# HOW TO DEVELOP LEADERS FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

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**Abstract**

In 2015, the 193 countries of the UN General Assembly have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated specific targets and indicators. These probably constitute the best blueprint of what we collectivity need to accomplish to address pressing planetary challenges and promote flourishing in place of catastrophes. For companies, it is not only a matter of reducing their negative externalities. It is an opportunity to achieve business success while having a positive impact.

While SDGs constitute precious guides, they are not enough without people able and committed to achieving them. Contemporary leadership has proven inadequate to promote this engagement and achieve the necessary business transformations (MacKie, 2024a). Several initiatives have been taken to define the leadership attributes needed to further the sustainability agenda, notably with the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) (Jordan et al., 2021). Developing leaders for sustainability remains a critical challenge. In this article, we build on recent research as well as on our global coaching approach (Rosinski, 2010) and experience in the past thirty years. We argue that global coaching is particularly suited to promote the sustainable leadership required to bridge the gap between the current reality and the vision of the SDGs.

**Keywords**: Sustainability; Global coaching, Sustainable leadership, Sustainable Development Goals

**Introduction: steering the world on track**

Unsustainable resource depletion ("humanity is currently using the resources of 1.75 planets to provide the goods and services we demand when we only have one Earth" - Global Footprint Network, 2022), biodiversity loss ("69% decrease in the average size of monitored vertebrate wildlife populations between 1970 and 2018" - Global Footprint Network, 2022), environmental pollution, anthropogenic global warming, extreme poverty ("around 700 million people live on less than $2.15 per day, the extreme poverty line" - The World Bank, 2024), are unfortunately not an exhaustive list of our dire planetary issues. In the meantime, some despicable political leaders are waging tragic wars and fueling terrorism instead of improving lives on earth.

In the corporate world, we still see all-too-many examples of business as usual and the cynical pursuit of profit with little concern for the environment and for society (Oreskes & Conway, 2010; Bogdanich & Forsythe, 2022).

Fortunately, in 2015, the 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted a historic agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their associated 169 targets and 232 indicators. This brought and still brings new hope that we can avoid slipping further on the dangerous slope and put instead our world on the right path.

Sadly, 8 years later, the world is not on track to meet these SDGs (Council of Councils, 2023). We will discuss the arguments of several scholars who explain why this is largely a failure of contemporary leadership (Bendell, Little, & Sutherland, 2018; MacKie,

2024a). We need sustainable leadership and, as we will argue, global coaching can be instrumental in promoting such highly required leadership.

**From ESG programs to positive impact creation**

Before the SDGs, ESG (environmental, social, and governance) programs have represented a positive step toward sustainability. The Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship (BCCCC) has shown how ESG programs can create value for companies along four dimensions (growth, return on capital, risk management, quality management) while addressing global challenges. One essential aspect is to ensure ESG programs are closely aligned with a company's core business and capabilities (BCCCC, 2009; Rosinski, 2010).

There have been some criticisms though about ESG. Several authors have argued that we need to move beyond ESG management to achieve true sustainability (Muff, 2024; Eubank, 2024). While recognizing that "it is better to overhaul than to bin ESG", the Economist nevertheless indicates numerous flaws (e.g., "negligible impact on carbon emissions"; "its attempt to address social issues such as workplace diversity is hard to measure"; "as for governance, the ESG industry does a lousy job of holding itself to account, let alone the companies it is supposed to be stewarding") (The Economist, 2022). Moreover, Donald Eubank highlights a fundamental limitation: "many investors and business leaders have used ESG and materiality only to determine the risks *to* the operation of businesses from climate-changed related risks. What they have left out is how their own business can create negative outcomes for external stakeholders - and possible positive ones" (2024). Note that 'materiality' is "the importance of an item of information to a decision-maker", which in the context of sustainability reporting, refers to "the importance of sustainability issues to a company's financial performance and its impact on the environment and society" (Hannay, 2023).

James Hannay contrasts 'single materiality', which represents the traditional approach to sustainability reporting, with 'double materiality', a more progressive approach gaining in popularity. While the former "focuses on the impact of sustainability issues on a company's financial value" and "is more likely to be used by companies that are primarily focused on their financial performance" (and prone to "greenwashing"), the latter "considers both the impact of sustainability issues on a company's financial value and the impact of the company's activities on the environment and society" and "is more likely to be used by companies that are committed to sustainability and social responsibility".

'Impact' has been defined as "positive and negative changes in outcomes for people and the planet" (Impact Frontiers, n.d.) and 'impact investing' as "investments made with the intention to generate positive, measurable social and/or environmental impact alongside a financial return" (Global Sustainable Investment Alliance, 2024).

