchy and differential status; otherwise, we could say that this is the assertion of inequality rather than equality. As a matter of fact, taking an example from the *De Officiis* of Cicero, you see that dignity depends on rank: Cicero gives us an example. He knows that in many speeches, in civil and political documents the recurring sentence “*cum dignitate otium*” refers to a specific status used to demonstrate how *optimi* (the best men) should live in a right republic.

It has to keep in our minds that when he says “*optimi*” he means rich people. For this reason, in such a society, it is usually accepted that not everyone is seen in the same way and everyone has a different position in this hierarchical society. In that sense, dignity is

a concept that marks a distinction: the one who has rank and honour is distinct from those who do not. It is unclear whether this exclusionary aspect is decisive: it is relevant that the honourable person has a dignity which is a reason for him to behave according to this status. However, dignity related to rank does not imply universality and it is not inalienable – rank may be lost. (*Ibidem*, p. 25)

Anyway, having taken Kant's point of view as true, the idea of "dignity of each" does not fit for us. Pride associated with holding status or occupation of a rank threatens to come out a situation of inequality. As a matter of fact, for people who believe to be "the best" in the society not to be recognised as the only ones with dignity means:

- dishonour and an occasion for anger or resentment
- and to extent that others have an interest in one's assertion of dignity, potentially a source of shame which requires apology, restitution or revenge.

Unlike this,

rather, the scope of ascription of human dignity is universal in the sense that it applies to all human beings, it is egalitarian insofar as each human being is equal with regard to his dignity and references to human dignity are justifying duties towards others that have the form of categorical obligations. (*Ivi*)

Thus, by emphasizing that human dignity is universal, I can say that the respect of it implies duties towards myself but also a ground for strict duties towards the others. It belongs to all human beings.

In order to better understand what dignity is, we could refer to two theories about it, sometimes thought as separated, some others matched together. These theories allow us to combine the topic of "dignity of all" with the topic of "dignity of a community".

The first one is called "the theory of endowment" according to which dignity is an original ownership, a natural and moral right; the second one is "the theory of performance" which states that human dignity is the result of human action, a conquest of his subjectivity that gives him an identity (Cfr. H. Hofmann).

Dignity as original ownership, has belonged to human beings since there were born, dignity in the second sense depends on merit, power, virtue or rank.

The idea that dignity is closely related to power and rank, as we saw above, is dangerous because it could lead to discrimination among human beings, but, on the other side, we have virtue and merit that are two important issues.

As a matter of fact, starting from Hofmann point of view, N. Luhmann says that human dignity is built on social recognition of a person and also merit and virtue depend on this social recognition.

Anyway, here I want to consider the possibility to combine the theory of endowment and the theory of performance because we have assumed up to now that dignity is an inner and original value but it isn't enough.

Here I assume the framework of a relational anthropology, according to the Aristotle thinking. Human being is a *zòn politikòn*, hence is personhood is strictly connected to the other human beings. Having asserted that, we can see that virtue is a habit, a disposition that each person obtains by behaving in a certain way for a sufficiently long period of time.

Thus, the human being does not look like a static subject, already made subject, but he is a subject in development who continuously wants to fulfil himself by virtue of his original freedom. Therefore, dignity that also depends on virtues and merits, is a commitment and a conquest.

We could trace a link between the two theories mentioned and developed above by Hofmann, in the really previous thought of Pico Della Mirandola. In his "Oratio de hominis dignitate" (1486), on one side, he bases human dignity on the ontological idea that human being is the first living thing in the world and, on the other side, he connects it to the use of freedom.

God placed man at the centre of the world so he could more comfortably contemplate all that is in the world but he neither made man heavenly nor earthly, neither mortal nor immortal, so that he can mold him free creator of himself, in compliance with that pattern he looks better.

Dignity is a thing that you have and at the same time that you must achieve, because you must become who you are and who you want in order to find your place in the society. In addition, maybe, the most important thing in the theory of endowment is that dignity belongs to all human beings: it means that it is a universal value.

Then, according to the theory of performance, human sociability results in the act of recognition and assignment of rights.

The rights are based on the principle that all men are due equal consideration and respect, so that the rights that defend dignity should be equally recognized and assigned.

In that sense, it is possible to talk about dignity of a community as a value that can be formed thanks to relationships.

This topic will be better and later explained while speaking about dignity in the workplace.

Anyway, if we want to start thinking about the link between dignity and workplace, we can discuss two issues related to this relationship and to the job market:

- 1 Ranking among professions;
- 2 Dignity of an office rather than of a person.

The first definition is problematic. If it is asserted that there is a hierarchy among professions, it is also asserted that some works are more dignified than others. But on what basis is it possible to say that a work is more dignified than another one?

In the introduction, the work appeared as one of the aspects of the life through which man can be realized and flourish. This is why while we are working we can give shape to our thoughts and apply our knowledge and our skills.

This topic will be deepened in the next paragraphs but now we can say that if it is assumed that all human beings are equal and that the work it has always been a means of survival and achievement, we have also to say that it is in general a place where people feel good, safe and respected. According to this, work can not produce inequalities.

In the Primitive Era when men lived only by hunting and fishing because there were not any big cities, schools, companies, the most important things that people had to learn were killing animals to feed themselves, surviving and wearing their skins, building huts and villages where to live and lighting a fire to bring the light around and warm up. This is the reason why they lived in a very simple and poor way and the only working activities where they were involved were linked to their

primary needs. Those activities were the only ones that could make people safe and happy.

A lot of other examples could be given as work has always represented one of the most important features for human beings of all ages and a constant.

Socrates, for example, said that work is closely related to virtue. Everyone has to know and to do well his work but the first work that man has to do well is “the work to live”. Only a virtuous person who lives in the belief that the most important things are the values of the soul and of knowledge, knows how to live and lives well. At this point, according to Socrates, the virtue is “*the art of living*” and not a value linked to things outside to human beings (such as richness, reputation, power) or to body things (such as beauty, strength, health); it is the art of living according to the good. It means living together and respecting each other because men are *zòn politicòn*, political people and therefore always live close. Hence, the real human richness depends on the merging between personal and public dimensions.

Firstly, it belongs to a dimension of personhood, according to which individuals become themselves «in search of self-realization and construction of their identities» (Giovanola, 2005, p. 1) while they are coming closer to God. Secondly, beyond this self-dimension, there is a *relational* dimension as well and «each one of us finds her or himself to be intrinsically related to the other members of a society» (*Ibidem*, p. 3). The core of this relational dimension is the idea that each person has to be treated as an end because of her dignity. Dignity is the feature that belongs to all human beings and establishes mutual respect in a society where everyone acts in a valuable way in order to aim at the common good.

In a human-centred society «human actions are driven not only by self-interest, but also by sympathy and commitment» (Giovanola, 2015, p. 3). In particular, quoting Sen, «commitment is strictly connected with a person’s moral principles and can also diverge from personal well-being; it can modify a person’s goals and his or her “rational” choice, by giving importance to other people’s aims that cannot be included in the pursuit of personal interest» (Sen, 2005b, p.7). This kind of commitment, requires *wisdom*, a wisdom that allows human being to both recognize his personal identity as well as the social one, too.



The real richness of a person requires a goodness of the soul but also the social and relational dimension of personhood. «Human beings both produce and are produced by society: on the one side, they produce institutions and contribute to shape the society in which they live but on the other side, they are formed by society itself, with its model and ideals» (Giovanola, 2005, p. 264). Relationship is the underpinning of the society: human beings are intrinsically “relational” and this means that each person “needs” to be related with the others.

This point is also Marx’s point of view according to which human beings can become “richer” thanks to their inner relationships with others that increase their identity. Furthermore, Marx talks about a worthy life that is realized through labour and here it becomes important to introduce the topic of labour, because later we will just discuss the link between dignity and the workplace.

Every human activity appears to be labour and labour alone appears as guarantee and execution of life worthy of human dignity. In other words, the human worth is related to labour and interaction.

Particularly, labour makes men superior to animals, not in the sense of discrimination but in the sense of a self-realization which depends on thinking, choosing and doing what seems good for their flourishing.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life. (Marx, 1932)

In the labour process, human being «sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his body [...] in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs [...]. He acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way, he simultaneously changes his own nature» (Ivi). But Marx also argues about the risks of labour. As a matter of fact, in the work human being can find his freedom as well as his social and political alienation. The philosopher begins to take into account men in general and not “the man” and states that they are distinguished in classes according to their relationship with means of production which relay between work and nature.

The ancient slavery, the medieval serfdom and the modern factory system based on formally free (contract work) and on the opposition between capitalists and workers, define the major stages of the historical evolution, marked by a deep conflict.

The Proletarian, the last class that has nothing to lose but its chains, is the big final antagonist of the bourgeoisie in the Communist Manifesto of 1847. The poorest workers risk different kinds of *alienation*:

- 1 alienation from their *product* that becomes a useful means for workers and they begin to be dependent on it;
- 2 alienation from the *act of production* that becomes constrictive. In this case worker feels bad because he is not satisfied and he uses work only to satisfy external needs and help the capitalist profit;
- 3 alienation from *Gattungswesen (species-essence)* because the worker does not recognize himself in the work. He feels like an animal. As a matter of fact, the only things that work allows him are eating, sleeping and reproducing;
- 4 alienation from *other workers* that makes conflictual the relationship with the capitalist conflictual because he is the only one who enjoys the poor worker's job.

The only solution to this situation is the abolition of the division of work and the creation of a communist society where everyone can be free to choose the activities that go with him. Marx does not believe that human beings must necessarily improve only in a certain and particular job. Such specialization would be a "tax" to which we cannot escape because we have no alternatives to survive.

At the end, according to Marx, all people should have the right to realize themselves in their own business which should gratify the individual and reflect his personality.

To come back to what we were saying before about "dignity of community", we must remember that sometimes dignity refers to an office rather than to a person. It is true: every office has a value because it is important for something else, to achieve a goal but the office is closely related to a person. As a matter of fact, it can not exist if there is not a person who holds it or, better, it can exist but

is “empty”: it exists only in power and not in act. To put an office in act you need a person, a person who has dignity and as such must be respected.

Coming up to the present day, our society is bigger and more complex than the society of the past and for this reason there are many and different works all over the world. Sometimes human beings can even choose the works they want (when they are lucky). Anyway, we continue to wonder if it is really possible to find a job that makes us happy and satisfied.

In addition, we might ask us “but why should the work make us happy and satisfied?”. Is our satisfaction the necessary reason so that man decides to work? No, of course, but it would be easier and more interesting if when we are working, we can flourish and express our personhood and skills.

This is not so hard, rather, it can be real because of the foundation of dignity of work that is an *ethical dignity*. Such an idea of work is based on the belief that the workplace is a community of people rather than a mere instrument for profit. Drawn up in this way, the work «could foster the development of human virtues and therefore take into account everyone’s need to grow as a person through human virtues» (Melè, 2003, p. 85).

With these assumptions we are approaching the topic of dignity in the workplace, that we will analyse in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### HUMAN DIGNITY IN THE ENTERPRISES

#### 1. The ethics of work

The aim of the second chapter is showing that human dignity can be a factor of innovation in the sense that as it can promote a new way of thinking work in the current business scene.

Thus, if the topic of human dignity becomes operational in the enterprises, as we will see, it conveys a paradigm change from mechanistic to humanistic management theories and practices, «exemplified in a shift from an economics oriented at the fictional homo oeconomicus towards novel models oriented at the real *conditio humana*» (Dierksmeier, 2015, p. 33). This methodological turn brings about both the opportunity and the necessity of re-orienting management theory as well as business education to the idea of human dignity.

Particularly, here I will try to deepen the role that human dignity plays in today organizations: is talking about this topic meaningful and useful to underpin the ethics of work?

The word “ethics” comes from the Latin “*ethos*” which refers to habits, behaviour, attitude that becomes virtuous by usually doing the same thing and confirming a habit every day.

According to that definition, the ethics of work is a belief that work and diligence have a moral benefit and an inherent ability, virtue or value to strengthen character.

A strong ethics of work is vital for achieving goals. It could be considered as an ethical code composed by vision, mission and goals of an enterprise that must be transferred to employees so that they can take proper professional behaviour. This definition is reductive, though. In addition, I can argue that people who possess a strong ethics of work embody certain principles that guide their work behaviour, leading them to produce high-quality work consistently. A good ethics of work fuels the human needs and goals, it is related to the initiative by a person aimed

at certain objectives and it is considered as a source of self-respect, satisfaction, and fulfilment.

If we want to describe the main factors of the ethics of work, we can quote Dan Schawbel, partner and research director at Future Workplace that is an executive development firm dedicated to rethinking and reimagining the workplace. In an interview he states that these factors are:

- Goal-oriented actions: it is not about making plans; rather, it is about getting things done so that the work invested would not be counter-productive.
- Dedicating on priority: focusing on qualitative activities that a person is capable of managing in order to reach a high impact in the company.
- Being available and reliable: spending time on the work and building oneself up for the task.
- Conscientiousness: a desire to do a task well, being vigilant and organized.
- Creating a rewarding routine/system: engaging in tasks that provide strength and energy to me, creating a good habit and a habitat for success.
- Embracing positivism: shape a problem with the statement "good, (action) (problem)", e.g. "I'm tired and it is time for a workout" leads to "Good. Workout tired".

On the contrary, a negative ethics of work is a behaviour of a single worker or a group that has led to a systematic lack of productivity, reliability, accountability and a growing sphere of unprofessional/unhealthy relationships (e.g., power politics, lack of social skills, etc.).

Having said that, now it is important to clarify how dignity is related to the ethics of work.

According to what I maintained in the previous chapter, everyone has dignity as an inner value; the worker is a person and for this reason he has dignity, but in addition, the dignity of worker also depends on him because it is a project to be realized.

People who want to build their own personal and professional identity, turn the work into a crucial experience: to work means to make yourself independent, to enter the social system as an actor, to become competent in something.

Consequently, it is possible to become a dignified worker, accepting an ethical code that offers him a system of behaviours to well perform his role according to the goals of the enterprise where he works.

When a worker can develop and improve his knowledge and skills, he becomes aware of his abilities and powerful in the sense that he is not a productive means but an actor of work. He is a key cell of the labour market whose skills are needed for the development, the growth and the success of the company he is working for. In addition, the true richness and the ethics of work is when the work is not just about production but it is also about the collaboration which means that a person wants to be together with others in order to develop the human relational dimension. The workplace is a kind of community where people are related to each other and I should clarify the way their relationship is developed.

So far, I have talked about the ethics of work from the individual point of view; now, what about the companies' point of view?

A company should prove its ethics of work through a set of values that it shows to follow. First of all, this set of values includes:

- respect for human rights
- respect for workers' rights
- the protection against minors' exploitation
- safety and health guaranteed on the workplace.

Hence, a company should have an ethic code and a social balance, a kind of Constitution, a set of moral rights and duties that defines the ethical and social responsibility of each worker. It is an effective way for companies to prevent irresponsible or unlawful behaviour by those who work in the name and on behalf of the company, because it introduces a clear and explicit definition of the ethical and social responsibilities of the executives, cadres, employees and often also suppliers to different stakeholder groups. This code is the main tool for implementing ethics within the company. It has become a tool for the stakeholder manager, a means of ensuring fair and effective management of human transactions and relationships, which supports the reputation of the company, so as to create confidence in the outside.

Each company has its specific Code of Ethics, with its principles and its variables but there are five levels shared by all responsible companies. They are:

- The general ethical principles that gather the entrepreneurial mission and the best way to realize it;
- Ethical rules for company relations with various stakeholder groups (consumers, suppliers, employees, etc.);
- Ethical Behaviour Standards: principle of moral legitimacy, equity and equality, protection of the person, diligence, transparency, honesty, confidentiality, impartiality, environmental protection, health protection;
- Internal penalties for violating the Code's rules;
- The instruments of implementation. The implementation of the principles contained in the Code of Ethics is usually entrusted to an Ethics Committee with the task of spreading the knowledge and understanding of the Code in the company, monitoring the actual activation of the principles contained in the document, receiving reports about violations, undertaking investigations and imposing sanctions.

In this context, it is understandable that people are the core of the enterprises, as well as their mind and their arms, so each company must take care of them in order to make work a safe place. If it happens and people can work well in mutual respect, company becomes socially responsible and, in addition, it can also achieve high standards of productivity.

