Sustainability Empowerment and Lifestyles: ICTs for New Food Behavioral Models[1]

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Abstract. Recognizing the important role that modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICts), and in particular the Internet, can play in determining the so-called "*Sustainability Empowerment*" ("*the ability to make the Right to Sustainability a constitutive principle of a new global society where well-being and its sustainability, in time and space, constitute its fundamental strategic goal*"), the present paper highlights a web project that takes for example the short supply chain model as a reference to a sustainable food lifestyle. This with the purpose of highlighting the importance to guide the visitors to new patterns of food behavior most functional to the maintenance in time and space of a new well-being paradigm.

Keywords: Sustainability of well-being; Shared Social Responsibility; ICTs; Food behavior; Lifestyle; Short supply chain.

1 Introduction

The globalization of the markets without a well-defined legal guidance, capable of overriding its rules and rights, surely it takes far away from the threshold of a sustainable well-being and universally recognized. The current world backdrop isn't comforting. The inequalities, that segment the planet separate it on parameters primarily based on mercantile vision. All this hinders the achievement of Sustainability Empowerment that, as stated by Cesaretti (2014) refers to the "*the ability to make the Right to Sustainability a constitutive principle of a new global*

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society where well-being and its sustainability, in time and space, constitute its fundamental strategic goal".

This preliminary remarks helps to understand why the current well-being paradigm, mainly oriented towards a mercantile approach is not designed to achieve the aim of Sustainability Empowerment. At this point it becomes fundamental a change of the paradigm of Dominant Well-being, in favour of a model based on the concept of *Integrated Universal Well-being*. If this would happen for consumers would result new lifestyles functional to the new paradigm.

This cannot be separated from the context in which all stakeholders, including consumers, move and compare themselves. In this regard, it is introduced the concept of *Sustainability Oriented Territories* where it is actually applied the model of Shared Social Responsibility. In these territories all stakeholders move responsibly, parameterizing their behavioral models to sustainable criteria. Within a Shared Social Responsibility model the ICTs play a crucial role, because they can be promoter of lifestyles compatible with creation, but especially with the maintenance in time and space, of the conditions of individual and collective well-being.

In particular, the starting point of this work is to recognize the unquestionable ability of ICTs, especially of Internet, to promote behavioral patterns and lifestyles more compatible with the objectives of Sustainability Empowerment by providing information that allows users to have an immediate idea of the possible alternative compared to dominant behaviors.

In this regard, the work serves as an example the web project developed by Simone Cesaretti Foundation named "The Portal of Sustainability": a free tool aimed at the promotion of a Culture of Well-being Sustainability. The portal, built around the areas of Well-being, in particular, includes a section dedicated to food by which are disseminated and promoted lifestyles compatible with what has been described as Food for Sustainability and not Just Food. In particular, in that section, values were promoted under the concept of short supply chain, as value system for eating patterns that are compatible with the goal of Sustainability Empowerment.

2 Sustainability Empowerment and Lifestyles

The current global society, aimed essentially at a mercantile approach, does not allow applying a Sustainability Empowerment Strategy (Cesaretti, 2014; Borrelli et al., 2013). One of the founding elements of the concept of sustainable well-being lies in a condition of global equity within and between generations.

In this sense, the overcoming of global inequality is a crucial prerequisite to achieve the aforementioned Sustainability Empowerment. Sustainability of well-being, understood as a right able to ensure its applicability on a planetary scale, in fact, does not yet exist. Imbalances, deep-seated in global society, heavily involved in the *System*, are those that hinder the process of overcoming inequalities. From this "*Global Society System*" derives a Well-being Paradigm totally unbalanced compared to its visions and aims. Not surprisingly the current reference model does not respond to the approach of universal well-being but rather to segmented approaches of well-being, especially to a mercantile vision. Putting sustainability at the heart of a new

global society project, it determines the move from segmented approaches to well-being to a one so to tell which is integrated with every single sustainable aspect of multiple segmented approaches.

Compared to it the result would be that, by changing the current paradigm of well-being according to criteria of sustainability, the *"Global Society System"* can finally find its way around new "sustainable" parameters, able to establish a new right: the "Right to Sustainability" (Cesaretti et al., 2015).

From this, in the name of a change on a global scale, we would have new behavioral models themselves voted for individual and collective well-being, worldwide sustainable. The symbiotic relationship between an Integrated Well-being Paradigm and new behavioral models related to it, assumes a responsible behavior by all stakeholders of the territorial systems. In this sense, starting from a more micro reality which is the territory, until another more macros which is the Planet System, all stakeholders must take responsible behavior. The business world, policymakers, the media, the information play a crucial role. Each stakeholder, in the context of a Shared Social Responsibility model, should, by adopting a responsible attitude, take consistent positions with a new model of Well-being Sustainability (Borrelli et al., 2013; Blasi et al., 2008; Van der Ploeg, 2006).