Eubank explains that 'intentionality' is core to impact creation. These businesses and those who finance them are purpose-driven, genuinely intending to create positive social or/and environmental impact. He argues that "the impact perspective is how businesses and investors can contribute to the SDGs". Impact serves as a "guide for building new business models and products that will create revenue as they contribute solutions to humankind's most wicked problems" (Eubank, 2024).

ESG risk-based management amounts to promoting a weak form of sustainability, which Nancy Landrum (2024) also sees as unsustainable (see Table 1). Referring to Pearce (1993), Landrum sees sustainability on a continuum of varying degrees with five stages. The 'weak sustainability' comes in the first three varieties: *compliance* (companies doing the strict minimum required and enforced by external bodies), *business-centered* (companies adopting sustainability actions that directly benefit them or their immediate stakeholders) and *systemic* (companies that are doing more good by pursuing systemic change, while still focusing on

growth, production and consumption that would not be sustainable). In contrast, the last two stages, *regenerative* and *coevolutionary* forms, provide a net positive impact and are therefore truly sustainable. The former aims at repairing the commons by restoring nature and seeks qualitative development within planetary boundaries. The latter goes one step further by striving to operate in harmony and synergy with other social, environmental, and economic systems.

An example of regenerative sustainability is New York's decision to strategically regenerate natural systems on which it relied for clean water instead of building a water filtration plant. This restoration project improved biodiversity and created a healthier ecosystem, while allowing substantial financial savings (i.e., spending approximately $1.5 billion in restoration instead of investing $4 to $6 billion for a water filtration plant, not to mention $250 million in annual operating costs) (Landrum, 2024).

Interface, a carpet manufacturer in the United States, exemplifies coevolutionary sustainability, with a long history of sustainability initiatives, using notably mimicry design strategies to replicate the referent ecosystem services and circular economy principles (Landrum, 2024). Having already achieved zero negative impact in 2019, one year ahead of plan, the company aims to become carbon negative by 2040. Remarkably, "to achieve this, the company is measuring its own emissions as well as those of its supply chain to determine its carbon impact. This involves calculating the three classes of emissions as defined by the Scope 3 Standard, including those created by suppliers and customers" (Fairs, 2021). Note that Scope 3 is the most ambitious standard, characteristic of an organization that "fully appreciates and addresses its wide-ranging levels of impact and responsibility" (Dahlmann, 2024).

At this point though, these positive examples are the exceptions rather than the norm. "Business as usual" still prevails (MacKie, 2024b; Landrum, 2024).

| Conservative business approach | True sustainable business approach | Authors |
|---|---|---|
| ESG risk-based management<br>Primary focus on risks<br>Single materiality | Positive impact creation<br>Primary focus on opportunities<br>Double materiality<br>Contribute to the SGDs | Katrin Muff, Donald Eubank |
| Weak sustainability (i.e., unsustainability)<br>Compliance<br>Business-Centered<br>Systemic | Strong sustainability<br>Regenerative<br>Coevolutionary | David Pearce, Nancy Landrum |

Table 1. Sustainability business approaches on a continuum

However, the tide is turning. Schoenmaker and Schramade (2018) articulate four reasons why companies should integrate the social and environmental externalities: first, to anticipate regulation and taxation (such as a high carbon tax already introduced by Sweden); second, to avoid reputational risk (e.g., pressure from NGOs); third, to be future-proof (your business model may get outdated and your assets stranded); and fourth, because it is the right thing to do (ethics). Resisting the change exposes your company to these risks (think of Kodak, which missed the shift to digital photography (Anthony, 2016)), while transforming proactively allows to mitigate the risks and to possibly gain a competitive advantage by seizing the new opportunities.

**From contemporary to sustainable leadership**

Myriads of definitions exist about 'leadership'. In 1961, William Prentice offered the following: "Leadership is the accomplishment of a goal through the direction of human assistants. The man who successfully marshals his human collaborators to achieve particular ends is a leader" (Prentice, 1961).

Let me offer a simpler version: "leadership is the process of engaging others towards achieving a goal (or goals)". Importantly, I concur with Tina Evans that "leadership is as good as the purpose it serves" (Evans, 2011).

Leadership takes place within a context and is influenced by culture. It implies some form of collaboration between the leader and their followers (in the traditional leader-follower dyad) or stakeholders (in the more general sense). McManus and Perruci suggest that "leadership is the process by which leaders and followers work together towards a goal (or goals) within a context shaped by cultural values and norms" (McManus & Perruci, 2020).

Sustainable leadership is leadership towards sustainable goals. It is leadership in the service of sustainable and flourishing human and non-human lives, committed to respect and restore natural ecosystems and a healthy planet.