Workers must not be treated as mere instruments for money making and this affirmation «comes quite close to Kant's philosophical argument that people are ends in themselves and never to be treated only as means to the attainment of the purposes of others or of society as a whole» (Düwell et al., 2014, p. 252).

In a human-centred system, the ethics becomes the ground of the respect that every human being has to show to the other one. Coming back to Kant's point of view and to the consequences of applying his philosophy to the workplace that I argued above and I am doing it even now, it is important to find an imperative to prescribe to all the human beings to treat the other ones as well as we would like them to treat us. This imperative is the categorical ones according to which human

livings are equal by virtue of a dignity that each of them owns as an inner value. And this idea of “dignity of all”, that I also mentioned before, is the underpinning of what we call the ethics of work.

«The pledge to respect human dignity thus demands a business ethics characterized by an egalitarian regard for the dignity of all stakeholders of business» (Bowie, 1999, p. 184). Therefore,

today’s authors translate Kant’s ethics into clear ethical mandates for firms – e.g., rejecting the terminology of human capital or human resources in favour of human relations and human capabilities, a common feature of all these endeavours is to make dignity central to management, i.e. to treat dignity not as one value amongst many but as the overarching principle in light of which management should be taught and practiced. (Dierksmeier, p. 38)

Under these circumstances, dignity becomes “dignity of a community”, and the community in this case is the enterprise. If the enterprise considers the worker as the core of its vision and mission, it can become a place where to be happy and to work well. A company which promotes the well-being of its workers, helping them to find a meaning and a goal in their professional activities (goal that could be managing an important project, reaching a personal and professional growth and development thanks to a training program, satisfying a client, recruiting a competent staff and so on), is a socially responsible company, a real community where a worker can be achieved as a real actor. Not as a tool. Otherwise, he has a goal and he chooses how to reach it because he is autonomous and free to achieve his success according to the values of the company where he works. When a worker knows to be an important actor of the labour market, his commitment is not the profit, it is not only quantitative, but also qualitative. He feels part of a community that is not a tayloristic community oriented to business but that enhances the quality of work and promotes the individual contribution.

In the current landscape, new competences, new ways of recruitment and human resources management, new working environments like open spaces are arising and this situation places the focus on the importance of the true quality of the individual worker.

It is time to return the sense that each one assigns to his / her work and therefore organizations need to be more and more able to produce meaning because



productivity also improves if everyone can find a meaning in what he is doing to the point of being available to give a specific contribution.

Unfortunately, today the managers sometimes count the quantitative results and not the quality of the work of the employees. It can happen that nobody sees the commitment that a worker offers, and this creates a sense of frustration and malaise.

On the other hand, if a manager notices that something must be changed, he starts to make work more meaningful, recognizing not only the personal commitment of the worker, the value of his performance and his economic recognition. As a matter of fact, he also becomes aware that the success of the organizations depends on the enhancement of human resources that are unique and irreplaceable.

This implies an organizational capacity to create real moments of listening and responding to the problems, the proposals and the request of the collaborators who want to be the protagonists of the work. And how is it possible to understand that being the actors of the work is more rewarding and useful than being a tool of it? Certainly, if it is started to think that the work is not the boss of economy, the engine of a society aimed at making profit using people like gear of a system. It is necessary to rethink the meaning of work wondering: what is the work? What is its meaning? Is there only one meaning of the work or are there different words that can express its different meanings?

In the common language, we often use the terms “work” and “job” in the same way but they have two different meanings.

Job is the word that refers to a specific type of work you do for money (for example professor, waitress, engineer and so on). Job can also be used to talk about the role of a person in a specific working environment where he/she is building his/her own career.

On the contrary, work refers to different kinds of activities that people do also regardless of the money (keep in mind the work of a housewife or volunteering for example).

For this reason, it is possible to say that the word work results in a thought about the ways of organizing our daily work life. In short, the meaning of this word has a

broader and deeper sense than the first one because it involves a bigger sphere of action and more reasons.

As Bal argues

a major problem of the contemporary workplace is that work is strongly related to having a job, and that at the macro level, policy makers are occupied with decreasing unemployment, which means that jobs need to be provided for people so they have jobs, and as such mask unemployment numbers. The question here is not about the quality of jobs, and whether people having a job make a positive contribution, or in other words, create 'real' value or dignity. The consequence, for instance, of the increasing bureaucracy in the UK following neoliberal transactionalization of employment relationships, is that an increasing number of people work in jobs in which monitoring is the primary task. As work is currently strongly connected to having a job, people working in these jobs become increasingly attached to this work, as making the monitoring redundant would risk the very existence of their jobs. Hence, the question here is not so much whether any value is created, but the reverse; people stick to their jobs, while there is effectively no real work attached to it. Conversely, a trend is observable where work is needed but as it is not attached to a job, risks to be destroyed and disappear altogether, such as caring for needy, homeless shelter, helping drug and alcohol addicts, cleaning of shared spaces, and creating solutions for the increasing number of empty offices. Hence, the intention of making a positive contribution within the workplace is more relevant than ever. (Bal, 2017, p. 117)

Having said that, it is easy to admit that when a positive contribution becomes the first task and principle of the future workplace «there is less or no need for strict controlling mechanism and extensive monitoring policies». (Ivi)

I think that what has just been argued, helps us to understand why before I stated that "work" has a broader and deeper sense than one specific job related to a salary. Work is one of the spheres of the human life thanks to which people can achieve their goals doing a job that allows them to show their knowledge, their hard and soft skills. In other words, work should observe some human rights.

To make an example, while you are working in a company and trying to achieve common goals with your colleagues for the good and the success of that company, the fact of being "monitored" is different from being "monitored" in a coercive way. As a matter of fact, the role I cover in a company could be at the same time higher and lower than the roles of two other people but this is not a good reason to be more or less free to work in a certain way. To be clearer, the role that everyone has, depends on his/her knowledge, competence, skills, career and

exactly by virtue of these variables you can justify the different job positions which people occupy.

But on the other hand, these variables do not justify a greater or lesser degree of freedom in doing something. Human freedom, we saw and we will see again, is closely related to the idea of dignity in the workplace and it deserves respect insofar it is a feature of the inner human value that is dignity. In addition, dignity, it has to be kept in mind, makes us all equal.

Under these circumstances, work can not be reduced to a simple job, that is a position that you occupy in the labour market. Work is linked to a position but it is more than a position, more than a role.

Work can mean manual activities and can refer to the job of a farmer, of a craftsman but also can refer to the liberal activities as those of a lawyer, doctor, teacher, accountant. It is also a Promethean work that is the collective effort to control nature with science and technologies that are applied to all human fields. The latter form of work is what summarizes in itself different kinds of labour both from an economical and an ethical point of view. Controlling nature with science, for example, is not the ethical way to conceive the work.

Sometimes, we think that to ensure the measurable happiness of a worker, countable wellbeing, his success and his power over nature is the only way to understand the human being, even though, the human life, with its different and numerous activities, can not only be reduced to an economical and quantitative dimension. Hence, the modern problem is that economics usually claims to be the only right science and starts assimilating and simplifying all the human dimensions. The scenario is dangerous and leads to a dehumanization of the humankind. This is the reason why today many thinkers underline the need of re-thinking the ethical implications of the economics, with the aim of promoting human dignity.

The philosopher Totaro is one of the scholars who wants to retrieve the ethical aspects of the economics. This is clear in his work *“Etica ed Economia: il rapporto possibile”*, where he says that «economics has to accept to see itself within a renewed anthropological framework which calls for an explicit primacy of the person and her interpersonal relationship» (my translation) against the primacy of economical instrumentality.

I am trying to show «the need for a sound ethical and anthropological foundation of economics and business» and to argue «the importance of a correct understanding of human values and human nature for the sake of economics and of businesses themselves» (Giovanola, 2009, p. 1). The notion of human richness that comes from the Capability Approach, as we saw above,

can lead to a more “humanized” business, by fostering human flourishing, the enhancement of human capabilities, and the pursuit of a more human development for each and every person. [...] The anthropological dimension will be based on the need to criticize the standard notion of homo oeconomicus and to provide a “richer” and more complex idea of human being, and thus of economic agents and business actors too. Both dimensions are strictly interconnected, since the notion of rationality - which belongs to both ethics and economics - prescribes how agents ought to behave, and such prescriptions, in turn, cannot be separated from an underlying idea of human beings’ basic features (*Ivi*).

If on one side the homo oeconomicus «is an exclusively self-interested individual, seeking to maximize self-interest and perfectly conscious of the consequences of his or her choices» (*Ibidem*, p. 4), on the other side the richest human being is the one who acts showing to be moved by different capabilities as moral commitment, emotion, deliberation and human interaction.

According to what I have just stated, work, as the economy in general, has to be thought in its potential meaning within an anthropological view. And this view also includes action and contemplation.

In other words, one could say that an increasing risk in our society is falling into the alienation caused by work when it reduces human life to be an instrumental dimension of productivistic mechanism. Conversely, only a correct measure of work within human activities as a whole can guarantee the richness of work and its ethical dignity.

The work has a relative value: its meaning is always closely related to our needs and to our wish of flourishing through something that permits us to express our knowledge and skills. The work has an important meaning in human life but it does not represent a value in itself, an absolute value.

It can be considered as one of the most important areas of human being expression, like those of our private sphere (family, friendships, faith...) or those of the public sphere (politics, religion, economics...). Through the work, people can

give shape to their thinking and represent what they are but this statement is true if the work is considered as one of the tools of human flowering and not its aim.

Under these circumstances, human beings can express themselves freely in the workplace and can demonstrate their efficiency, creativity and innovativeness. It is an important part in our life that is linked to the other lives and based on the development of ties. When we are working, we are never alone because if on one side the work responds to a basic need of our maintenance, on the other side it relates us and other people, our interests and the ones' society. Thanks to our activities and our role in the job market, we can produce primary goods (food, clothes and so on) and secondary goods (means of transport, communication tools...) and we can offer them in different business areas. So, when we work to respond to our needs and when the job market laws reflect and respect them, people can gain a sense of achievement and the society can develop, as well. According to this, if workers can express and apply their skills and also their talents in the job market, the workplaces become meaningful for them.

In order to better understand what I am stating, I may mention the Encyclical "Laborem exercens" of the Pope Giovanni Paolo II.

Now, the reference framework of the discussion is changing. As a matter of fact, I have so far paid attention to the ethical and economical points of views, but a fundamental contribution to the theme of work is given by the Encyclical, even if it is an expression of moral theology.

The Laborem exercens is an "apotheosis" of the work, seen as a dimension closely related to the human value. According to this and to what Totaro states in his book "*Non di solo lavoro*", the importance of the Laborem exercens is that it allows to go beyond an instrumental idea of the work. It means that work can not be considered as a simple *facere* aimed to an external result. It also refers to the dimension of *agere* aimed to human flourishing. Through the work human beings not only produce objects but also can model themselves and hence become "more" men and increase their humanity.

The person is a subjective being able to act in a planned and rational way, able to decide for himself and to realize himself. Person is the sum of theory and practice and the ethics of work is closely related to the idea that human being

knows how to work “as a person” that it means as a conscious and free subject who decides for himself. This is the reason why the *Laborem exercens* states «the first basis of the value of work is man and first of all, work is for man not man for work» (my translation).

In the work, human being experiences himself and thanks to work the mutual exchange between work and man is carried out.

The person is opening to the being’s fullness, is the commitment to make the human being happen, to make him concrete and evident and, at the same time, person who works gives herself a handy word. Work makes available things that are not immediately available and produces a familiar world.

Just that feature of the work, which is called “effectiveness” allows workers to attribute utility to the production process whereby they give shape to material goods that then use in a responsible way. Using material goods in this way means to go beyond the idea of a pure quantitative work and retrieve the idea of a qualitative work. Such idea is far away from the taylorist-fordist model of assembly lines and standardized work.

Taylor, in fact, offends the human dignity by reducing man to a “pair of arms” or to a servant of the working machines. Conversely, the qualitative work of a socially responsible enterprise puts human being at the centre, showing the essence of the ethics of work. And as it was argued above, the *Laborem exercens* offers a new idea of work that is an ethical idea.

The key points of the encyclical are the following:

- 1 The word “work” refers to all things, all acts that human beings do;
- 2 Working is a duty and through it human being can achieve three goals:
  - Survival
  - Development of arts and sciences
  - Spread of culture and moral
- 3 Work is a fundamental dimension of human life. Human sciences base on the reason and faith confirms it;
- 4 Work reveals the signature of human being who acts within a society;
- 5 God leads us to be fruitful and multiply us and asks to dominate fishes and birds. Work is a part of our answer to this recommendation;

- 6 Work is a transitive action: each person works and creates an object in a flowing time;
- 7 Technology is only a set of tools that human beings can use at the work. The development of technology shows human beings' excellence and their power to control the earth (My translation. Totaro, 2008, pp. 98-99).

Under these circumstances, it follows that work is restored as an anthropological and meaningful dimension of human life.

In addition, it is possible to talk about the human sense of the work when it becomes an essential part of a society which promotes and defends the ethics *of* work, the ethics *in* the work, the ethics *for* the work.

I have already tried to clarify the idea of the ethics of work that is important to safeguard a dignified and positive work to all human livings. Where human dignity is injured, the society has to restore it. The object and the purpose of the ethics of the work is showing it as a fundamental human experience and indicating how the man should live it, according to which rights and duties.

The ethics *in* the work is evident when man can show his virtues and skills. I can give an example: thinking about the courier service, one could wonders "what is his virtue"? It is not when the courier pretends to be robbed in order to take and enjoy the goods that he should have delivered to the customers. Again: "which are the courier service skills"? They consist in bringing the goods to their destination as soon as possible. Hence, in other words, being honest is not enough and this virtue must match with the skills of a particular kind of job or role that in this case are to be fast and efficient.

Finally, the labour market needs an ethics *for* the work as a commitment to create and develop conditions and opportunities according to which all human beings can enjoy the good work.

Nowadays, work is the key to access other rights that belong to a citizen status; it is the first right to access other rights. Thus, it reveals its inner sociability because it is a "good" to share and foster to all people.

Work is energy used to reach different purposes, the energy that human beings use in order to give a shape to their lives and find a safe place in the society.

## 2. Human dignity in the workplace: a factor of innovation

According to what we said above, dignity is an ethical value, the value that allows to recognize each other as a person and it is on this awareness that the community, the natural sociability of people and their sociability in the workplace are based. Now we must demonstrate what we mean with this last statement and we can do it by asserting that work is relationship and the workplace is the community where this relationship can happen. Then, we have to show what we mean for “dignity at work”.

According to the Italian Constitution, our Republic is based on work (art. 1), on a dignified work. As a matter of fact, the third article states that dignity does not belong to an “abstract man” but to a man involved in economic and social relationships. In addition, as you can see in the Art. 4, paragraph 2, dignity means doing something or performing a task «according to our possibilities and individual choice in order to contribute to the material and spiritual progress of society» (My translation).

Work, hence, gives human beings the full development of their personhood and of their dignity, as well. In the Italian constitution, the emphasis beats on the social dimension of dignity and it also arises from other two articles: art. 36, where it is argued that the worker is entitled to a salary sufficient to assure him and his family a free and dignified life, and art. 41, paragraph 2. According to it, dignity looks like a value that economical business can not hurt.

The concept of dignity is, therefore, related both to the role that each citizen plays in the society and to the fact that the state must guarantee everyone the opportunity to carry out a dignified work. Dignity is not just something that has to be defended from any behaviour that may be harmful to it, but something that should be promoted and thanks to which the social growth is measurable.

Nevertheless, in order to measure the social growth, it must be argued how dignity can be promoted and how it «can be conceptualized to be operational in the workplace», «how it may inform human work-related behaviour» (Bal, 2017, p. 67).



According to what was written above, the workplace can be source of human flourishing because it has dignity as it is performed by a worker who is first of all a human being, a dignified person with an intrinsic, inviolable, worth.

Then, we must add that work is a feature that gives us a shape, the shape of our identity and how can it happen? Of course, because:

- It allows us to achieve a goal;
- It helps us to increase our self-esteem;
- Thanks to work we can receive approval from the other ones;
- We can become self-sufficient;
- We can access other rights.