In this perspective, if among the various stakeholders of a territory we focus on consumer because it is *"the subject that, in aggregate perspective, creates the offer"*, you can instantly understand how its behaviors and lifestyles can be functional to Sustainability Empowerment. Consumers, in fact, according to our own lifestyle can make daily choices, becoming a critical factor for the change of the model of "Well-being offer" in a territory.

3 Shared Social Responsibility

The relationship between Sustainability Empowerment and its functional behavioral patterns should be analyzed within a Shared Social Responsibility model. The methodological analysis made here cannot be separated from the interconnection of the two concepts. Another important factor shifts the debate, integrating it in the territories, starting with the assumption that these last are privileged observatories to look at the actual applicability of certain paradigms of well-being and not only the place where the stakeholders physically move.

Starting then from the territory as fabric within which stakeholders daily perform more or less responsible actions, taking certain behavioral patterns, the analysis should be carried out taking into account the degree of responsibility that drives these behaviors, allowing or not an approach to Sustainable Well-being.

The business world, policies, support sectors, the media and consumers with their lifestyles, should not only act, but mainly deal in the context of a model of shared social responsibility.

In particular, the consumers' lifestyles changing that, as it has been previously stated, is function of a certain well-being paradigm, is possible only in view of a real application of the model of Shared Social Responsibility (Hertwich, 2005; Misso et al., 2013). In fact, this can only happen if all the stakeholders of the territorial

systems point simultaneously towards the goal of Sustainability Empowerment. How can they do it? In this regard it is very important the role of the media that should reset their information strategies looking to a new paradigm of Universal Well-being.

4 Social responsibility and Media

The current model of globalization imposes certain parameters to the Media from which you can hardly move. The current model of global governance largely influences information and communication that, today more than ever, comes strongly influenced to the consumers.

Certainly freedom of expression, understood as the ability to tell without filters, in some cases without retaliation, does not belong to that kind of information service offered by the most common media. This introduction is used to move the focus of certain info processes based not so much on the amount of provided service, but rather to the quality of it that strongly affects the aforementioned "freedom". To achieve Sustainability Empowerment, in a logic of social responsibility, information is more than ever a lever for change. Responsible communication, of which a certain type of information is the direct result, must be carried out in respect of all stakeholders through a service that is both educational as well as informative.

We need a new independent media who can contact their local stakeholders, a communication able to educate to new behavioral models compatible with the well-being and its sustainability. The strength of a so well thought communication should, find expression in the adoption by all stakeholders of those behavioral models related to sustainable attitudes.

In this sense, the function carriers to this type of communication that could be defined as independent are undoubtedly those relating to the "free" world of ICTs, especially the Internet. At this point it is important to understand how through the Internet it is possible to educate to the sustainability of well-being by promoting the principles of new lifestyles, bringing consumers to them, and making sure that they will later come to constitute the new "*demand for sustainability*".

5 Internet and new Lifestyles for a Universal Right to Well-being Sustainability

Globalization has deeply changed the sensory perception, revolutionizing the spatial-temporal standard criteria for all inhabitants of the planet.

The advantages of the so-called "global village" (Mac Luan) reside in the immediacy of information that knows no boundaries. The disadvantages are identified with the centralization of an information flow strongly mediated by the global governance. Hence, it follows that the traditional mass media such as newspapers, radio and television stations are essentially governed by those that hold power. Except for a few networks that are more sensitive to social issues and to the

environment one, the vast majority of the products packed by the standard information are affected by this pressure.

Quite different is the case of ICTs, especially the Internet, which have completely revolutionized the way we communicate by giving not mediated information. The power of ICTs and of the "liberty" of these instruments, also involves the interests of the big powers that constantly rely on the "immediacy" of Social networks. Internet (and all its extensions) is the main tool of global communication, so it responds perfectly to the type of support that suits the paradigm shift. For its "free" nature it is the absolute best way to communicate to consumers the importance of new lifestyles (Andreopoulou et al, 2014). Coming directly to consumers, the produced information flow is not affected, lending itself perfectly to the packaging of "pure" contents.

The network is the tool that most lends itself to the implementation of a Bottom Up strategy: an integrated communication able to fully express all the necessity of Sustainability Empowerment, it must necessarily adopt instruments capable to tell and to intervene on a reality more compatible with the well-being.

In other words, the Internet is actually that famous fourth estate, acting as a forerunner to a communication able to impact significantly and responsibly on the users' way of life.