Different terms have been used in the literature to mean something equivalent or close: ecological leadership (Ives & Wilkinson, 2024) or eco-leadership (Western, 2018), environmental leadership (Berry & Gordon, 1993; Karamally & Robertson, 2024), among others.

Sustainable leadership is required to bridge the gap between our current reality and the positive impact creation necessary to achieve the SGDs.

It concerns everyone: we all can take responsibility to advance the sustainability agenda and encourage others. We do so though our various choices and actions, as citizens, consumers, parents, professionals, etc. In this article, I will primarily refer to leaders is business firms, but the ideas and practices here also apply to leaders in other organizations and contexts.

Before examining the attributes of sustainable leadership, it is worth listing some characteristics of contemporary leadership, which has proven inadequate to further sustainability (see MacKie (2024b)):

Goal: Profit and market share, economic prosperity

Beneficiaries: Shareholder primacy

Worldview: Anthropocentric

Ethical stance: Amoral

Situation: Tragedy of the Commons (due to short-term horizon combined with analytical thinking) (Hardin, 1968)

Power: Concentrated (hierarchy and competition)

In the 'anthropocentric' (i.e., human-centered) view, "only humans are viewed as having a moral standing" (Brown & McManus, 2024). This does not mean that the environment should be ignored but it implies that caring for the environment only matters to the extent it contributes to human well-being.

'Amoral' means being without moral bearings (i.e., having no sense of right and wrong), and not realizing that what you are doing may be wrong. It is different from 'immoral', which means knowing what is right and wrong, but doing wrong anyway (Vocabulary.com). Executives or coaches adopt an amoral stance when they insist on being neutral, on not taking a stand, arguing that their role is to achieve business goals regardless of their broader impact (or to help their coachees do so).

The 'Tragedy of the Commons' refers to the all-too-frequent situations where individuals or companies pursue their own interests and end up damaging the common

resources that constitute the basis of their own well-being and the well-being of others. This deleterious pattern is due to a lack of both long-term and systemic thinking.

There characteristics can be further exacerbated with the destructive 'dark triad' of leadership (see Figure 1), overrepresented among corporate executives compared to the general population. These toxic leaders are "simply less concerned about environmental and sustainability issues" (Pelster & Schaltegger, 2021).
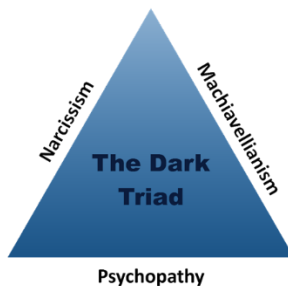


Figure 1: The 'dark triad' of leadership
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Sustainable leadership is different in many ways (see MacKie (2024b)):
Goal: Sustainable flourishing, net positive
Beneficiaries: Multiple stakeholders
Worldview: Eco-centric
Ethical stance: Ethical maturity
Situation: Long-term horizon and systemic thinking (allowing to break the "Tragedy of the Commons" pattern)
Power: Distributed (shared leadership and collaboration)

Note that sustainable leadership transcends contemporary leadership without excluding it (except in its destructive form). For example, it still aims for economic prosperity but strives to make it compatible with a net positive impact (companies give more to the world than what they take - Polman & Winston, 2022); it still is in the service of shareholders but ambitions to also serve all the other stakeholders; it still values short-term imperatives and analytical thinking, as long as these go together with a long-term horizon and with systemic thinking, etc. In other words, sustainable leadership is a more inclusive and complex form of leadership ("and" versus "or").

Several scholars explain how the pursuit of societal and ecological goals can be reconciled with competition in the market. Alex Edmans (2021) shows that 'win-win' scenarios exist. His research notably demonstrates that fostering employee well-being boosts long-term business performance. However, Ranjay Gulati (2022) recognizes that 'win-win' is not always possible (sometimes you cannot have the cake and eat it too) and suggests pursuing 'deep purpose' instead. This is a form of practical idealism: being purpose-driven, genuinely committed to solve social and environmental problems, while recognizing the necessity to generate wealth as well as to build a lasting company. These leaders are ready to sacrifice one of these agendas in the short term when they must to achieve long-term sustainable success, which requires purpose and profit.