Work does not cover the whole dignity of a person but it is an important way to express yourself and to leave your positive impression to the surrounding environment. It is also the way to access essential goods as house, health, clothing, education, free time and relational life. In short, it is the basis to live a decent life. This is the reason why it could be said, as also Sennett admits, that work is the place where

people may find the meaning of their lives (Sennett 2008), and through which they are able to experience what it is to be a human being, able to exercise agency, to produce something, and to have a free choice over how they spend their time. This is not to say that meaning in life can only be found in work – it is obvious that people find meaning outside of work. [...] However, the workplace has the potential to create meaning in life. (Ivi)

In order to better understand this meaning of the work, it could be also interesting to refer to the four Dutch words used to talk about dignity. They show the idea that

dignity in the workplace is about the intrinsic value of the workplace itself, as a physical or mental space where people come together to conduct work, or to exert physical and mental efforts constructing something, which may be physical as well as intangible, such as ideas or creativity. (Ivi)

The four words are the following: true (waar), value (waarde), nature or earth (aard or aarde), and kindness (aardigheid).

Truth depends on the activities performed in the workplace and on the satisfaction that a worker feels after doing something. The utility produced for him and society and the success reached are its proof, as well. Satisfaction, utility and success could be summarized in a unique word that is value. As a matter of fact, value arises from the interactions among human beings and the respect for nature, earth and the surrounding environment which are the third elements of dignity.

Kindness, finally, is the mood of the relationships and it is index of the respect that all workers show each other.

Anyway, even if we assume the Kantian perspective as true according to which the necessary condition of dignity is being «treated as an end in oneself, at least in part, and not merely as a means to someone else's ends, or as substitutable for someone else» (Sayer, 2007, p. 568), when people are hired by a company «to fulfil an instrumental role (i.e., as a means to an end), the achievement of dignity becomes inherently problematic in employment relationships» (Lucas, Kang & Li, 2012, p. 3).

Mismanagement and abuse, overwork, incursions on autonomy, and contradictions of employee involvement are some of the way categories of dignity-diminishing practices that contribute to the experience or denial of dignity at work.

How is it possible to skip these problems and make sure that human beings are not conceived as mere business tools?

I think that the answer to the last question lies in the "*humanistic theory*" of the economics.

«Humanistic philosophy takes the human individual as its starting point and emphasizes the human capacity of reasoning» (Pirson & Lawrence, 2010, p. 554). Such that central idea of human reasoning is the key to overpass the potential reduction of human being to a tool. In addition, humanistic organizational structures are centred on human capabilities and effectiveness. Human beings are the owners of lots of skills that allow them to work knowing that they can achieve a specific goal. In other words, their knowledge and skills should make them powerful to lead a work where they can express themselves without running the risk to be means of an economic point of view.

In a wide sense, we can call “humanistic” a kind of management which focuses its attention on human development within business. Early reflections about humanistic management date back on the middle of 20th century, while its variegated approaches have been developed in the time. (De Stefano, 2016, p. 53)

The starting point of humanistic management consists in asking «what is the purpose of our economic system», taking the distances from most of current theories about business and society which rarely «question the primacy of GDP growth, profit maximization, and individual utility maximization» (Spitzeck, Pirson, Amann, Khan, & von Kimakovitz, 2009, Preface).

Against this last point of view, humanistic management wonders «what a more life-serving economy look like» (Ivi), and tries to create

a human-centered and value oriented society. The fact that the current global economic system more often than not treats human as instruments for profits or GDP growth, ignoring rights and liberties and generating alarming injustice, environmental deterioration and individual unhappiness, calls us to rethink about the foundation of economics and business. (De Stefano, 2016, p. 54)

«Humanistic management scholars believe that the current dominant form of capitalism suffers from several flaws» (Pirson, Steinvorth, Largacha-Martinez & Dierksmeier, 2014) in regard of three main aspects: «systemic (environmental degradation, social inequality), organizational (decreasing level stakeholder trust, decreasing level of employee commitment), individual (low average level of life satisfaction)» (Spitzeck et al., 2009, p. 6). Humanistic management contributes to overcome such short comings «through promoting the development of an economic system at the service of human flourishing» (Dierksmeier, Amann, Von Kimakowitz, Spitzeck, & Pirson 2011, p. 12).

In fact, the unconditional respect for human beings and for their dignity is the ground of this managerial perspective and the foundation for any interpersonal interactions within business dimensions.

Now, having said that, it is important to find a tool, a practice to ensure that human dignity becomes operational in the workplace. Otherwise, the thesis so far argued could remain an abstract formalism. The answer to this need lays on the idea of “*workplace democracy*”. This theory «can be one way by which

organizations can achieve the respect, protection, and promotion of human dignity for all stakeholders» (Sauser, 2009).

«The aim of workplace democracy is to involve *all* organizational members in the process of deciding how work should be conducted, and more generally empowering employees to be committed to, and engaged with, all facets of the organization» (Foley & Polanyi, 2006).

Human dignity focuses on the equality of all human beings that, translated into organizational terms, means «the equality of employees and managers, and equality is a key aspect of democracy» (Bal, DeJong, 2016, p. 9).

In addition, «democracy offers the potential for higher involvement, autonomy, and equality and a healthy democracy avoids favouritism, cronyism, and corruption». (*lvi*)

This range of values represents a factor of innovation in the current panorama where humanistic management is an early element. In many cases, today's organizations are still conceived in a hierarchical way and this is the reason why the relationships within them are founded on a power system and not on a human-centred view.

At this point, how can we recognize a hierarchical organization?

Is it completely necessary to overcome the idea of hierarchy in the enterprises or is it possible to confirm any aspects of it?

## **2.1 Organizational behavior: hierarchy without discrimination**

Hierarchy is an asymmetrical system that involves a supremacy relationship and a pyramidal subordination. Hierarchical organizations that strictly adopt this concept can damage the safety of human interactions.

As we saw in the first chapter, hierarchy is usually related to the idea that human beings were born as static and fixed type of people with different levels of dignity, (social status).

According to this view, the statement is enough to justify different levels of treatment of people. If in the past being rich meant occupying the highest rank of the society, and being poor meant occupying the lowest rank of it, today, a static and hierarchical organization which is based on this idea of richness and poorness,

can raise barriers among the different roles that men play in it and also among the people.

For example, we can think about the role of an entrepreneur, a general manager, an account manager, an HR manager, a technician, a customer etc. and we can see that each one of them depends on different levels on knowledge and skills acquired during the life and the career. Anyway, these differences do not justify a difference in the treatment of workers. What we know today is the result of lots of factors that played a crucial role in our existence, first of all our studies and training processes that are linked to the choices we did in the past and to what we wanted to become according to our inclination and interests. We were sure and aware of which kind of career we wanted to start in order to become the people we are today. This rational awareness is the proof that human beings are “thinking beings” and they can not be reduced to means for economical purposes.

In this way, we can say that each level of acquired knowledge corresponds to a role that a man can play in a company: but the meaning of “roles” is different from the one of “kinds of person”.

Each company presents a variety of roles (general manager, HR manager, account manager...) associated with different “kinds of people” (different because of the gender, the age, the skills, the knowledge) but such the fact to be a “person” entails that workers are ending in themselves and deserve the same respect each other.

Considering this distinction between the “role” that you can cover in a company and the “kind of person” that you are, we can admit that a hierarchical point of view is natural and obvious if we look at the “roles”, but it is reluctant when it is based on the discrimination among kinds of person, because all human beings are equal, even in their differences.

I am trying to support the idea that it is possible to talk about “hierarchy without discrimination”. The theory of “workplace democracy” that we saw in the previous paragraph, is the proof of it.

The basis of workplace democracy is power distribution. Instead of high-level managers taking key decisions about how the organization is managed and structured, a workplace democracy distributes power across the company. Via

internal voice mechanisms and elections, employees can exercise this power. Managers are elected by the employees, and act as representatives rather than as traditional managers. Hence, they should act in the interests of the employees and other stakeholders, rather than only representing the interests of higher-level management or investors. When employees have a direct influence and interest in participating in the organization, they are more likely to act responsibly. Therefore, human dignity is better sustained in an organizational form where its members perceive a direct responsibility of their acts towards the outcomes. (*Ibidem*, p. 10)

Always sharing the Bal and DeJong point of view, I can add that

the above discussed redistribution of power associated with workplace democracy creates fairer, clearer, and more equitable relationships amongst stakeholders and, since human dignity is also about changing relationships towards these ends, workplace democracy and human dignity are aligned. Research supports this notion, as it has shown that when people within the organization trust each other due to strong relational ties, employees will be more committed to the organization, and more willing to contribute in a positive way. (Rousseau, 2012)

A company democratically oriented also promotes the responsibility of everyone as member of the organizations. «More specifically, there are at least eight other reasons why workplace democracy fits with a human dignity principle of organizations» (Sauer Jr., 2009).

- 1) Democracies tend to focus on participation of employees within the organization;
- 2) Democracies stress the value of protecting employees and their rights;
- 3) Democracies involve workers in the process of working and organizing supporting their voluntary choices;
- 4) Democracies enable workers to promote the “greater good” and to vote for abolishment of practices that do not fit the values of the people;
- 5) Workplace democracy makes workers more autonomous;
- 6) Democracies are focused on learning and on training process;
- 7) Democratic companies support cooperation rather than competition;
- 8) Democracies are also responsible towards the surrounding environment.

In the same way, Andrew Sayer, even if he does not speak about “workplace dignity”, also argues, in “*Dignity at work: Broadening the Agenda*”, some ways in which dignity at work can be supported.

According to his point of view, dignity might be maintained in an organizational context when it is related to the values of *autonomy, dependence, seriousness* and *trust*.

«In the realm of ends everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalence, has a dignity» (Kant). «To be dignified or have dignity is first to be in control of oneself, competently and appropriately exercising one's powers. Most obviously, then, dignity is about self-command, and autonomy» (Sayer, 2007, p. 568).

According to what we said before, autonomy means making good choices for one's own training, career and growth and then working in a company following his own habit (to quote Aristotle nomenclature).

This is possible in a democratically oriented company that motivates all the workers to do their best in order to achieve their flowering and making profit, as well.

The company is the place where the goal of each activity is to reach the wellbeing of all collaborators as people and of the whole firm as a community.

The person as a member of this community exemplifies her deeply social being and in this sense her autonomy is in tension with the concepts of heteronomy and respect since people in a company are also dependent on each other.

Both heteronomy and respect are connected to the topic of seriousness which says to us about the kind of relationship that workers can experience in a company.

Someone who is never serious lacks dignity; if they are serious but are never taken seriously by others, it is hard for them to maintain their dignity and self-respect. This includes being able to speak out, to be listened to and have their views taken seriously. It is important both for individuals' self-respect and welfare and for the success of organizations that disagreements and criticisms can be aired. An important aspect of dignity is being allowed to disagree (respectfully) with others without this undermining our position or inviting contempt from others. Allowing people to lose arguments or admit mistakes without loss of face or humiliation (i.e. allowing them to maintain their dignity) is important both for morale and for organizational learning. (*Ibidem*, p. 569)

According to these words, seriousness is also a kind of self-control and composure that implies respect for our opinions but also for the other ones. We could say that

respect is a matter of relation and distance of self to others but also a matter of relation of the self to self.

The self-awareness, the awareness to be closely related to the other collaborators and the acceptance of this status of sociability, makes the worker sure about the trust that must underpin his interaction with the others.

As a matter of fact, employment is not merely a contractual matter, and as we saw above when we quoted Rousseau, when workers trust each other, they can be also more willing to contribute in a positive way to the company success and growth.

To conclude, the eight points that we argued before and the four values of autonomy, dependence, seriousness and trust describe an economical behavior observant to the moral prescriptions that inform the aforesaid behavior.

Having said that, a humanistic paradigm, centered on the idea of human dignity and also on the topic of a “hierarchical organizational system without discrimination”, could be the real way to make «the study and practice of firms more accurate, real, ethical and possibly humane» (Pirson, 2015, p. 3).



## **CHAPTER III**

### **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ITS LINK WITH DIGNITY IN AN AGEING SOCIETY**

#### **1. Corporate Social Responsibility: the state of art**

In this third chapter, I want to discuss the role that human dignity plays in the enterprises as a value to promote active ageing.

As a matter of fact, one of the most pressing challenges for today's organization is demographic ageing. The European population, and more in general, the world population, is ageing: on one side, this shows that length and quality of life are increased in number but on the other side, this phenomenon can lead to determining a higher number of pensioners and an increase in the unemployment rate.

Hence, demographic change is a crucial issue for companies and it is linked to their engagement to maintain longer and active in employment older workers.

So far, we have talked about human dignity and its value in the workplace and it should be almost obvious that it is meaningful to carry out the fulfillment and wellbeing of the workers. In particular, now, according to the idea of demographic ageing, as we have just said, the main proposal of this section is showing that human dignity is one of the most important features of Corporate Social Responsibility since it enables the enterprises to promote active ageing.

First, organizations must pay attention to older workers' needs that are different from those of young people.

According to the European Union the number of people who are more than 50 is steadily increasing and now represents the 20% of the population. It is also expected that the number of workers over 50-60 will increase of 2 million per year and, according to Eurostat, this could result in a lack of strength by 15% in 2020, amounting to 35 million of unemployed workers.

The legislative reforms are answering this problem moving the line of retirement and this is the reason why companies will be obliged to keep people active as long as possible.

The ageing workforce is usually seen as a factor of diversity and potential discrimination but a socially responsible enterprise should foster and endorse a new vision of ageing, by considering the possibility of a longer working life and converting the current challenge of ageing population into an opportunity. According to this, we will discuss the useful practices and tools which enable older workers to remain active at work and share their skills and knowledge.

Furthermore, since the workforce is ageing and young people are hiring, today's organizations are communities for all ages. Different ages within an enterprise entail

creating and strengthening intergenerational ties between the young and old so that they become a common force of social experimentation and cooperative environments, open to dialogue with differences, capable of taking care each other and of articulating the multiplicity of languages and cultures that make up the cultural and social heritage of the community. (Rivista Formazione Lavoro Persona, 2014, p. 64)

In such an environment, the biggest challenge is just taking care of all workers, regardless of the ages.

The idea of human dignity as inner value of the person could help the organizations to combine young and old workforce, thus overpassing the possible intergenerational conflict. As a matter of fact, human dignity is the underpinning of the ethics of work and the ethical idea of work provides the awareness that workplace is one of the areas where human beings can flourish whether young or old, because age cannot be a factor of discrimination. Rather, we will see, age is a factor of value and competitiveness.

Having said that, a company which wants to be "socially responsible", must pay attention to many issues and active ageing is one of them.

What is the meaning of Corporate Social Responsibility? Which are the values and the mission of a socially responsible enterprise? How can it be responsible for the surrounding society, promote the environment and contribute to its development?

In the current landscape, there are mostly two different ideas about the aim of a responsible enterprise. One is connected to the topic of efficiency and the other one to the opinion that a balance between efficiency and fairness is welcomed.

According to the first point of view, the reasons for efficiency are the only ones useful for the success of a company, because they suppose that the most important thing is producing wealth and doing profit for shareholders.

On the contrary, the idea of a balance between efficiency and fairness takes into account the ethical-social reasons, as well. The interests of a socially responsible enterprise go beyond the mere idea of profit for some shareholders and involve the whole society. In that sense, according to Sen, a socially responsible enterprise is a public good that also thinks about stakeholder's interests. «The overall success of a modern enterprise is, in a very real sense, a public good [...] from which all benefit, to which all contribute, and which is not parceled out in little boxes of person-specific rewards strictly linked with each person's respective contribution» (Sen, 1997)

Thus, a socially responsible enterprise should not only look at profit maximization «and the central question is [...] whether good corporate policy can encourage and nourish individual growth by fostering opportunities for every employee to develop his/her own talents and potential» (Giovanola, 2015, p. 2).

Before proving the last statement, we have to clarify the meaning of “socially responsible enterprise”.

The word "responsibility" comes from the Latin language and more specifically from the verb "responderere". It refers to people's ability to foresee the consequences of their actions, the affection to the future and their value, whether the actions are positive or negative in advance. In other words, the responsibility is a relational good, a social value: the most important value for a company oriented to the welfare of society and to the workers' wellbeing.

Around the 30s-50s of the twentieth century in the USA, the social responsibility became an important topic to deepen and the first currents of thought considered responsibility as a duty of a single manager to carry out his tasks in order to achieve both quantitative and qualitative results.