5.1 Internet and Well-Being Sustainability: "The Portal of Sustainability", a Case Study

The Simone Cesaretti Foundation, adhering to the notion that the Internet is the right tool to communicate a certain paradigm of sustainable well-being, has designed and put on line "The Portal of Sustainability" (www.portaledellasostenibilita.it): a website with the aim of promoting the culture of Well-being Sustainability.

Adopting the model of Shared Social Responsibility, the portal aims to contribute to the dissemination and implementation of lifestyles compatible with a functional integrated well-being paradigm to Sustainability Empowerment.

Assuming that all stakeholders often do not have the tools, resources and information to implement independently certain behavioral models compatible with sustainability of well-being, the portal stands as vehicle construction, dissemination and promotion of responsible guidelines related to the Sustainability Empowerment.

Of course this cannot happen if the stakeholders are not contextualized in a Sustainability Oriented Territory — a place where the model of Shared Social Responsibility is really applied.

In particular, the consumer may not adapt his lifestyle to sustainability criteria without the support of a territory and of a context *already, in itself, sustainable*. The same consumer will hardly be able to parameterize his lifestyle on the principle of Sustainability Empowerment if the communication does not intervene to direct his sustainability choices. From this point of view, "The Portal of Sustainability" represents a web interface with an offer of contents suitable to determine the creation of a *Demand for Sustainability*.

6 Internet for New Food Lifestyles

"The Portal of Sustainability", as promoter of new lifestyles compatible with Sustainability Empowerment devotes a particular section to food. The current offer of goods and services, although wide, is often incompatible with the principle of food sustainability, at first against the segmented approaches to well-being (health), then against the entire paradigm. The offer raises the consumer confusion and inability to make critical choices. With respect to the latter consideration, which is contextualized within the model of Shared Social Responsibility, it can be said that it becomes essential for the Food Matter to pass from the current "Right to Food" to the "Right to overall food system". This means that the Food Systems of the planet must make a Right to Overall Food System compatible with the multidimensional nature of well-being and its sustainability, so that we come to a universal approach to food for sustainability and not just food.

This would lead the transition from segmented approaches (social, generational, territorial, eco-centric and anthropocentric) to the integrated Right to Overall Food System, in which, in fact, converges all the sustainable aspects of all segmented approaches.

"The Portal of Sustainability", believing the Food System an area of great importance for Sustainable well-being, has dedicated a section to new lifestyles to steer users toward a new Paradigm of Sustainable Well-being.

6.1 The Short Supply Chain as a reference for sustainable food styles

The underlying values the concept of short supply chain represent a value system of reference for food patterns that are compatible with the goal of Sustainability Empowerment.

These are models of life followed by critical consumers who usually inform themselves about the production process of a certain food, imagining a limited sequence of steps. The emblematic nature of Short Supply Chain translates the phrase "from producer to consumer" — referring not only to organoleptic features of the product but also to aspects of space and time. Indeed, today more than ever, the concept of Short Supply Chain became a symbol not only of a new way "to provide food" but above all a new approach to food, a way to retrieve the relationship of trust with those who create that agro-food product (and therefore not only agricultural) and, in a situation of economic crisis, a means to reduce the multiplication of the intermediation cost (AA.VV., 2005; Aguglia, 2009).

The concept of Short Supply Chain, then, went extending beyond the mere consumer-producer relationship to become the symbol of new patterns and habits that are going to require more economic, social, environmental, territorial and generational sustainability[2].

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[2] An example of Short Supply Chain can be one type of "sustainable farmhouse" which, through an offer compatible with the criteria of Food Sustainability fully complies the Integrated Approach to Food. It is believed that the critical consumer frequenting a

7 Conclusions

Wanting to pursue the goal of Sustainability Empowerment it is necessary to change the current approach to well-being. To this end, it becomes necessary a crucial paradigm shift able to project the "*Global Society System*" by a segmented approach to well-being to a universal approach. If the *"Global Society System"* would adopt a new paradigm of well-being, this would have compatible lifestyles with the goal of Sustainability Empowerment that actually would become those concrete actions, based on criteria of sustainability. In this way you would identify lifestyles with that objective parameter to evaluate the actual degree of "sustainability" of a territory, in which should necessarily be applied a model of Shared Social Responsibility.

In this work we have given more significance on implementing a portal that among the various areas of the wellbeing, has planned a large section dedicated to food, focus on those food lifestyles compatible with an integrated approach to well-being and in particular on the corresponding reference models as the Short Supply Chains.

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"sustainable farmhouse" try to find, from his point of view of food, to arrive near the source, as close as possible to the product. Thus this critical consumer reports a lifestyle characterized from the Food sustainability, well aware of how the production cycle can intervene on the "sustainability" of the final product.

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