Concerning 'stakeholders', to avoid confusion and controversy, Lynn Paine (2023) urges to specify which 'stakeholder capitalism' and associated corporate governance the company is adopting, with four versions from weakest to strongest commitment to nonshareholder stakeholders: "instrumental (managers should respect stakeholders' interests when doing so will maximize long-term returns to shareholders), classic (companies have

ethical and legal obligations to stakeholders that must be respected whether or not doing so is likely to maximize shareholder value), beneficial (the corporate objective is improving all stakeholders' well-being rather than just maximizing value for shareholders), and structural (to protect stakeholder interests, stakeholders other than shareholders should have formal powers in corporate governance)". Paine explains that beneficial stakeholderism calls for a more expansive commitment to the well-being of stakeholders than classic stakeholderism. Still, without modifying the corporate governance, "few … appear willing to forgo meaningful returns for a greener planet or more equitable society". Yet, structural stakeholderism is not the panacea either since directors may serve the interests of the groups they represent at the expense of the company's interests. While only beneficial and structural stakeholderism could be viewed as truly sustainable, those in charge need to genuinely want to serve all stakeholders to make a positive impact.

Sustainable leadership is eco-centric in that it attributes an intrinsic value to ecosystems with both their living and non-living components (Brown & McManus, 2024). It is concerned with ethics (Rosinski, 2024). It embraces shared leadership and collaboration to advance the SDGs (MacKie, 2024b).

Among the initiatives to define the leadership attributes needed to further the sustainability agenda, let me also mention the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL), which has proposed the following definition: "A sustainability leader is someone who inspires and supports action towards a better world" (Visser & Courtice, 2011). The CISL has offered a model including the leadership context, individual characteristics, and actions, while noting that "the gap between sustainability aspirations or imperatives and actual performance remains wide". More recently, the Ekskäret Foundation and its partners have developed the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), "a framework of the human capabilities, qualities and transformative skills that are needed to successfully build a better world", in connection with the SDGs (Jordan et al., 2021). The authors make the case for moving from "the modernist cultural perception of 'separateness'" to "'complexity awareness'", appreciating that IDGs are "aspects of integrated human systems – individual or collective". They insist however that "the IDG framework is primarily a communications tool, and not itself an intervention, a training programme, or a path of inner work".

**Global coaching to promote sustainable leadership**

'Global coaching' (Rosinski, 2010) is fully aligned with the sustainable leadership attributes described above, with the CISL model and the IDG skills and qualities, as well as with its underlying complexity/interconnectedness paradigm. Global coaching is an integrated approach that calls upon multiple interconnected perspectives (physical, managerial, psychological, political, cultural, and spiritual) to facilitate the unleashing of our human multifaceted potential toward meaningful pursuits. Global coaching allows to raise awareness and to define success in a broad and sustainable fashion (the *what* question). But importantly, it also permits to go beyond these first steps to effectively enable this success (the *how* question). It empowers to bridge the vision-realization gap and offers multiple complementary paths of inner work.

The 'Global Scorecard' (Rosinski, 2003) invites to articulate specific coaching objectives along four dimensions: Self (taking great self-care –including internal measures such as feelings– and external measures such as health indicators like body-fat percentage), Family and Friends (sharing love and friendship), Organization (adding value to the organization's stakeholders), and Community and World (improving the world). It offers a critical difference with the 'Balanced Scorecard' (Kaplan & Norton, 1996): while the Balanced Scorecard only considers factors that contribute to business success, the Global Scorecard includes all dimensions in their own rights. SDGs can clearly be linked to the

Community and World category, and the corresponding indicators of success matter, whether or not they translate into business profit. The associated 'Global Coaching Process' (Rosinski, 2003) can therefore be viewed as a coaching approach that fully supports sustainable leadership. Global coaching, described in (Rosinski, 2003, 2010), is sustainable coaching.

I was recently coaching a senior executive from a pharmaceutical company. Bringing the 'Community and World' explicitly into the picture led her to this reflection: "My company's mission is to improve the lives of patients. I realize however that our drugs are only one part of the solution. More could be done to serve our patients". I asked her about what else could be done. This led to discussing the example of Novo Nordisk, which is taking various initiatives to combat diabetes, particularly by sponsoring prevention initiatives: "As a leader in diabetes care, we have an obligation to people's health, and a business interest in resilient healthcare systems that can afford our innovations for people living with diabetes. To tackle both the rising prevalence of type 2 diabetes and obesity, we are taking actions to stop these diseases before they start. Our current focus is on two of these leverage points - urban health, and childhood overweight and obesity" (Novo Nordisk, 2024). We then talked about how she could promote these sorts of initiatives in her company, increasing her company's positive impact externally while promoting a sense of purpose and genuine engagement internally.

Global coaching can be deployed as an intervention that typically involves a combination of consulting (needs analysis, leadership curriculum design, HR agenda), training (tailored and experiential leadership development) and executive coaching (to facilitate the leaders' development journeys facing challenges along the way). We have successfully used this approach in executive coaching and broader leadership development programs, in team coaching and in organizational development internationally in the past thirty years. In Rosinski (2018a), referring to research from Pfeffer (2015) and Beer et al. (2016) as well as my own experience, I discussed two categories of reasons for the disappointing impact of traditional leadership development programs (lack of systemic vision and inadequate trainings) and explained how global leadership/coaching interventions remedy for these two problems.