In 1960, Keith Davis suggested that social responsibility should refer to businesses' decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic or technical interest. At about the same time, Eells and Walton (1961) argued that CSR refers to the «problems that arise when corporate enterprise

casts its shadow on the social scene, and ethical principles that ought to govern the relationship between the corporation and society» (Eells & Walton, 1961, pp. 39-40).

Then, around '70s, when the responsibility became the ethical foundation of business life, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility started to definitely refer not only to life in the enterprises but also to their respect for the surrounding society.

According to this, R. Edward Freeman published the book "Strategic Management: a stakeholder approach" about the stakeholder theory in 1984.

This is a theory of all organizational management and business ethics that addresses the existence of lots of stakeholders, many actors relating to the company and affecting its management (shareholders, employees, customers and suppliers and even institutions, organizations and so on).

By addressing social responsibility, enterprises can build long-term employee, consumer and citizen trust as a basis for sustainable business models. The level of trust is very important because it can help to create an environment in which enterprises can innovate and grow. Business are not isolated: they operate on a global scale where the question of trust is essential (Springer, Huber, Nerudova, Rozmahel, 2015, p. 79).

In the current landscape, the simple definition of CSR is "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society".

The European Commission's new strategy on CSR, part of a package of measurements on responsible business, aims at helping enterprises achieve their potential in terms of creating wealth, jobs and innovative solutions to the many challenges facing European society. It sets out how enterprises can benefit from CSR as well as contributing to a society as a whole by taking greater steps to meet their social responsibility.

First, we have to suggest that CSR is constituted by three kinds of social responsibilities linked to some shared and recognized rules. They are: economic, legal, ethical. Then, there is another social responsibility, the philanthropic one, but it is discretionary and does not depend on fixed rules.

Historically, business organizations were created as economic entities designed to provide goods and services to societal members. The profit motive was established

as the primary incentive for entrepreneurship. Before it was anything else, the business organization was the basic economic unit in our society. As such, its principal role was to produce goods and services that consumers needed and wanted and to make an acceptable profit in the process. (Carroll, 1991, pp. 40-41)

The economic components or responsibilities of Corporate Social Responsibility regard the fact of performing in a manner consistent with maximizing earnings per share. Then, it is necessary to be committed to being profitable as possible, to maintain a strong competitive position and a high level of operating efficiency and it is important that a successful firm be defined as one that is consistently profitable.

The economic components are not sufficient, thus we introduced also the legal ones.

Society has not only sanctioned business to operate according to the profit motive; at the same time business is expected to comply with the laws and regulations promulgated by federal, state, and local governments as the ground rules under which business must operate. As a partial fulfilment of the "social contract" between business and society, firms are expected to pursue their economic missions within the framework of the law. Legal responsibilities reflect a view of "codified ethics" in the sense that they embody basic notions of fair operations as established by our lawmakers. (Ivi)

Then, regarding the ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, the Corporate Social Responsibility starts to involve those standards, norms, or expectations that reflect a concern for what consumers, employees, shareholders, and the community regard as fair, just, or in keeping with the respect or protection of stakeholders' moral rights.

In one sense, changing ethics or values precede the establishment of law because they become the driving force behind the very creation of laws or regulations. For example, the environmental, civil rights, and consumer movements reflected basic alterations in societal values and thus may be seen as ethical bellwethers foreshadowing and resulting in the later legislation. In another sense, ethical responsibilities may be seen as embracing newly emerging values and norms society expects business to meet, even though such values and norms may reflect a higher standard of performance than that currently required by law. (Ivi)

According to these responsibilities, we have to add that a socially responsible enterprise should perform in a manner consistent with expectations of societal mores and ethical norms, recognize and respect new or evolving ethical/moral norms adopted by society. When it happens, it is due to the fact that corporate

integrity and ethical behaviour go beyond mere compliance with laws and regulations.

As concerns the last responsibilities, «it would be argued here that philanthropy is highly desired and prized but actually less important than the other three categories of social responsibility. In a sense, philanthropy is icing on the cake» (*Ibidem*, p. 42). Philanthropy is more discretionary or voluntary on the part of businesses even though there is always the societal expectation that businesses provide it. As a matter of fact,

Philanthropy encompasses those corporate actions that are in response to society's expectation that businesses be good corporate citizens. This includes actively engaging in acts or programs to promote human welfare or goodwill. Examples of philanthropy include business contributions of financial resources or executive time, such as contributions to the arts, education, or the community [...]. Communities desire firms to contribute their money, facilities, and employee time to humanitarian programs or purposes, but they do not regard the firms as unethical if they do not provide the desired level. (*Ivi*)

In other words, it is important to perform in a manner consistent with the philanthropic and charitable expectations of society like, for example, assisting the fine and performing arts. It could be also important that managers and employees participate to voluntary and charitable activities within their local communities. In addition, it can happen that a philanthropic enterprise aids private and public educational institutions or voluntarily assists those projects that enhance a community's "quality of life" but all these things are not mandatory. The fact to be a philanthropic enterprise depends on its choice and it is not necessary to be "socially responsible".

Philanthropy is just one more feature of a responsible enterprise which, showing its economic, legal and ethical behaviours, proves to be already a good corporate community. It means that it is already contributing resources to the community and improving quality of life, that is the purpose of a socially responsible enterprise.

Having said that, now it is important to identify the ethical aspects of a company, because in addition to the economic and legal ones that I mentioned above, the ethical code is another crucial point to define its social purpose and its responsibility.

As a matter of fact, the enterprises have a public purpose and it follows that they must take care of the ethical values which justify the need to make a profit but respecting the idea of a human centred workplace.

The ethical foundation of action guarantees right behaviours and it is the safe ground of a socially responsible and sustainable enterprise.

In the next paragraph, the idea of responsibility connected to that of sustainability is going to be central; for this reason, I am going to analyse this relationship in the light of those ethical values that are functional to talk about Corporate Social Responsibility.

## **2. Responsibility and sustainable careers**

Responsibility and sustainability are two closely related social dimensions. Sustainability is a relational value as responsibility: it could be considered as the daily commitment of an enterprise to spread behaviours and good practices that encourage the conscious and responsible use of resources for the development of economy and society. Social sustainability considers how organizational activities affect people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, that is linked to the idea of human flourishing and economic wealth and profit.

The European Commission suggests to enterprises considering these topics as it is very important to guarantee their development and a good feature for the surrounding society.

In addition, today an enterprise can be conceived as even more responsible and sustainable if it responds to the challenges and needs of an ageing population. Therefore, deepening issues such as employability, demographic changes and active ageing is becoming essential.

Anyway, responsibility and sustainability are features of those organizations that are "moral communities". Their morality can be explained in the light of the neo-Aristotelian ethics of the enterprise which is based on four items:

- *Community*. Each company must be recognized like a community that is greater than people who work within it. It helps to define workers' identity and values;

- *Excellence*. It means the main purpose that a company must achieve with its activities and it also refers to the workers' behaviours and their sense of satisfaction after doing something valuable for them, the community and the surrounding environment.
- *Membership*. It depends on how much the worker's values are identified with those of the company and this shows that workers' identity is strictly connected to company's identity. The individual identity is always contextual and never absolute and that is because of the role that each worker occupies at work. Through the role, it is possible to establish regulatory requirements and therefore the models of excellence for each person who belongs to the company-community.
- *Holism*. The whole is greater than its parts. The enterprise is something bigger than a sum of individualities. It needs to overcome the contrast among people, the other one and me. As a matter of fact, it needs to recognize that the enterprises are public goods, social and cooperative practices oriented to common ends. «They are supported by trustful relationships which overpass individual ends» (Sacconi, 2005, p. 282).

A socially and sustainable responsible enterprise, even if in its totality is greater than the sum of the individualities, must pay attention to each of its workers. It is very important that the enterprise shows the willingness to develop the virtues of everyone useful to reach a social and shared value. Producing goods and services for the trade is the main purpose of an enterprise and it can be obtained thanks to a management which takes care of the workers, their careers and development of their skills and virtues. According to this, we can move on with the explanation of the proper meaning of sustainability.

In 1972, an important definition of sustainability was introduced by the United Nations (NS) during a conference on the human environment. The UN defined sustainability as «a general world-view according to which people should strive to fulfil their needs in a manner such that the ability of future generations to fulfil their needs is not endangered» (Docherty, Kira & Shani 2009, p. 3). And definitely people can fulfil their needs and those of society only if the enterprise where they



work is interested in developing their virtues and preserving their careers. At the same time, such a way of acting is farsighted because helping today workers means to create the right assumptions of a good environment where the future generations will work, as well.

During the 1980s, we subsequently witnessed a paradigm shift from a focus on the concept of development toward the concept of “sustainable development”, defined as «development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs» (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992).

Today, more specifically, Pfeffer refers to human sustainability in the following way

Just as physical sustainability considers the consequences of organizational activity for material, physical resources; social sustainability might consider how organizational activities affect people’s physical and mental health and well-being – the stress of the work practices on the human system» (Pfeffer, 2010, p. 35).

A relevant definition in this regard was also provided by Carl Holling who defined human sustainability as «the capacity to create, test and maintain adaptive capability» (Holling, 2001, p. 390). «Holling’s definition suggests an important responsibility of the workers (or individual employee) in creating, testing and maintaining his or her own work capacity or ability» (De Lange et al., 2015, p. 52). Even the International Labour Organization defines sustainability as decent work that:

involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. (ILO, 2013, p. 6)

According to what we have just said and to Bal, we can summarize that «sustainability of contemporary careers over the life course implies a different perspective on how employees currently develop their careers. [...] Sustainability can be defined as a long-term oriented approach of designing policies and practices regarding careers» (Bal, 2015, p. 2).

In addition, when we talk about careers, we have to distinguish two parts of it:

on the one hand, a person can work within an occupation or an organization, and build a career within that occupation. In this sense, career refers to the development within an occupation, such as a PhD-student who becomes assistant professor, associate and subsequently full professor. In this meaning career refers to the development of a person within an occupation. On the other hand, career refers to the total period a person spends from graduating from education until full retirement from the labor force. In this meaning, career entails all the decisions a person makes during the working life, for instance to choose a certain occupation, to go back to school, and retrain, to engage in volunteer work or eldercare. (*Ibidem*, p. 3)

Thus, career is either the personal and professional development of a person within a role in a company or the training process of that person in his lifespan.

At this point, we need to argue how careers can be sustainably operational in the workplace.

Following Bal's point of view, there are four key dimensions that could be useful to operationalize the concept of sustainability at work. They are: resource-based dimension, priority and fairness, progress and system-based aspects that highlight the role and interconnectedness of multiple actors.

According to the first point, sustainability is a «process of preservation, as well as regeneration of resources that states that no generation (e.g., the group of older workers) be allowed to consume all (e.g., job related) resources at the cost of other generations (e.g., young workers)» (De Lange, Kooij & Van der Heijden 2015, p. 54).

Priority and fairness refer to the disposition to protect the needs of all people because all people need to be engaged in a decent work.

The third key dimension, that is progress, refers

to the importance of social and technological innovations in relation to the content and type of work (e.g., flexible work), as well as in skills and personal resources of workers (e.g., changing digital skills and level of available knowledge, and future work-related requirements) across time. That is to say, the required innovations make long-term views and proactive investigations regarding the need to focus on stability versus change across time necessary to capture the sustainability part of the (continuously changing) work environment and its included workers. Moreover, stability in itself, being an indicator of maintenance (e.g., stable safe work, stable mental health of workers), has become an important new topic or process in the search for sustainability across time, and should therefore be investigated separately instead of controlled for. (*Ibidem*, p. 55)

Finally, the fourth dimension involves «individual workers, employers, organization, and other stakeholders, as well as the role and interconnectedness with the macro-context» (Docherty et al., 2009).

All these dimensions are related to the contextual feature of the workers during their careers. This relational value is the sustainability which we can also call work ability. It «expresses the extent to which an employee is capable of working in the present and in the near future, taking his or her own physical and mental resources, as well as the requested level of work demands, into account» (Ilmarinen, 2001; Ilmarinen & Tuomi, 1992). This concept includes questions measuring one's abilities and motivation to work, «but also includes an assessment of the psychological nature of work» (Ilmarinen, 2006).

The topic of work ability was introduced by Juhani Ilmarinen of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, in Finland around 1980s and its main aim is measuring human ability to work during the ageing process (Finland is one of the country where the percentage of older workers is higher). After some experiments in different companies, lots of workers were noticed to be maintaining the work ability, but a smaller percentage of them showed a dramatic decline. For that reason, the Finnish Institute agreed that the maintenance of the work ability during the ageing process was its main purpose.

According to this, Finland was one of the first countries to develop active ageing policies in order to safeguard older workers' ability and keep them active as long as possible.

## **2.1 The enterprise as a social actor that supports an ageing population in our society**

The enhancement of the ageing workforce is an important aspect of human resources management within a socially responsible enterprise and this is the reason why now we want to focus on the issue concerning the elderly in the final part of their work placement. It is necessary to address our studies around their life in the delicate moment of transition from work to retirement, even considering the possibility of a longer working life. In a situation where the legislative reforms move the line of retirement, companies, we saw, will be obliged to keep people active as long as possible. It is therefore necessary to address the issue of longer

working life, seeking practical solutions through training policies, retraining and interventions on work. That is why the same scientific research should not be limited to the Italian landscape, but it must look beyond the boundaries, especially to countries that have shown they can address these problems by finding suitable solutions.

Older workers are often forced to a premature exit from the labour market despite of their real capabilities and this situation of "labour shortage" can be dramatic. It also determined a waste of human capital that is a problem for the whole country. A company which wishes to be socially responsible must take responsibility for all the problems connected with this situation, be sensitive to the issue and begin a conscious age policy. This means paying attention to the age factor, developing a set of best practices «that facilitate active ageing in order to reach the EU targets for employment of older workers» (Malpede, Villosio, 2009, p. 8. My translation). They are the custodians of knowledge which must be protected and handed down. The knowledge acquired by the older workers cannot even be replaced by new technology skills. In a welfare system, everyday oriented to use technologies as an instrument of mediation, the qualifications, skills, ideas of older workers are wrongly knocked out: the dominant frenzy in the today workplaces should instead be mitigated by the "slow down" capacity to reflect before action.

The desire to appear the best organization should be replaced by the awareness that it is the best not so much in terms of quantitative success but qualitative success. Only a responsible enterprise can win "the appeal of appearance": the ability to think, the strong sense of responsibility, seriousness, commitment and diligence are all features that seniors have developed in different contexts and working scenarios but as they constitute a valuable and indispensable asset, they should be transferred to young people. Knowledge communication from senior workers to younger ones, dialogue, intergenerational exchange are supported in an organization that has the ability to promote the workers welfare and improve relationships in the employment context that are workplace challenges.

In the era of knowledge economy, where intangible and immaterial play an essential role, the experience, the wisdom and the skills of senior workers can be

really great sources of innovation if they are made available to the younger generation and combined with their energy, curiosity and the desire of learning. Therefore, an economy that wants to be more competitive and dynamic, needs to promote a real fight against the social exclusion of seniors and to adopt programs related to education and training throughout life, so that they can always stay active. This is the only way that can promote solidarity among generations. It is an objective that the European Union has sanctioned with Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty of 1992: «the Union shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection of the rights of the child [...]». This Article is better understood if it is related to Article 2 which sets out the values on which the Union is based, namely respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and human rights. It is very important to remember these principles, especially to counter age discrimination in the labour market; then, when the older workers are encouraged to remain active, you need to create employment opportunities for this real purpose. To ensure that employment opportunities are grasped in all their innovative capacity is apt to maintain, develop and improve the skills and competencies of older workers who are particularly vulnerable to economic restructuring, and this promotes a program for lifelong skills development.

It must act on two levels:

- a) Business: enterprise should have the awareness of seniors' added value in order to prepare the procedures to maintain his knowledge within the company. Anticipate the risk of experience dispersion;
- b) Subjective: stimulating the role of experience, enhancing the skills of older workers in order to create a collaborative spirit and not a competitive one with the youngest. (Malpede, Villosio, 2009, p. 47. My translation).

According to this, companies must rethink the traditional management policies and human resources development. It is important to do this kind of human resources management renovation not only because of the demographic ageing but also because of workplace diversity in today's organizations.