**Different forms of coaching**

Coaching is "the art of facilitating the unleashing of people's potential to reach meaningful, important objectives" (Rosinski, 2003).

Coaching promotes individual responsibility and autonomy. Two years after a coaching journey together, a former coachee recently commented on the fact that he had crystallized his frustration by blaming his boss. Through the coaching process, he became more aware of his own responsibility in the difficulties he was experiencing. This was not a case of having to deal with a toxic manager: she was far from perfect (who is?) but nevertheless rather benevolent. He became more conscious and able to replace destructive psychological games with self-care and constructive relationships. He is now happier, more serene and effective at work. Empowering people and fostering their sense of responsibility constitutes an essential coaching contribution.

Coaching typically involves helping coachees tap into their own experiences, insights, and wisdom: "Coaches listen, ask questions, and enable coachees to discover for themselves what is right for them". Coaching can be contrasted with other (and sometimes complementary) helping professions (mentoring, therapy, consulting, and teaching) (Rosinski, 2003). This is far from saying that coaching itself is monolithic. Coaching can take various forms, notably linked to diverse cultural preferences.

A critical question is whether or not coaches can share knowledge while still acting as coaches. Several authors have argued that some input from coaches is necessary in some

coaching practices (notably executive coaching), such as content education (Sohl et al., 2021) and business knowledge (Berman, 2019). Western (2018) and DiGirolamo (2024) anticipate and hope for more knowledge-sharing in the area of sustainability. This is consistent with global coaching where sharing knowledge and tools from various perspectives serves to empower coachees, so they can become their best coaches rather than being dependent on coaches who would not divulge their know-how.

Coaching can be represented on a directive- non-directive continuum, adapted from DiGirolamo (2024):

$$\longleftarrow \quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad \longrightarrow$$

Directive coaching                                          Non-directive coaching
(The coach manages the process,                 (The coach manages the process)
offers appropriate guidance, and shares somerelevant knowledge)

Examples of knowledge/tools shared by the coach include the 'Cultural Orientations Framework' (Rosinski, 2018b) and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015).

However, before engaging in more directive forms of coaching, it is useful that coaches learn to master the basics, i.e. non-directive coaching (as described by the International Coaching Federation and other leading coaching associations). This will ensure that guiding and imparting knowledge don't prevent coaches from still acting as facilitators. For a demo (in French) of non-directive coaching, see (ICF Synergie, 2022).

Coaching can also be represented on another axis, mirroring the type of leadership it is intended to promote, ethical versus amoral (contemporary leadership).

$$\longleftarrow \quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad\quad \longrightarrow$$

Ethical                                                                          'Neutral'

Coaches striving for 'neutrality' assimilate ethics to the adherence of a coaching code of conduct that includes basic deontological rules such as maintaining confidentiality and avoiding conflicts of interest. They help their coachees achieve their goals without being concerned about the nature of these goals, and whether these lead to a positive or negative planetary impact. These coaches have good intentions: they don't want to influence their coachees with their own views, they want to help their coachees do what matters and seems right to them.

The problem is that neutrality is neither possible (e.g., we all have cultural biases even if we are not aware of them) nor desirable (e.g., it would amount to helping coachees becoming more successful in prolonging unsustainability).

Coaching needs to become ethical to become sustainable, which can best be informed by a combination of philosophical ethics (spiritual perspective) and interculturalism (cultural perspective) (Rosinski, 2024).

As we are about to delve into the six perspectives associated with global coaching, it is important to recognize that these perspectives are interconnected. For example, living purposefully (spiritual perspective) has a positive impact on healthy longevity (physical perspective) (Buettner, 2023), and conversely exercise (physical) can be a form of meditation (spiritual) (Cengiz, 2020). Our behaviors are influenced by psychological and cultural factors: someone's apparent shyness could come from a lack of confidence, be a cultural manifestation (e.g., Japanese politeness and collectivism), or both.

This interconnection does not mean that we can afford to rely on limited viewpoints. Each perspective sheds light on unique aspects of reality. Addressing situations from multiple angles is particularly necessary for challenges that resist habitual solutions. The trap is illustrated by this classic Sufi tale:

"'What have you lost, Mulla?'
'My key,' said Nasrudin.
After a few minutes of searching, the other man said,
'Where did you drop it?'
'At home.'
'Then why, for heaven's sake, are you looking here?'
'There is more light here.'" (The Idries Shah Foundation, 2024)
Rather than doing more of the same, we want instead to examine the zones not lit by our current lamppost. This implies a readiness to learn from diverse disciplines.

## Physical perspective

"The physical perspective aims at actively nurturing the body, our precious yet fragile foundation." (Rosinski, 2010)

Although we all know the expression "a healthy mind in a healthy body" ("Mens sana in corporate sano"), I observe that this crucial physical aspect is typically overlooked in sustainable leadership models, and that many coaches and leaders often don't refer to it.

In his book "The Blue Zones" (2023) and Netflix series "Live to 100" (2023), Dan Buettner unveils lessons from the healthiest places on earth. This is not only about "adding years to our lives", but also about "adding life to our years". Importantly, Buettner notices that "the same things that help us live a long healthy life are the things that make life worth living". And I would just add: and that make our world more sustainable! These 'things' involve nurturing relationships and living purposefully, in place of mindless consumerism. They favor a plant-based diet, which is better both for our health and for the planet than consuming meat, not to mention the alleviation of unnecessary animal suffering (see Singer (2015)).

Buettner has shown how we can create environments that promote healthy behaviors in place of deleterious habits (e.g., junk food, sedentariness, stressful lives).

Global coaching encourages leaders to learn about nutrition, physical exercise and other activities that increase our health, fitness, and well-being, and to proactively consider the following questions:

How can you increase your vitality and create the conditions for your optimal & sustainable performance?

How can you promote wellness in your organization?

How can your increase your health and well-being while reducing your ecological footprint?

The physical perspective is directly related to SDG 3 ("Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages") but it is also linked to SDG 8 ("Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all"). Decent work involves indeed safety and harmony at work in place of excessive and damaging pressure. I was recently coaching a senior executive who was very consumed by his work. He had given up on physical exercise, "having no time for it". Inviting him to consider the physical perspective by reflecting on these questions, as well as helping him to give himself the permission for self-care (psychological perspective), led him to bring sport practice back in his life. The new fitness routine reduced his negative stress and increased his well-being. At the end of our coaching journey, this executive confided in me that our work together had saved him from a burnout.

## Managerial perspective

"Management is a task that consists in focusing resources on the organization's goals, and then monitoring and managing the use of these resources." (Campbell, 1991)

The simple 'situational leadership' model (Hersey, 1979-1993) allows to choose among four leadership styles to help followers (typically subordinates) increase their 'readiness level' for various critical tasks. The readiness level is a combination of ability and willingness, which itself includes motivation and sense of responsibility (Rosinski, 2010). Interestingly, despite overlooking psychological and cultural preferences, the model can help to gradually shift one's leadership to delegation and full empowerment. In this sense, it offers a practical mechanism to promote the shared leadership that distinguishes sustainable from contemporary leadership.

The managerial perspective is also concerned with measurements. Referring to the SGDs is probably currently the best way to ensure that the chosen KPIs are consistent with creating a positive impact.

Coaching questions could be:

How can you adjust your coaching style to help your coachees in various situations?

What leadership styles do you tend to overuse? To underuse?

How can you help your subordinates increase their readiness level?

How can you best adapt your leadership style to each situation?

What KPIs will you choose to contribute to the SDGs in order to create a positive impact?

I have often coached executives who wished they could rely more on their subordinates to take initiatives and to perform tasks autonomously with high quality standards. When I ask how they communicate with these subordinates, they typically explain the instructions they give. Sharing the situational model allows them to become more mindful of the importance of asking questions (preferably open questions). By shifting from a 'telling' to a 'coaching' style, they realize that they can increase their subordinates' autonomy and eventually be able to use a 'delegating' style. This in turn is conducive to a more stimulating working environment, to everyone's benefit. If in addition, the KPIs are chosen in relation to the SDGs, this also benefits society at large.

**Psychological perspective**

"Psychology is the study of individual personality, behaviors, emotions, and mental processes. Psychology differs from culture in that its primary focus is the individual rather than the collective." (Rosinski, 2010).

I have advocated for an integrated approach, learning from different schools in psychology, including behavioral & cognitive psychology, transactional analysis, neuro-linguistic programming, psychological profiles (e.g., MBTI® (Briggs Myers, 2000), FIRO-B® (Waterman & Rogers, 2007)), positive psychology, psychodynamics (in particular: unconscious defense mechanisms), social psychology, and cognitive neuroscience.

This can help to promote healthy and mature egos, an 'OK-OK' attitude (Harris, 1969), constructive, benevolent, and fluid relationships. These qualities relate to many aspects of the IDG framework, such as self-awareness, presence, empathy and compassion, communication skills, and trust, among others. In other words, coaching from a psychological perspective generally contributes to build sustainable leadership.