Workplace diversity is high on the agendas of human resource (HR) departments and managers. With growing gender, age, and ethnic diversity in the workplace, organizations have to adjust their practices. Because diversity implies that people are different from each other, this also means that people have more diverse needs in relation to what their organization offers them, including their career development. (Gubler, Arnold & Coombs, 2014)

For this reason, we wonder which are the ways to handle diversity at work always in respecting of human dignity.

The “multiple” enterprise is now a reality and human resource management must evolve.

Diversity management is the answer to pluralism, it is the practice that allows the acceptance and valorisation of the differences. The multiple enterprise does not fear the "different" person, on the contrary, it enhances and creates the assumptions so that the synergy of diversity is created.

The value of diversity is linked to the personal attributes of each and the respect of human dignity in the enterprises does not occur if all people get equal by denying the differences. Rather, these should be recognized and valued in order to draw from each of them the value of uniqueness. The organizations, in this context, are called upon to acquire the new awareness that the market's multiplicity and the workforce impose to analyse the needs of each. Managers are therefore invited to acquire new skills to manage diversity because diversity is among people and it is the ground of the enterprises.

Starting from this assumption, the enterprises must rethink human resources management in a conscious manner by assuming diversity management as a tool to promote diversity and overcome discrimination.

Diversity Management is a corporate process which aims at valorising and fully utilizing the unique contribution that each subject can make to achieve business goals.

Multicultural and multi-ethnic companies are both in a critical and in a privileged situation. Criticism is due to its internal complexity and the privilege is such that this complexity is a kind of richness. We mean that such companies are bearers of differentiated and integrated resources able to read the heterogeneity and multiplicity of target markets. Each worker depending on his background and skills

can make an important contribution to business goals and diversity management is aimed at enhancing the differences carried by everyone.

According to Loden, we can distinguish two dimensions of diversity: the primary and the secondary one.

The primary dimension can be found in those differences that refer to elements such as age, gender, ethnic origin, mental competence / characteristics, which are part of innate individual inheritance and that cannot be changed.

The secondary dimension is related to those elements acquired over time such as, for example, the educational background, the family situation, geographical location, income, religion, and professional experience.

By saying, what are the factors that Diversity Management must consider in order to enhance the differences?

Trikey with his studies has tried to answer the question, suggesting three factors:

- *Multicultural mentality* and therefore a *new thinking* (willingness to extend one's own knowledge in very different fields from our professional area; ability to consider the various aspects of reality according to different perspectives); *welcoming strangers* (willingness to trust the others and establish relationships with people who have experiences, perceptions and values different from ours); *acceptance* (tolerance); *flexible judgment* (avoid stereotypes); *valuing differences* (adaptation to work with people with different backgrounds).
- *Multicultural skills* as an advanced communication ability. It is related to *perceptivity* (make sure that all people to whom communication is directed, fully understanding the meaning of the message being transmitted), *listening ability* (let the interlocutor understand that he is understood); *transparency* (be able to communicate clearly and explicitly).
- *Multicultural leadership skills*: it is characterized by two areas of competence. *Ability to influence* (if you want to handle a multicultural environment you need to know which is the style of communication of the workers). *Ability to find synergistic solutions* (take care of the

understanding and interpreting the various points of views regarding different issues) (Trikey, 2004. My translation).

We are trying to understand what taking charge of the complexity at work might mean.

The respect of diversity in the enterprises shows that all workers have the same importance and this assumption comes from the idea that they are equal in dignity, as we saw in the previous chapters.

According to the age, diversity management practices take into account the psychological contracts which «describe the exchange relationships between employees and organizations» (Bal, 2015, p. 1). During the work career, this relationship can change because many different features (like skills and knowledge acquired, age, social and contextual dynamics in and outside the companies) affect it and they also tend to change in the lifespan.

In particular, workers' performance is closely related to ageing: we will see in which way and we will try to show how age-related changes can strengthen or weaken the effects of behaviour on important work outcomes.

Age in the work has a specific role, therefore it is obvious that we must understand in which sense, deepening the ways to motivate and support the employees during their lifetime. According to the topic of older workers, there are some features, as proactivity, that «can contribute to successful aging at work» (Zacher, 2015).

First of all, for proactivity we mean different traits and behavioural concepts.

On the one hand, «employees with a proactive personality are characterized by a relatively stable tendency to initiate change in their work environment, unconstrained by situational forces» (Bateman & Crant, 1993). On the other hand, «proactive behavior has been defined as employees' active, self-directed, and future-focused behavior with the goal of changing and improving their work environment or themselves» (Bindl & Parker, 2011; Grant & Ashford, 2008). «Proactive behavior is typically conceived as the opposite of reactivity or being passive when changes occur; yet it is not necessarily the opposite of the concept of individual adaptability, which involves actively adjusting to internal and external changes» (Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007). In other words, proactivity means taking



charge, expressing voice job crafting and «negotiating idiosyncratic employment I-deals» (Rousseau, Ho & Greenberg, 2006). Anyway, a proactive behaviour results in important individual and organizational outcomes and if in the current panorama most thinkers state that proactivity decreases with ageing, we will propose a review of empirical studies on age and proactivity at work.

As a matter of fact, as Zacher and Kooij suggest referring to other studies

employees' proactive personality may translate into different training- and career-related attitudes and behaviors depending on age. For instance, young employees with a proactive personality may be more likely to strive for career advancement, whereas proactive older employees may be more interested in engaging in organizational citizenship or mentoring behaviors (Bertolino, Truxillo & Fraccaroli 2011).

In addition, Zacher, to prove the previous idea, «examined interactive effects of age, proactive personality, and occupational future time perspective on job search intensity in a sample of 182 job seekers between 43 and 77 years in Australia» (Zacher & Kooij, in press) and the results showed that age was negatively related to job search intensity but not significantly related to proactive personality. If on the one hand, the age could be closely related to a functional decline that involves sensory and perceptual processes, cognitive and emotional abilities, personality and motivation, on the other hand, with age, crystallized cognitive abilities (e.g., general knowledge, experiential judgment), certain personality traits (i.e., conscientiousness, emotional stability, and social dominance), and socioemotional abilities (e.g., emotion regulation) tend to improve. Moreover, research on work motives found that growth and extrinsic motives (e.g., challenging work, advancement, compensation) decrease, whereas intrinsic motives (e.g., autonomy, accomplishment, use of skills, helping people, and contributing to society) increase with age.

The theoretical framework of the previous statements is the *lifespan development perspective* that investigates «constancy and change in behavior throughout the life course» (Baltes, 1987, p. 611). The aim of this theoretical orientation is to acquire knowledge about general principles of lifespan development, about differences and similarities among individuals in

development, and about intraindividual plasticity or modifiability of development (Baltes, Reese & Lipsitt, 1980).

The ageing workforce asks the organizations to offer training programs in order to help older employees maintaining and improving their abilities, skills and knowledge but the empirical evidence shows that older workers are always less involved in such programs. As a matter of fact, it is shared the idea that there is no need training and development investments for workers near retirement. This belief relates to the stereotype that older workers are less motivated and able to learn and less willing to understand the new labour market with its technological progress. Therefore, if the enterprises are convinced that older workers are less performing than young people, this lack of trust inhibits them; consequently, they start to have some problems to learn because they think they are not able to reach good results and success.

Some works and experiments, as Callahan, Kiker and Cross tell us, show that a program of training investments taking care of the human needs during the lifespan development, could help to keep older workers longer and motivated at work.

Ford and Orel suggest us some advices to improve practices to manage the old workforce:

1. Adopting training programs which stimulate the problem solving;
2. Assuring people the possibility to apply their new knowledge and skills after training;
3. Using training practices suitable for old people;
4. Foreseeing that the employees need time to understand and then to use the new practices of the lifespan development perspective;
5. Appreciating older workers and offering them possibilities of improvement.

It is clear that during life the process of learning changes and the current enterprises must act according to that situation because the main space where employees can learn is *on the job*.

Based on the lifespan development and work and ageing literatures, Kooij et al. coined three types of job crafting that may be relevant for older employees.

First, accommodative crafting refers to job crafting activities that help to compensate for age-related limitations at work (e.g., delegation of certain tasks to others). Second, developmental crafting refers to behaviors that aim to optimize personal and professional growth at work, for instance by acquiring new knowledge and skills. Finally, utilization crafting comprises the exploitation of existing knowledge and skills in an improved way, for instance by selecting only attainable work goals and by focusing on tasks that require readily available yet so far unused resources. (Kooij et al., 2015)

Following the point of view of other experts, as Bal and Jansen, there are further factors which support the ageing workforce. We mean flexibility and development.

Negotiating flexibility positively predicts «older employees' motivation to continue working beyond traditional retirement age» (Zacher & Kooij, in press) because thanks to flexibility the enterprises can fit with the form, frequency, intended target, timing, and tactics of proactive behaviour that change with age.

We start with the research by Ng and Feldman,

who categorized age-related person characteristics that can influence work behavior into five groups: cognitive abilities, personality characteristics, goal orientations, emotional abilities and experiences, and physical abilities and health (Figure 2). In addition, we adapt the proactive behavior dimensions suggested by Grant and Ashford (2008): form, intended target, frequency, timing, and tactics (*Ibidem*, p.23).

When employees

enter the final phase of their working lives, they can proactively use their increased experiential knowledge, judgment skills, emotional abilities, and social networks to compensate for age-related decreases in fluid cognitive abilities, physical health, and occupational future time perspective. Such compensatory efforts can help them maintain high levels of work motivation, performance, and occupational well-being (Charles & Carstensen 2010; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004).

Moreover,

socioemotional selectivity theory and the strength and vulnerability integration model suggest that older employees have stronger preferences for emotionally positive and meaningful experiences than younger employees. Consistent with these assumptions, meta-analytic research shows that older employees hold more

favorable attitudes toward their work tasks, colleagues and supervisors, and the organization (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

Their desire is to leave a positive lasting legacy; thus, they show to be ready to answer the last challenges at work.

We propose that in the final phase of their working lives, employees prioritize proactive socioemotional, compensatory, and strategic behaviors. Proactive socioemotional behaviors may include increasingly seeking interactions with familiar people at work, avoiding difficult co-workers, helping to create an emotionally positive work atmosphere, or taking on more meaningful tasks and roles, such as mentoring and organizational ambassador roles. (Calo, 2005; Tims & Bakker, 2010)

In addition, a proactive socioemotional behaviour includes «issue selling as well as acting as organizational ambassadors and effective gatekeepers for innovation and other strategically important topics» (Calo, 2005; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). «Research has shown that older adults have higher levels of emotional stability, emotion regulation abilities, social dominance, and show more positive attitudes (e.g., commitment) and behaviors (e.g., citizenship) toward their organization» (Charles & Luong, 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2008, 2010; Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006), which should enable and motivate them to show more proactive strategic behaviors.

A proactive behaviour arises in a working environment where there are the above-mentioned conditions to be proactive and stay active. This relation between workers and enterprises is called the psychological contract that we are going to deepen better in the next paragraph.

## **2.2 The psychological contract: keep older workers in employment**

The psychological contract «has been developed as a scientific construct in the early 1990s, while being introduced in the early 1960s in the research of Argyris who described it as a relationship that developed between employees and their foremen at work» (*Ibidem*, p. 2). It is a sort of mental model

about what the employee thinks the organization should do for the employee, and what the employee should do in return. These mutual obligations may have arisen from pre-employment experiences, but are also communicated via recruitment processes, communication from the organization (such as employer branding), and promises made by managers to the employee (*Ivi*).

Obviously, worker age affects the relationship between employees and foremen.

First, age can have an impact on the type of obligations employees exchange with their employers. Secondly, age can have an effect through influencing the type of psychological contract (i.e., transactional or relational) employees have with their organization. Finally, age influences the responses employees show towards breach and violation of the psychological contract (*Ibidem*, p. 1).

According to the first point, recent studies about psychological contract have showed that the older worker become the more heterogeneous group in the organizations.

Because the aging process is associated with various changes, including changes in personality, life styles, health, organizational experiences and psychosocial perceptions, it has been argued that the older people become, the more different they become from their peers. Hence, older workers will also be more different from each other and therefore also show more complex patterns in relation to work-related experiences, including psychological contract perceptions, job attitudes and job behaviors. Hence, it is important to ascertain the underlying changes that cause psychological contract perceptions and job attitudes to change with age. Therefore, theories of gerontology and development psychology shed more light on the changes that people experience when aging at work. Especially the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), and the Selective Optimization with Compensation model (SOC-model) may inform theory about aging and psychological contracts (*Ibidem*, p. 3).

In particular, the last statement tells us that SOC strategies (Selection, Optimization and Compensation) can cope with age-related losses, such as declining physical capabilities and less fluid intelligence.

SOC-strategies include Selecting a narrower range of goals one will pursue at work, Optimizing the tasks one still carries out at work, while Compensation indicates employing alternative means when one is no longer able to conduct specific tasks to carry out the job (Bal, Kooij & De Jong 2013b).

The central aim of the SOC-strategies is retaining and motivating workers of all ages but if we focus on the older workers' employment, we have to add that SOC-model must consider the individualization of career arrangements.

An individualized approach, such as through the lens of idiosyncratic deals (or I-deals), can facilitate older workers to retain work motivation and performance. However, the extent to which I-deals will benefit motivation and performance is dependent upon a range of factors, including supportive climate, psychological processes that occur within the worker, and fairness in the distribution of negotiated deals across the organization (Bal, 2015, p. 1).

One of the most important I-deals concerns arrangements targeting flexibility, «because flexibility allows older workers to negotiate an individualized relation to work, and to obtain a better balance between what they find important in work, and what they bring into their work, such as their abilities, experience, and knowledge» (*Ibidem*, p. 20).

The term flexibility has been used in lots of different fields, including organizational psychology, sociology, strategic HRM, strategy, and the careers literature. Now, thanks to these different perspectives, we can argue that the crucial idea of flexibility is related to how older workers balance work and non-work. «Flexibility HRM is defined as the opportunities organizations provide to employees to make choices regarding when and how they work» (Hill, Jacob, Shannon, Brennan, Blanchard & Martinengo 2008). Then, in line with most of research on HRM, «we distinguish the employee perceptions of availability of flexibility HRM and the use of flexibility HRM» (Casper & Harris, 2008). «On the one hand, employees may be aware that they have access to flexibility HRM, while on the other hand, they may actually use or take advantage of these practices» (Bal & De Lange, 2015, p. 129). Moreover, it is possible to distinguish an irregular flexibility from a regular shape of flexibility.

Irregular flexibility is defined as those practices aimed at facilitating the workers' needs to irregularly reduce workload over a certain period of time by practices such as unpaid leave from work to pursue something else, such as volunteer work or career breaks. Irregular flexibility is similar to accommodative practices identified in previous research such that it allows employees additional exceptional leave or exemption from working overtime (Bal, Kooij & De Jong, 2013; Kooij et al., 2013). Irregular flexibility also implies a minimal adjustment by organizations without fundamentally changing the way of working (Lee, MacDermid & Buck, 2000). Regular flexibility concerns the freedom employees have in choosing their work schedules, starting and quitting times, and flexibility in job sharing on a more daily basis (Hill et al., 2008).

According to other recent studies, irregular flexibility can be also called “quantitative flexibility” and regular flexibility can be compared to a “qualitative flexibility”. For quantitative flexibility we mean «the organizational capability to hire and fire employees easily in order to adapt to the environment» (Bal & Jansen, 2016, p. 9); for qualitative or regular flexibility, we refer to a psychological

form of flexibility. Psychological because it depends on a human disposition and is associated with the skills of employees and their freedom to manage their careers. In addition, in the current landscape, flexibility

from an employee perspective concerns the free choice of employees on deciding when, where, and how work will be conducted to meet work and personal needs. The 'when' concerns the work schedules of an employee, which can be made more flexible by allowing employees to choose when they start and stop working, which days they work, and when they take breaks. Moreover, the 'when' also refers to the opportunity for employees to work part-time or reduced hours during a particular period. The 'where' concerns the location where an employee conduct (parts of) the work, which can be from the office, from home, or from any place relevant for the employee to conduct the job. Finally, the 'how' concerns the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among employees, and may include the flexibility within teams to distribute tasks in line with workers' needs and preferences. (*Ibidem*, p. 15).

When, where, how represent two different types of flexibility: flex time and flex space.