One aspect worth emphasizing are cognitive biases associated with "climate change inertia" (Eckardt & Mazutis, 2024). Eckardt and Mazutis have shown how four biases (framing, anchoring, availability, and professional identity) lead to this inertia and how becoming aware is the first step to overcoming them. For example, framing 'global warming' as some temperature increase in a distant future or simply as 'climate change' does not convey a sense of urgency. Furthermore, adding low (e.g., only 2° increase) and remote anchors (e.g., carbon reduction goals by 2050) invites to not worry and deal about this now. 'Availability heuristic' is the tendency to pay attention to immediate top-of-mind examples

while ignoring other important elements (Kahneman, 2011). We may enjoy the unusual warm and sunny spring weekend without seeing the adverse global warming effects. We may savor a walk in the nearby park without considering the tragic deforestation in Amazonia, etc. The professional identity bias refers to a narrow focus on the norms and conventions of one's profession (e.g., a business executive focusing on profit-maximization and shareholder value, with no concern for externalities).

Global coaches can also help raise awareness about pitfalls revealed by social psychology. For example, we tend to take our cues from people around us, for better or worse. Latané and Darley (1970) have revealed this 'bystander effect': we are less likely to assist a victim in the presence of other people who don't intervene. We are also prone to 'obedience' (Milgram, 1974), complying with individuals perceived as authority figures. Taken together, these two phenomena mean we are at high risk of conforming with practices in our organizations, even when these are harmful to the environment and unsustainable.

The good news though is that once we become aware of these phenomena, we can choose to not fall prey to them. Coaches can help coachees explore the various options to do so.

Here are some coaching questions:

How can you make the most of various schools in psychology to improve your coaching/ leadership, and make it more sustainable?

How can you further develop your emotional intelligence?

What else can you learn to understand psychological preferences, motives, and dynamics, to promote constructive relationships and to foster healthy contact with your emotions?

How can you recognize and overcome cognitive biases and resistances in the way of sustainability?

How can you be aware of social dynamics that could lead to unsustainable behaviors, and not fall prey to these?

**Political perspective**

"Politics is an activity that builds and maintains your power so that you can achieve your goals. Power is the ability to achieve your meaningful, important goals. Politics is a process. Power is potential, and it comes from many sources." (Rosinski, 2010)

In my experience, politics in organizations still has largely a negative connotation, suggesting hidden agendas, manipulation, deceit and jockeying for positions. I have shown that it is inherent to organizations and inevitable, and that it can become constructive when the quest for power is associated with a commitment to service. While the former allows us to have a greater impact (for better or worse), the latter guides our actions to make a positive difference.

This perspective still appears to be lacking in sustainability leadership models. However, it is essential so we can move from 'idealists' (high service but low power) to 'enlightened builders' (high service and high power) (Rosinski, 2010).

Coaching from a political perspective allows to identify and tap into potential sources of power, and to engage in constructive politics necessary for impactful sustainable leadership.

Coaching questions include:

How can you build your power?

How can you increase your impact and make it positive by serving others?

How can you help your coachees build their power and have a greater net positive impact?

I have had the privilege of coaching remarkable CEOs and senior executives who became CEOs. Peter Leyland, one of the best leaders I have had the chance to work with, declared that our coaching had the greatest influence in his career (PIR International, 2020). Sadly, we also see the dark triad of leadership overrepresented among top executives (and political leaders), while competent and well-intentioned executives in their organizations don't reach the C-suite. In my experience, one reason is that these executives may have an aversion to engage in politics… and get passed over for promotions. Coaching from a political perspective is first about helping these executives to appreciate that politics is part of their job. And then it is about guiding them to systematically build internal and external alliances (among other relevant sources of power), so that can achieve their ambition while increasing their positive impact.

**Cultural perspective**

"A group's culture is the set of unique characteristics that distinguishes its members from another group." It includes visible aspects such as behaviors and artefacts and invisible characteristics (norms, value, basic assumptions/fundamental beliefs). (Rosinski, 2003)

Several authors have highlighted the importance of developing intercultural competence for sustainable leadership (DiGirolamo, 2024; Jordan et al., 2021).

This stems from the necessity to be able to collaborate with different actors and to deal with various stakeholders, with diverse cultural preferences.

However, more generally, coaching from a cultural perspective helps to broaden one's worldview and to become more creative. This supports the development of sustainability attributes, including "creativity" (CISL et IDG), "diverse stakeholder view" (CISL), and "inclusive mindset" (IDG).