On the one hand, workplace flexibility offers employees to adapt their working times. Adaptations of working times may occur at daily level, or may be arranged at an institutional level. Daily flexibility allows employees to choose when they start their working days and when they finish it and more elaborate forms of workplace flexibility may allow employees to abolish working times, and be evaluated solely on output and performance targets. A more institutionalized approach to flexible working schedules is the opportunity to work part-time or reduced working hours. This allows a contractual agreement where the expectation of fulltime employment ceases to exist, and where part-time employment is regarded as a 'normal' work arrangement. Part-time employment is increasing in popularity, and despite stereotypical perceptions of lower commitment, research has shown little evidence of systematic differences between part-time and fulltime workers. Furthermore, Bal and De Lange distinguished between regular and irregular flexibility, with the former referring to flexibility at a structural, daily level (such as changes in working times, and reduced working hours), and the latter referring to irregular breaks from work, such as sabbaticals or working only part of the year (e.g., seasonal work). Hence, another important aspect of flex-time is whether it is related to employees' daily work schedules, or whether it concerns the more irregular breaks in which one can pursue alternative activities (*Ibidem*, pp. 23-24).

Then, about flex space we have to say that it refers to the free possibility of older workers to decide where conducting their job.

While there may be constraints within many jobs as to where tasks are completed (e.g., a border control employee has a very specific location for execution of the job), especially white-collar office workers may become more independent of the physical locations of offices to complete their work. Discretion over where to conduct work allows them to cope with work demands through completion of work

at home, and thereby avoiding traffic jams, and possible interference with school times of children. Finally, a type of workplace flexibility for older workers concerns early retirement and bridge employment options. Early retirement options offer employees the flexibility of ceasing working lives earlier than state pension age, while bridge employment options allow them to achieve a more flexible transition from fulltime work towards fulltime retirement through for instance reduced working hours, demotion, or the opportunity to work in another career until one's retirement. Recent research also investigated how older workers have more specific wishes as to how they arrange the transition from fulltime employment into full retirement, and found that in general four ways people may want to transition from work to employment: gradually reducing working hours, not changing anything until retirement, changing the content of one's job, and changing the context of one's job (such as working for another organization; Polat, Bal & Jansen, 2012).

There is also another kind of flexibility that concerns early retirement but since the first trend of today's organizations is to move the line of retirement, we want to investigate all ways to remain longer and active in employment.

According to what we have so far said, during their careers, workers can employ alternative means to achieve goals and can change their employment contract making arrangements with their employers.

Flexibility is one of the I-Deals that a company SOC-model oriented can adopt in order to motivate older workers in remaining active as long as possible. Their retention in the workforce pertains to their motivation to work and their motivation in their work. It follows that an integrating motivational theory of job design is necessary if we want that all workers, especially the older ones, always turn in high-quality performances.

That is linked to the topic of job enrichment developed by Hackman and colleagues.

They use the following three sequence model to provide recommendation for enriching jobs: core job dimensions, psychological states and personal/work outcomes.

In the design of job, core job dimensions are the underlying characteristics of a job and how they relate to a person's job involvement, motivation, performance and satisfaction.

They are: autonomy, task variety, task identity, feedback, friendship opportunities and dealing with others.



According with the Regents of the University of California, the first six core job dimensions have the following meaning:

- Autonomy: the degree of control a person has over his or her own job actions, such as responsibility for self-governing behaviours to perform the job and the absence of a programmed sequence of activities (essentially, task depth).
- Task variety: the degree to which normal job activities require performing multiple tasks (breadth of task scope).
- Task identity: the extent to which a person has a whole task to complete, with visible starting and ending points.
- Feedback: the frequency and completeness with which the task provides information about work progress and results of personal efforts.
- Friendship opportunities: the extent to which the work setting provides opportunities for close interpersonal contacts.
- Dealing with others: the degree to which task flow or accomplishment requires interaction with others in contributory or collegian ways.

«Favourable core job dimensions create a positive motivating potential which often yields high personal and work outcomes. Job outcomes are measured by job involvement, motivation and satisfaction at the personal level, and performance at the work level» (Bloisi, Cook, Hunsaker, 2007, p. 234).

Assuring job involvement, motivation, satisfaction and performance maintains active young and old people at work. For older workers, there are special measures to keep them longer performing. We saw above some theories and practices but it is not all.

We can add, for example, that a biological approach minimizes physical strain and stress on an older worker. Ergonomics involves

making jobs physically comfortable and matched to physical strength and endurance, combined with the attention to noise, climate requirements and the design of equipment. Where jobs are well designed biologically, workers report less physical effort and fatigue, fewer aches and pains, and have fewer health complaints. The likelihood of accidents is reduced, and employees have more

favourable attitudes toward their workstation and sometimes experience slightly higher job satisfaction (*Ibidem*, p. 236).

Since the job market is changing and the old workforce is increasing in number, the right consequence, as we saw, is «the emergence of a new sub-discipline in work motivation that focuses specifically on older workers, typically between the ages of 50 and 70» (Kanfer, 2012). As a matter of fact, most studies about this subject «have examined older workers motivation in specific contexts and for specific goals, such as job performance, skill learning, retirement, bridge retirement, and post-retirement employment» (Wang & Shultz, 2010).

When the enterprises put the focus of attention on men, rethinking the traditional management policies and human resources development, they start to consider economic transactions as fundamental as human relations. «Business is to serve humanity, and not vice versa» (Dierksmeier et al., 2011, p.91) and one of the goals is answering to the ageing population.

The tools and the practices we have discussed so far are founded on the awareness that human dignity can be operational in the workplace. It means that the respect of human dignity and of the different needs of human beings as workers, can promote their flowering and wellbeing in the enterprises.

According to the trend of an ageing workforce, the companies should experience on “age conscious” policy. This approach is characterized by what we have just talked about and it is called Age Management.

### **2.3 Age management: the relationship between dignity and active ageing**

Age Management can be defined as an approach aimed at enhancing the contribution that each employee can give the enterprise, regardless of age. It is desirable to promote this approach to try to mitigate the possible negative impact of the ageing population on economic growth. This happens when the enterprises offer incentives for early exit of many older workers still "active" from the labour market. Without knowing how to manage the generational change lets the companies find themselves in really difficult situations. More specifically, from the economic point of view, a "know how" gap can be created to put them in an alarm position: they are obliged to recall workers with strategic technical skills for

business, offering them consulting contracts or project contract. On the other side, from the human resource point of view, if older workers are pushed to retirement, it follows that a big waste of human capital arises and that is to detriment of the whole country. In addition, the social consequences can be serious, too: the quality of life suffers this situation and in particular morale and esteem of the elderly are affected by the fact that they are forced to retire even at the height of their intellectual abilities.

The older work is a resource to support and enhance. Moreover, an ageing society is not necessary neither worse nor better, simply it changes and it should be treated in a different way. Therefore, just as there are gender and ethnic minorities policies, we also need Diversity Management policies whose Age Management is one of its dimensions. These theories aim to a human resource management that considers the particularities of workers to produce competitive advantages. Certainly, we must not think that to ensure equality of treatment means to deny the existence of some differences among workers of different ages: in fact, seniors have requirements, work skills and lifestyles different from other workers which must be taken into account in human resource area. It is from the recognition of the differences that the real possibility of overcoming discrimination against older workers arises.

One of the first things to check is if ageing has an impact on the personal characteristics of the workers (health, family ties...). It must be verified where it is true that older workers have a lower efficiency in the workplace, increased fatigue, a lack of willingness to accept business trip.

It is clear that every company has its precise business areas but, for example, the risk that the worker runs is that of usury, as we saw above: the simple employees are unlikely to be adequate to technological developments because in some sectors the qualifications and skills formed at school may become obsolete.

Age affects the relationship between employees and organizations and what a responsible enterprise has to do is answering its effects. We saw above that age can entail problems of health, knowledge obsolescence, request of flexibility and so on.

The answers that the organization can give older workers are different and one of the most important is *education and lifelong learning*.

We believe that education and training should not always be addresses to a homogeneous target. Instead, we can experiment with proposals and initiatives designed to accommodate the differences as a resource for dialogue and mutual enrichment, and to approach the realisation of a heterogeneous social laboratory, integrated with the complexity, along with its nuances, divergences, and peculiarities. In this way, we can generate “relational goods”, and articulate inclusive projects, that are aimed at improving the quality of life off all subjects involved. Active ageing becomes a growth strategy to develop throughout the course of life. (Rivista Formazione Lavoro Persona, 2014, pp. 64-65)

According to this, it is also important to promote "mentoring programs" where older workers can help young people in their growth and career. This solution should guarantee an age friendly working atmosphere and motivate seniors to transfer their experience and wisdom to the younger.

Welcoming people with different knowledge that are professors, managers, engineers, consultants, enriches the companies with meeting opportunities, collaborations on projects, increases its competitiveness allowing it to support innovation and contributes to the social development.

We should ensure that healthy and active workers over 65 can continue to produce but without asking for competition with young people. This is to make room for young workers, to stimulate elderly to innovate and to find new motivation and make better use of the experience accumulated. This trend could be strongly encouraged by fiscal policy and intelligent, far-sighted, courageous and highly innovative contribution.

Then, they can also help innovative forms of part-time, as well as the promotion of joint working opportunities between older and younger people with the elders who perform tutoring, guide, training in the field (job sharing).

So far, we have discussed about Corporate Social Responsibility applied to a labor market where the workforce is ageing.

Psychological Contract, SOC Strategies, flexibility, sustainability and the other HR practices that we have mentioned are the most important features of a responsible enterprise which believes in the employability of old workers up to their retirement.

These HR practices influence the retention of older workers.

The psychological contract refers to the expectations between employer and worker (expectations of support and stimulation of individual skills and professional potential) and we could say that it represents the underpinning of those strategies suggested as beneficial for older workers.

For example, as we think about the lifespan theory of Selection Optimization and Compensation (SOC) introduced above, we can argue that HR practices can be grouped in four HR bundles for ageing workers: accommodative, maintenance, utilization and development HR practices. In those bundles it is possible to do experience of flexibility and sustainability of careers.

According to different studies, we can examine the influence of age on associations between high commitment HR practices and work-related attitudes.

For Kooij it is possible to distinguish

two bundles of HR practices based on the goals to which individuals allocate their resources according to lifespan theories: a bundle of development HR practices that are related to growth and help individual workers to achieve higher levels of functioning (such as training and internal promotion), and a bundle of maintenance HR practices that help individual workers to maintain their current levels of functioning in the face of new challenges, or to return to previous levels after a loss (such practices include job security and flexible work schedules).

A third possible bundle of HR practices for older workers, not distinguished in Kooij's study, is suggested by Zaleska and De Menezes. They aimed to explore specific development HR practices for older workers, among others. Therefore, they distinguished between the more traditional upward-focused HR practices, such as formal training, challenging jobs and promotion also distinguished by Kooij, and HR practices aimed at lateral development in order to increase employability and flexibility, such as job rotation, special projects and lateral job moves. Furthermore, they argued that the latter HR practices, aimed at lateral development, are particularly important for older workers. In support of this reasoning, Shkop found that older managers continue working when they can modify their job (e.g. enrich their jobs with special assignments such as consulting or training younger employees) or change jobs. Similarly, Conway proposed that employees in the maintenance career stage are concerned not only with maintaining their self-concept, but also with maintaining interest in the job and seeking greater opportunity for involvement. We can also link this bundle of HR practices aimed at lateral development to the lifespan goals mentioned earlier. Although Baltes distinguish three life goals to which individuals allocate their resources (i.e. growth, maintenance and regulation of loss), they subdivide maintenance in maintenance and recovery: the function of maintenance, including recovery (resilience). Consequently, instead of maintaining the current level of functioning by dealing with losses (e.g. in health), we argue that HR practices aimed at lateral development help older workers to recover from a loss or to return to previous levels of

functioning after a loss, by removing job demands that have become unachievable from the job and replacing them with other demands that utilize already existing, but not yet necessarily applied, individual resources (e.g. experience). Consequently, we denote this bundle 'utilization HR practices'. A fourth possible bundle of HR practices for older workers, also not distinguished in Kooij et al.'s study, is suggested by studies examining the availability of HR policies and practices for older workers within companies. These studies have found that the most widely implemented form of HR practices for older workers are accommodative ones that typically reduce older workers' work demands, such as additional leave and demotion. These HR practices help individual workers to function adequately at lower levels of job demands, and thus help attain the lifespan goal 'regulation of loss'. (Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers, & De Lange, pp. 2198-2199).

In sum,

based on lifespan theories and earlier research, we distinguish four bundles of HR practices for aging workers: development HR practices are practices that help individual workers to reach higher levels of functioning (e.g. training); maintenance HR practices are practices that help individual workers to maintain their current levels of functioning in the face of new challenges (e.g. flexible work schedules); utilization HR practices are practices that help individual workers to return to previous levels of functioning after a loss, by removing job demands that have become unachievable for an employee from the job and replacing them with other demands that utilize already existing, but not yet necessarily applied, individual resources (e.g. lateral job movement); and accommodative HR practices are practices that organize adequate functioning at lower levels when maintenance or recovery is no longer possible (e.g. less physically demanding posts). (Ivi).

Thus, the success of active ageing at work depends on a responsible and sustainable perspective. Employees are human beings before than workers. A socially responsible enterprise recognizes this state of things because it is based on the idea that all workers are ends in themselves and not means, dignified people since their birth and then also in the workplace regardless of the age.

The HR Department in a responsible enterprise must adopt an age conscious policy to answer the problem of increasing in number of older workers.

To keep people active until their retirement, to keep the job attractive a change is required. Only through new theories, practices and tools which support the psychological contract employees can maintain their health, motivation, and work ability. We mean Age Management, SOC strategies and new I-Deals that we saw above.

Since an important way to achieve current and future fit is by engaging in proactive behaviors, we also tried to identify proactive behaviors for successful ageing at work. For example, job crafting can help ageing workers to adjust their job to changing goals and motives, improving current person–job fit, and proactive career planning can help ageing workers to set new career goals, improving future person–job fit.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **LOCCIONI: A CASE STUDY ON INNOVATION AND ATTENTION TO ACTIVE AGEING**

#### **1. History, value and culture of an Italian company. Loccioni among innovation, people and future**

This chapter focuses on the Loccioni company as a case study of a Socially Responsible Enterprise which pays attention to its surrounding environment taking care of its needs like that of active ageing.

To improve, achieve success and guarantee its growth and the growth of the community around, Loccioni develops many different projects but it is also an international company which is currently working in more than 45 countries. As a matter of fact, Loccioni has three overseas offices in Washington, Stuttgart and Shanghai where the main activities are related to market development, territorial relations and direct assistance to customers.

Next sections are going to deepen the history and the development of Loccioni and to show in which sense this company can be seen as socially responsible.

Loccioni is an industrial automation company founded by Enrico Loccioni in 1968 in the province of Ancona (Marche, Italy) and entirely owned by his family: Graziella Rebichini, Enrico's wife, who passed away two years ago, Claudio and Cristina, Loccioni's son and daughter.

Enrico Loccioni was born in a family of farmers, in the crossroads of three important abbeys of Benedictine culture: St. Elena, St. Romualdo and St. Urbano. The culture heritage of Benedictine monks and the family one linked to its land and the work in fields have determined the model and the values of the company.

The first 10 years of the company turn around the industrial electric plant engineering to carry on activities in the service of industry. Since the beginning the company has been the intermediary figure between school and working world, finding in technical institutes and in the Universities of the territory the necessary resources to carry on the company development.



In the 80s Vittorio Merloni was one of the first to identify and to pursue the passage from the quantity to the quality of the product. Working with him, Loccioni started to analyse the new possibilities offered by the market in terms of quality control challenge through the diversification of markets and competences. In few years, thanks to a group of curious and willing young people a new branch of the company was created, soon reaching the international leadership in home appliances and car components testing. Following its clients, world leaders, from electric plants to production lines, Loccioni has started to communicate with them in terms of efficiency, handling, traceability and logistics, developing competences in the productive processes automation technologies. At this point, it is clear that Loccioni's commitment is offering solutions to many customers, measuring for improving which means helping all those who realize products or offer services to do it in the best way, saving time, money and respecting the environment. Today this commitment is the mission of all nine different business areas of the enterprise that are Industry, Mobility, Humancare, Energy, Environment, Train&Transport, Electronics, Food and Aerospace.

In the 90s the passage from hand-crafted company to a knowledge company is almost completed, first starting from specialized workers and then passing to people with diploma and finally graduated people. The knowledge development can also be realized thanks to a recruitment policy focused on the continuous employment of young people who can benefit of training in return for their energy, courage in taking initiatives and responsibilities with the aim of contributing to the growth of the company.

In this way, after the electric engineering plant, industrial automation, home appliances and car components quality control and monitoring phase, new adventures start with developing telecommunications competences and ICT and environmental monitoring.

Measuring for improving, transforming data into values: this is Loccioni mission.

With this commitment and multi-sector experience in measuring since 2000, the company has been giving the starting signal to new business and knowledge development lines.

Thanks to the challenge collected from the health care world, Humancare the Loccioni team dedicated to the development of solutions for healthcare, nutrition and wellness was created.

On the other hand, ICT measurements and competence meet up on a new ground, the energy flows focusing these 40 years of experience and knowledge in transforming quality into sustainability, data measured into tangible values to communicate.

The first 10 years of the new millennium see Loccioni transforming from knowledge company into a thinking company which develops innovation. Almost the 50% of collaborators has a degree, the Research for Innovation team numbers more than 40 researches, the Marketing and Communication team explores new markets and cultural visions, Loccioni systems are proposed in more than 45 countries in the world and international branches are created in Usa, Germany, China and now also in Japan.

### **1.1 Ideas, people, technologies to transform data into values: that is Loccioni mission**

The core of Loccioni activity are the data that are managed, created, measured and transferred not only to improve products and processes but, in going through intelligences, knowledge, open company networks, they are transformed into values. In particular, software data are the most important information in work process: they are the values of economic, quality, performance and efficiency and mainly represent the company soul, its most intimate dimension.

Ideas, people, technologies are the main characters of the company: soul and values represent the intangible and the tangible purpose of the different activities. Transforming data into values is Loccioni commitment towards our interlocutors – clients, collaborators, suppliers, partners – with the aim of improving ourselves, of going beyond the limits and facing new challenge.

To create values for market, clients and collaborators, Loccioni uses a complex behavioural system which leads the daily work. The system focuses on six fundamental ideas, that are:

1. *Listen to anticipate*: Loccioni is an ever green and innovative company. To remain young, it needs to know the market and its developments. In that way, it promotes its growth, anticipating what is going to happen in the automotive, industrial, environmental and technological world.  
  
Listen to anticipate also refers to the attention that Loccioni shows towards the students. The company works with primary and secondary schools and Universities because it wants that young people meet early the labour market. Just in that way it is possible to create the future: helping the young workforce to know itself, its needs and what it wants.
2. *Energy and will* which means putting a great deal of enthusiasm, passion, initiative, courage, motivation in the things they do; energy and will are the highest expressions of doing, the fundamental values at the base of every knowledge company where there are no products to realize but projects to imagine and dreams to fulfil.
3. *Clear communication*: Loccioni clients trust the company because it communicates its identity in an honest, reliable and clear way.
4. *Innovation* in the sense that the curiosity of the new, of the unknown market and clients allows the company to remain young and to renovate itself.
5. *Flexibility and adaptability*: to be flexible and adaptive at work means knowing how to manage yourself in many different situations, how to spend time in different projects and being ready to answer the daily challenges.
6. *Proactivity and intelligence*: Loccioni is a team where each collaborator employs his/her knowledge and skills to reach common goals. Proactivity is the ability to imagine and to do something, to create work and value, to do some proposals for the growth and the development of the company. In addition, in a team, each person has a role and a task: to be intelligent means to know your role and the role of the other one, to know how you can collaborate with the others and it means that it sometimes needed to change your role to win new challenges.

These six points become true and effective when they are linked to three values that are: *imagination, responsibility, tradinnovation*.

*Imagination* is having the ability to dream, watching with “big eyes”, asking ourselves useful questions to get to the realization of the dream imagined. Knowing how to dream is to be co-creators, participating to the construction of the future rather than being subjected to it. Capable of imaging is whoever has the right curiosity, openness, creativity to make his work and his life a coming of unique events, continuous occasions to grow even if still young.

*Responsibility* is living the present with the awareness that every action we do has consequences on the future. It means respecting the environment and the people living on it, personally taking the trust offered upon ourselves (by clients, suppliers, collaborators). It is the ability to respond and therefore welcome, with generosity, honesty, integrity.

*Tradinnovation* combines the value of tradition, of the rural culture Loccioni comes from, of the experience and innovation use and listening, of the incentive to be launched in the future, of continuously innovating. It is the arrow which once strongly shot, can reach the furthest places. It is recovering the base cultural values, the ancient wisdom which leads to live innovation as behaviour, towards the territory, the people, the organization, the technology.

All that has just been said is the core of Loccioni identity, of its philosophy and it is the ground of its projects.

This chapter focuses on some of them that allow to understand in which way we can say that Loccioni is socially responsible.

## **2. The job place for the ages: Bluzone, Redzone, Silverzone**

Loccioni numbers around 400 collaborators with an average age of 34.

Each employee is daily placed in front of a challenge and is therefore called to form his / her own knowledge and skills continuously in the field. Loccioni hires students just graduated after their bachelor or master’s degrees and they immediately become spokesmen for the company worldwide. It invests on training of those students who come from local and foreign schools and universities (over a thousand

every year), to help them to live at the same time the dimensions of studying and working. Over the past four years the company has hired more than 100 students because it always needs suitable profiles.

Loccioni is a real training ground to build the skills of the future. Students of different ages are introduced to the business world and involved in many workshops organized in collaboration with schools through which they learn to integrate nature and technology, knowledge and know-how. These kinds of projects constitute *Bluzone*, an open network with schools and universities aimed at hosting and training students.

There is also the *Redzone*, an area where the professional growth of the collaborators is helping and monitoring with a training program composed by different kinds of Master.

It is clear that the company combines different generations, professional worlds, different skills and matches primary students and PhDs, teachers and managers, technicians and humanist gurus thanks to its projects. This is the reason why it is a jobplace for all ages where relationships create intergenerational bridges to achieve a common goal and where the openness towards the others, the intertwining of perspectives lead to discover the joy of learning by doing and exchanging knowledge. Hence, *Bluzone* and *Redzone* meet *Silverzone*, a network of more than 100 people, a “meeting garden” where the experience of trainers, entrepreneurs and scientists matches with young collaborators: a place to innovate, imagine and design the future. *Silverzone* involves “beautiful minded” over-65 retired people that have met Loccioni along their way. It is a virtual space that gathers people with huge luggage of different knowledge, competences and experience. With their precious contribution and contagious enthusiasm, they keep sustaining Loccioni success.

*Silverzone* is all about building trustful and respectful relationships. It is basically based on mentorship programs, through which a new employee is joined by a retired person and together they work on a highly innovative project. Loccioni gave birth to this program, also called “28-82”, because of the ages of the first mentor and the mentoree involved, to preserve the richness that these individuals own, not just looking at the past, but looking into the future in creative and innovative perspectives.

Through Bluzone, Redzone and Silverzone, Loccioni merges different characteristics and positive aspects of young and old people, of different professional profiles. The theoretical knowledge matches with the practical approach in an exercise of maturation and growth that is constantly enriched and supported by dialogue.

A similar network leads not only to knowledge transfer but also to new knowledge creation, triggering creativity and concretizing avant-garde innovative projects and solutions.

### **3. Silverzone and the social responsibility of Loccioni towards older workers**

In the current landscape, the population is ageing.

In this scenario, Loccioni tries to introduce one way to answer the problem of retired people' employability: Silverzone project where knowledge, that has been gained through years and episodes, is collected to be available in the future.

The network is composed by consultants, engineers, geologists, managers, architects, physicists, ex professors and managers of important industrial companies that have reached ambitious achievements in their professional lives. Collaborators, clients, suppliers, partners who now feel like transferring their experience to young people, have a renovated enthusiasm and indeed, the company aims at hiring young students, that have just finished up professional and technical high schools or have just graduated at University. That means that Loccioni focuses its attention on enthusiasm and proactivity, rather than on long experience when hiring. Consequently, Silverzone that is based on mentoring programs, is crucial to support learning and decision making, enabling competences and knowledge to be quickly gained.

It was written above that Silverzone sprang from one of these projects, called "28-82" because of the ages of the first mentor and the mentoree involved.

It was 2005 when Carmine Ungaro arrived at Loccioni, after graduating in mechanical engineering. It arrived from Ischia, in the middle of the winter, while it was snowing in an unusual and extraordinary way for Angeli di Rosora (AN).

The valley was covered by a thick layer of white and freezing snow and was completely desert: Carmine was all alone, even in the apartment that the company provides to non-resident collaborators and that is usually very crowded; there was nobody.

Carmine found on the door of his new room a post-it written by Enrico Loccioni himself telling that the following day he would pick up Carmine to go to CFR (Fiat Research Centre) and they would meet Mario Ricco, “Common Rail technology mother”. Carmine always uses this expression to define Mr. Ricco because of the Latin proverb: *mater semper certam est pater numquam*.

They went together with Filippo Surace, ex Technical Director at Alfa Romeo, sharing a strong passion for car and automotive sector in general. The challenge they prompted for their-owns was inventing a tool to measure spray injector from mass distribution, internally developing the needed technology rather than buying it, cutting off costs.

After that meeting, Carmine spent months working on this project closed in his office. Every now and then he met Filippo and discussed steps and advancements. Two years later, in 2007, they successfully developed and prototyped a tool called Mexus. The patent was filed using both their names, instead of one of Loccioni brand. Mexus has won lots of awards (for example, NI Green Technology Awards) and allowed Loccioni to defeat direct competitors in the field. Starting from this solution, a whole Research for Development laboratory has been developed in Mobility business unit. Nowadays Carmine is managing of the whole team, composed by young researchers and engineers.

Thus, merging the different characteristics and positive aspects of different professional profiles and generations leads to knowledge transfer triggering creativity and concretizing avant-garde innovative projects and solutions.

Carmine achieved great success working with a “milestone man” of the automotive world. As a matter of fact, thanks to Filippo Surace, he knew a network of Italian and international people who helped him to become more and more competent in the field of injectors so far to develop a key solution for Loccioni business.

In this paragraph, I start to show the implementation of active ageing practices in a company where the policy aimed at enhancing the transfer of knowledge and

experience from retired workers to Loccioni’s employees is the key of its social responsibility.

Later, I will clarify in which sense Loccioni can be considered a socially responsible enterprise.

### 3.1 Research methods for data collection and analysis

I deepened Silverzone project working with Loccioni collaborators and doing two different sets of interviews.

I collected data thanks to two qualitative semi-structured surveys: on one side, I asked 16 Loccioni managers (those who are responsible for the eight business areas and those who are responsible for three foreign branches), about Silverzone and on the other side I got 81 Silver men involved.

**Tables of interviewees that participated to my study and their role**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Renzo Libenzi	General Manager
Maria Paola Palmeri	Communication Manager
Gino Romiti	Innovation Director
Cristina Cristalli	Business Innovation Manager
Tommaso Puerini	Key Account Manager & Business Development
Luca Marassi	Mobility BU Director
Marco Pacenti	Industry BU Director
Enrico Rocchetti	Environment BU Director
Antonio Giovannelli	Energy BU Director
Alessandro Salvucci	Train&Transport BU Director
Claudio Loccioni	Humancare BU Director
Matteo Fioravanti	Electronics BU Director
Alessandro Ragnoni	Aerospace BU Director
Luca Lazzari	Managing Director Loccioni Deutschland
Andrea Alcini	Managing Director Loccioni China
Ignazio Droghini	Managing Director Loccioni USA

**Table 1: List of 16 managers interviewed**



In addition, I interviewed 81 Silver men and according to this I must provide more details on how the survey was administered, how the sample was structured.

First, I must clarify that Silverzone network is composed by 46 “Silver men of the Present” and 35 “Silver men of the future”. Those of the present are retired people or almost retired people above 65 years old and they are currently working with Loccioni collaborators in different kinds of projects.

Those of the future are younger than old silver men; they are not retired yet, but they are employed in other companies having specific roles. They can be consultants, customers, professors or managers who meet Loccioni during their careers for different reasons and that are chosen as future partners, future silver men.

Each of them has a specific CV, different careers and training. I classified them into five categories according to their professional skills and the role that they play in the projects developed in the Business Areas, the Departments and the foreign branches of the company.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Silver men involved</b>
Engineers	20
Managers	11
Professors	7
Architects	5
Physicists	3

**Table 2: List of 46 Silver men of the present**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Silver men involved</b>
Engineers	22
Managers	5
Professors	4
Architects	3
Physicists	1

**Table 3: List of 35 Silver men of the future**

The aims of my surveys, as I clarified in the introduction, were mostly two: knowing how many Silver men work in this network and which were the projects that they developed and that they are developing even now and then, understanding the type of involvement of the Silver in this network and their feelings about it.

Can they test dignity at work?

### **3.2 Analysis, interpretation and discussion of data**

Mexus project, that I discussed above, is not the only one developed in Loccioni. We can mention others kinds of collaborations.

For example, one of the first Silver men was Cesare Maria Sabatucci, best friend of Enrico Loccioni and his family. He was a writer, a wise-man who inspired Loccioni philosophy. Enrico Loccioni remembers a sentence of Sabatucci that says “More, better, new. Loccioni Group trains entrepreneurs and the company is an adventure. It means making it happens”; thinking about it, Enrico Loccioni adds “thanks to Cesare Maria Sabatucci our dreams have become our enterprise: a power that improves the quality of life”.

During these 27 years another Silver man, Isao Hosoe, an engineer and designer has met Loccioni. He was born in Tokyo in 1942. In 1965, he designed his first pedal airplane as the project for his degree in Aerospace Engineering at Tokyo’s Nihon University, which was followed by his Masters. He came to Italy in 1967 and began his design experience with the architect Alberto Rosselli of the Studio Ponti-Fornaroli-Rosselli.

Following a number of professional experiences in 1985 he founded Isao Hosoe Design. To date he has won a number of international prizes with his designs in the fields of transport, office furniture, product design, telecommunications, electronic and household furnishing.

Visiting Loccioni company, Isao saw the special way to work in this enterprise and he called it a Play Factory.

It is while playing intelligence is best expressed. For play I mean children and their curiosity, unexpected events and surprise. PlayFactory is a cultural area where meetings among people and relations find the essential space for game, developing active knowledge, experiences and innovative discoveries (Isao Hosoe).

This expression represents the extreme synthesis of Play Factory philosophy, an itinerary showing a new way to design, to “do” and create value through the human expression as a whole. Its roots can be dated back to in the past: already in the XVIII century Schiller stated that “men are all-round when they play” because in the game it is possible that all human beings main components coexist: sensibility and wit, matter and shape, inner and outer characteristics; all expressions of beauty. Adriano Olivetti, in his inauguration speech for the new Pozzuoli plant (Naples) in 1955, said that: this factory has been built in front of the most beautiful gulf of the world, thanks to an architect respecting the beautiful surrounding places so that the beauty may offer consolation to the everyday working activity. The factory was therefore created for man so that he could find in his accurate workplace an instrument for his redemption and not a motivation to suffer. The aesthetical education develops through the game since it is not subordinated to a rational goal nor the intellectual moment is sacrificed to the sensible impulse: the only goal of this activity is itself.

Playing means knowing yourself and the reality around. “Stake yourself” inside the group to find out the affinities, the implied knowledge and the points of strength. The game space reduces with growth and at the same time that fundamental dynamism for innovation is progressively lost.

Play Factory is the company thinking through the spaces and the moments of the game in terms of creativity, innovation, growth.

Play Factory is also a new way of thinking and communicating the work philosophy out of the material and physical aspects of workplaces to become the full expression of personality and possibility to create relations with the people.

Play Factory was born from the collaboration of Isao Hosoe, Japanese designer with the passion of studying workplaces and their impact on working people (from the furniture design to the lifestyle in the professional life and the space), with the Loccioni group, with the idea of promoting and diffusing this creative culture.

Already involved in the Group activities, Hosoe seems to be surprised when says «that you are a Play Factory. You are a good centre where to train to the new culture and diffuse it».

To summarize Loccioni philosophy, at Milano Furniture Fair (17th-21st April 2008) Isao Hosoe, winner of four Compassi d’Oro, in collaboration with Loccioni company

presented the Pro-gettare behavioural installation. Isao Hosoe says: «Planning is like throwing a stone in a pond, the waves move from the epicentre towards a hypothetical future and towards the person who has thrown the stone».

When the ball touches the water, it creates circular waves which propagate towards everyday wider environments but at the same time some of those waves return to the person who has thrown the ball with the same energy used to throw. To design as to “plan”, “look forward to the future”: an action involving the sense of responsibility towards ourselves and to all what surrounds us, since the effect of our behaviour will affect all the environment. Our projects, our ideas will get to the others with the same energy as the one used to create them.

This play represents a perfect metaphor to measure our behaviour, the energy and the power we use in our actions. Pro-gettare is mainly training our mind to look at the future being completely free from predefined and specific goals; it is to propose our ideas in a possible fertile environment, where each seed may generate new fruits and create networks among people mutually enriching of others’ ideas and experiences and learning in a creative and organized way. In pro-gettare it is very important to look back at the past: as in the archery game the more you draw your bow string the farther your arrow will get, the same is for the idea of planning, the farther you go the deeper you grow into your past.

Pro-gettare is a step in the Play Factory path: the installation has been created inside the company and has so far recalled the curiosity of millions of visitors (from children of 3 years old to international top managers) who have tested the energy and determination of their projects.<sup>2</sup>

Alessandro Salvucci, a Loccioni collaborator, worked together with Isao Hosoe to build the Pro-gettare installation, following engineering solutions and formulas. After this match, he explained «thanks to Isao we have understood that creativeness is very important in order to achieve good results».

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.play-factory.it/?page\\_id=58](http://www.play-factory.it/?page_id=58)

Thus, we are starting to understand the precious contribution of this kind of collaborations with wise men because, thanks to them, Loccioni company improves its ideas, its philosophy and innovates itself.

Another important milestone is represented by Gino Tosolini, General Manager of the Hospital in Ancona. He helped Claudio Loccioni, Enrico Loccioni' son, to find the Humancare area. Speaking with Claudio, we listen that «thanks to Gino, Loccioni has set its mission: technology at the service of man and his wellbeing».

Loccioni Humancare is the business unit of Loccioni developing technological solutions for health, nutrition, wellness.

There is also another notable project, called the Leaf Community.

Leaf refers to the “green and natural leaf” but it is also the acronym of Life Energy and Future. As well as a leaf, the LeafCommunity takes energy from nature: it gathers and uses it when it is necessary and releases it in the air with healthy and cleaned methods. In 2014, Loccioni became the first smart micro-grid in Italy, an example of energy network peer-to-peer that accumulates and gives energy among different work environments. The Leaf Community is a sustainable network built around 2km of future, the area close to Esino river whose safety was secured after the flood of 1990. In that community, it is possible to live in a carbon neutral house, and move with electrical or hydrogen cars, bring children to a solar energy school and work in eco-compatible buildings. Energy is provided by renewable sources, granting the highest level of comfort and modernity.

After acquiring very high-level competences in the most different technologies applied to automation, handling, traceability and logistic systems, Loccioni Group has understood that the sustainability of enterprises and more in general of the territory were the new challenge with which to deal. Therefore, it has operated with such a determination on this front that he deserved the “Environment Enterprise Award” by Legambiente for the “LeafCommunity” project. Leaf is the acronym of “Life Energy and Future” that configures the initiative programme but it also corresponds to the English term “leaf”, which for Loccioni Group represents the metaphor of the model according to which the enterprise develops. Faithful to his rural origins and to the traditions of his earth Enrico Loccioni, in fact, identifies the sustainable enterprise as a tree rooted in the territory, drawing energy from the economic, environmental,

social and cultural resources that the latter makes available. As starting from its bearing structure, formed by trunk and branches, the tree develops towards the environment through the leaves with which it breathes absorbing carbon dioxide and generating oxygen, likewise operates the sustainable enterprise, whose leaves are constituted by the plurality of individuals who are part of it and by their initiatives. Provided that the environment is healthy, the life of the tree essentially depends on leaves, as the life of the enterprise depends on people and on their initiatives. Environment protection and people centrality are then the elements on which, according to Loccioni, we should ground the construction of the future. These remarks have given rise to the “Leaf Community” according to which the enterprise, together with its partners, integrates with the territory taking part in its development in a responsible way. For this reason, inside the company they have implemented the most advanced systems of energy saving and environmental protection. They have introduced effective thermal insulation systems while for the department lighting they have adopted special optical systems that from the roof address the sun light inside buildings. Finally, they have installed photovoltaic systems and solar plants for the electrical energy generation and they have exploited a small water stream to power a mini hydroelectric plant. As in Loccioni philosophy it is necessary to measure data to manage a process, the entire energy network of the enterprise has been monitored with the “My Leaf” system and, in addition, they have built the “Leaf House” with six flats inhabited by collaborators and guests of the Group, equipping it with the most advanced systems of energy generation and saving. In this “carbon free” building, besides photovoltaic panels and a geothermic system with heat pump, they have also provided for a collection and distribution system of the rainwater for non-food uses. The monitoring of the “Leaf House” is performed by a computerized system, connected with 1200 sensors of various types. Therefore, the “Leaf Community” has been extended to the internal mobility system of Loccioni Group and finally to the community, involving school and education areas in the energy management. All these experimentation and monitoring activities are completed by development actions, in collaboration with outstanding partners such as Enel, Samsung SDI and other big brands of the household appliance industry, of the most advanced technologies for domotics and energy co-generation with photovoltaic and

solar systems and with fuel cells, as well as with state-of-the-art batteries for the electrical energy storage. Through the “LeafCommunity” Enrico Loccioni intended to indicate a course for the sustainable development, along which the principle of sharing goals and resources is accompanied by the concept of the smart use of technologies, widening also the intervention horizon to the community the enterprise is in contact with<sup>3</sup>.

This project was started and finished by a numerous team of Loccioni collaborators who worked with external Silver men. We remember the most important: Federico Maria Butera.

He is retired man over 65 years.

Federico Maria Butera is a physics expert interested in the topics of environmental sustainability, energy consumption and energy efficiency.

The projects we have talked about are just some of those that have led to the success and growth of the Loccioni company.

I knew about them thanks to the meetings that I organized with the managers of Loccioni business areas and with Silver men.

### **3.3 Implications**

The interviews have been useful to assess the quantitative and qualitative impact of the project in the company and to try to understand if people involved in it can test dignity at work.

Loccioni managers answered that the importance of Silverzone project depends on the possibility to increase Loccioni network and find new partners (schools, associations, local and international companies). Knowledge, competences and skills of Silver allows the company to innovate, to train young collaborators, to develop new businesses. At the same time, we should pay attention: especially for what concerns technological innovation, we should not rely on them too much: they do not always know the news about innovation and could have obsolete knowledges.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://home.loccioni.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/A-successful-socio-organizational-model.pdf>

This is the reason why, maybe we shouldn't ask them too much from the operational point of view, but more in terms of vision and network.

Next, from Silver' point of view this project is appeared such as a working situation where the main human and professional dimensions emerge.

On one side, we refer to "gift, exchange, community, respect" and on the other side we refer to innovation, technology and so on. In other words, during my interviews I used to ask each Silver what is the sense and meaning they attribute to the network and if they felt changed since they have been involved into it. Everyone agrees in saying that to find oneself involved in many activities and projects in Loccioni was a privilege, a luck, a new reason to feel alive, valued and fulfilled once again.

The Silver men maintain "Silverzone is a network where old people help young workers to open their mind"; "Silverzone is a place where the older worker is considered as a resource and not as an obsolete tool"; "Thanks to this project Loccioni defends and promotes the differences between employees because it understands that in a world that is ageing, a socially responsible enterprise must combine the competences and the wisdom of the elderly workers with the energy of young people"; "Silverzone represents the tool box thanks to which young generation can create its future"; "This project builds a generational bridge"; "Silver men are motivated to guide young people because they feel evergreen"; "Silver men represent the milestones and the underpinning of Loccioni success"; "Silverzone is the space where ideas arise and you can think the company of the future for the human flowering"; "Silverzone is the workplace of the mutual respect".

The older workers that gave me these definitions are people that have already achieved important goals during their life, who have worked hard but they are not tired yet. On the contrary, having the possibility to take a new challenge after retirement has been seen by them as an acknowledgement of their career and success. This has been one motivation for their pride and their second birth into a new life, the life of "wise grandparents".

Silverzone project focuses on the human being and his value first as a person and then as a worker. Here the respect of human dignity goes through the relationship between seniors and juniors, the cooperation, the dialogue among different



generations and the desire to work together in order to achieve shared wellbeing and enterprise's growth.

Silverzone is a community and this term refers to interaction, sharing of interests; it is a *munus*, a gift through which it becomes a meeting space of different people, a community where the relationship among people are gifts that you do and that you receive at the same time.

In addition, the human dignity respect that results in the respect of older workers' stories is a factor that predisposes them to teach and guide well the young into difficulties. Thanks to Silverzone, people develop different soft skills that are: energy, imagination, responsibility, reliability, membership, flexibility, availability

In addition, people involved described the project with the following words: experience, wisdom, innovation, trad-innovation, collaboration, fun, sociability, ideas, respect, creativity, diversity, exchange, challenge, wonder, commitment, passion, awareness, beauty. If we have to summarize what the project means to them we could say:

- Giving wisdom and exchanging energy
- Thinking company of the future
- Human flowering
- Learning by doing
- Feeling alive
- Having fun
- Choosing to do
- Giving knowledge
- Discovering yourself
- Feeling evergreen
- Helping young generations and learning from them.

This project is the example of an enterprise that is a socially responsible enterprise and where the necessity to make profit (through many projects in the eight business areas of Loccioni) is not ignored or underestimated but is subordinated to the higher value of contributing to human needs fulfilment.

## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of my dissertation was to show that human dignity is the value which underpins the ethics of work and in addition, today, in a labor market where workers are ageing, it can promote an efficient process for the re-employment of older workers.

In the business world the age factor, as well as factors related to gender, ethnic origin, physical and mental disabilities, often becomes a discriminating factor.

The lengthening of life and the increase of the proportion of older workers and the same number of pensioners have imposed the European Union to think carefully about the chances of employability of these workers to make up for a dramatic event: the decrease of the active population in the business areas, which is added the production deskilling.

Therefore, if the enterprises want to answer the current social needs and especially those of the future, must learn to question their organizational structure examining flexibility in relation to the needs of employees of different age range and to enhance the various skills features. Furthermore, the opportunity that organizations can give senior workers must be accepted by them.

The workers over a certain age are the pillars of our society and, for this reason, an oriented policy age motivating them to stay active will be necessary. Moreover, productive environments where a company gives the opportunity of qualitative growth and rewards workers achievements, offers additional elements for a work experience that becomes open space, attractive for everyone.

After arguing that, I explained that this kind of agreement between organizations and their employees is called the psychological contract and it belongs to the ethics of work that establishes a worthy work environment.

According to the idea of active ageing, the agreement consists in the interest of an enterprise to adopt theories and practices to involve older workers and keep them longer at work.

Diversity management and age management represent two examples of the psychological contract which, in this case are adopted to allow older employees to stay and remain still motivated and proactive at work.

The elderly knowledge and experience represent the business wisdom heritage which an enterprise has the right and duty to preserve and pass on to future generations.

Taking care of the employees regardless of their different ages, trying to re-think the human resource management according to a human centered policy adopting dignity as the core of its conduct, could be the right way for a company to promote active ageing.

Dignity is the crucial point of my research. As a matter of fact, it is the underpinning of the psychological contract and of the theories of management that I introduced in the previous paragraphs. Dignity conveys the human flowering at work and growth and success of the company.

Over the centuries, human dignity has taken on several meanings, but the most important is the one argued by Immanuel Kant. He suggests that «we must never objectify persons because [...] that which constitutes the condition under which alone anything can be an end in itself, this has not merely a relative worth, i.e., value, but an intrinsic worth, that is, dignity» (Dierksmeier, 2015, p. 38).

If I accept, as I did, the idea that dignity is the intrinsic value of all human beings that makes them equal and worthy of respect in their daily and personal life as well as in the professional one, it follows that dignity becomes operational in the workplace.

Why?

We could answer with the words of Dierksmeier

Respect for dignity means hence to protect the capacity of the human being to define its own ends, ideally but not always actually, in the pursuit of a moral life. Accordingly, with Kant we enter a genuinely modern phase of theorizing, where the values and virtues of business ethics are derived from the autonomy of the concerned subjects rather than from imposed metaphysical premises [16]. The pledge to respect human dignity thus demands a business ethics characterized by an egalitarian regard for the dignity of all stakeholders of business [17]. Howsoever today's authors translate Kant's ethics into clear ethical mandates for firms – e.g., rejecting the terminology of human capital or human resources [18] in favor of human relations and human capabilities [19] – a common feature of all these endeavors is to make dignity central to management, i.e. to treat dignity not as one value amongst many but as the overarching principle in light of which management should be taught and practiced (*Ibidem*).

In the enterprises, each employee has a stock of knowledge, experience and skills that makes him autonomous in organizing his work and defining his own ends.

Obviously, his autonomy is justified in the light of the psychological contract that defines the tasks of the workers and of the enterprises so that they can combine and can be moved by the same willingness to do profit but respecting human dignity in a human centred working environment.

The idea of a humanistic management that I described above, is the result of these arguments. Humanistic management is an approach to management theory based on the idea of human needs and human values. Employees are not merely as economic assets primarily valued for their productivity but as people with complex needs and a desire for meaningful and varied daily tasks. Implementing humanistic management concepts is difficult due to the complexity of human behaviour and of ethical questions in general, and it has many challenges.

About the issue of active ageing, a humanistic and socially responsible enterprise is one that takes measures to motivate and stimulate older workers. I discussed about some practices and tools to do it, like part-time job, flexibility (flex time and flex space), ergonomic choices and again autonomy, task variety, task identity, feedback, friendship opportunities, dealing with others, monitoring and tutoring programs and so on.

Lastly, I analysed the case of the Italian company Loccioni where I have spent the 50% of my applied PhD research.

The Silverzone project that I studied as a kind of a humanistic management especially focused on active ageing, is just one practice of older workers re-employment. Further, the network of silver men that I have monitored, numbers more than 100 Italian or foreign older workers but I could not obviously interview all of them.

The biggest problem of Silverzone is that each project that an older worker is developing with Loccioni collaborators, has a specific scheduling, a specific deadline. There are many projects and they are all different among them. For this reason, there can not be a scheduled calendar of all meetings between Silver men and Loccioni collaborators.

According to Loccioni' needs the older workers come to the company to follow and improve the projects where they are involved but the meetings can be occasional because they depend on the different scheduling. In addition, when the silver men

are hosted in Loccioni, their agendas are always very full so that it is sometimes difficult for me to meet and interview them.

Another problematic aspect of the project is that if someone can come to Loccioni company in the province of Ancona once, twice a month, some other comes twice a year or goes to Loccioni foreign branches.

Anyway, the interviews and the data which I summarized show that Silverzone is a good practice to keep older workers proactive because working after the retirement, in a comfortable and respectful work environment, allow people over 65 years old to be still essential for today' organizations and to reach important goals. Silverzone could be considered a practice of age management used in an enterprise that is socially responsible and where the necessity to make profit is not ignored or underestimated but is subordinated to the higher value of contributing to human needs fulfilment.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Meetings/Interviews with Managers and Departments Directors.**

#### **Questions:**

1. Who are Silvers in your Business Area? Which are the projects involving them?
2. What is the value of their support for Loccioni? On the other hand, are there any difficulties while working?
3. How often do you meet them?
4. Why do we need this kind of partnership?

### **Meetings/Interviews with Silver men.**

#### **Questions:**

1. What is your name?
2. When were you born?
3. Which is your hometown?
4. What is your training like?
5. Where have you been working and what were your main tasks?
6. How and when did your first contact with us occur? Who was your first contact?
7. How have you known Silverzone project? And thanks to whom/what?
8. With whom have you worked?
9. In which projects are you involved?
10. Could you describe Silverzone project with three words?
11. What is the meaning of being part of this project?



12. In your opinion, what is the meaning of Silver man?

13. What kind of relations have you got with Loccioni collaborators and the other Silver?

14. Which kind of human dimensions (gift, relation, community, respect...) and professional dimensions (innovation, technology, network...) come out working within Silverzone project?