One challenge, captured by SDG 17, involves transformational partnerships. The greater the cultural differences between the partners, the greater the difficulty to turn these ventures into successes, but the greater also the opportunity to make a significant difference. Diversity is indeed a double-edge sword. 'Coaching across cultures' (i.e., the systematic weaving of interculturalism into coaching) is about deploying the richness that lies in cultural diversity (Rosinski, 2003). It supports transformational partnerships (Rosinski, 2024) and more generally cooperation among diverse actors.

Here are some essential coaching questions:

How can you make the most of cultural differences for fruitful collaboration among diverse actors?

How can you leverage cultural diversity for increased inclusion, unity, creativity, and positive impact?

I systematically use the COF assessment (Rosinski, 2018b) to help my coachees become aware of their cultural orientations, of how these affect their leadership and of how they can expand their cultural repertoire. This helps them to deal more effectively with different people as well as to increase their own creativity.

Since 2006, during the "Leading & Coaching Across Cultures/Cultural Orientations Framework (COF) assessment" programs (Rosinski & Company, 2020), participants live the experience of becoming enriched with cultural differences and of building unity in diversity. The Kenichi Ohmae Graduate School of Business has offered the course "Coaching Across Cultures for Managers" since 2008 (now in partnership with BOND University) (BOND-BBT MBA, 2024). The IESEG School of Management has made interculturalism a central component in its curricula, winning a trophy for pedagogical innovation (IESEG, 2018). Hopefully, intercultural coaching will be included more systematically in management and leadership development programs, so executives can become better equipped to advance SDG 17.

**Spiritual perspective**

"Spirituality is an increased awareness of a connection with self, others, nature, with the immanent and transcendent "divine". It is also the ability to find meaning, derive purpose and appreciate life." (Rosinski, 2010)

The spiritual perspective can be informed by secular philosophy, religious traditions, mythologies, and mysticism.

I notice that sustainability leadership models don't seem to refer explicitly to spirituality. However, sustainable leadership is purposeful in essence and could benefit from a more systematic exploration of spiritual sources.

Coaching from a spiritual perspective can start with asking simple yet crucial questions, while offering a safe environment enabling coachees to candidly explore these fundamental areas:

What is your purpose?

What is truly important to you?

What is the legacy you want to leave behind?

It can involve artistic activities (collages, drawings, etc.) to help uncover that deeper purpose (letting our intuitive brain speak up).

Coaching from a spiritual perspective helps to develop 'ethical leadership' defined as "(a) the practice of leaders using various approaches of ethics to make ethically sound decisions and (b) using one's position of leadership to bring about positive change" (Brown & McManus, 2024).

Here are some coaching questions inspired by philosophical ethics:

How can I act in a way that could be universalized and makes me worthy of being called human? (Deontological ethics – Kant's categorical imperative) (Kant, 1785)

Note: the choice here is not determined heteronomously (i.e., by something external such as a code of conduct) but should rather be dictated freely by our conscience.

How could I foster the greatest good for the greatest number? (Teleological ethics - Bentham and Mill's utilitarianism) (Bentham, 1781; Mill, 1863)

Note: It is difficult to imagine "doing the greatest good for the greatest number" in today's world without referring to planetary environmental, social, and economic imperatives.

What kind of person do I want to be? How can I increase my humanity in this situation? How can I become a good person? How can I act as a role model? (Teleological ethics – Aristotle's virtue ethics) (Aristotle, 335-322 BC)

Coaching from a spiritual perspective contributes to develop other attributes associated with sustainable leadership such as 'presence' and 'optimism' (IDG), notably by adopting the 'sunflower strategy' (Rosinski 2010), inspired by the Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), resolutely turning toward the light, noticing and being grateful for the gifts of the day.

It includes many other aspects, which support deep inner development conducive to sustainability: mindfulness, search for meaning, dealing with hardship, existential exploration (notably learning from the great philosophers to address the ultimate concerns of the human condition), and raising our level of consciousness.

Importantly, as is the case for all the other perspectives, global coaches first ask themselves these questions, always striving to be congruent, embodying the human qualities they help others to develop.

In my experience, this domain is sometimes alluded to in leadership development programs but without going as far as calling a spade a spade. The word 'spirituality' may indeed be perceived as inappropriate in a business context. However, explicitly including

spirituality in coaching and leadership can be liberating, inviting people to consider purpose as a central theme rather than as a dispensable add-on. I make sure to clarify though that spirituality does not imply religiosity.

**Embracing the interconnectedness**

Different initiatives exit to promote the necessary business transformation, including sustainable finance, sustainable strategy, sustainable marketing, sustainable corporate governance, etc.

However, leaders at all levels are needed to make this happen. We can hope for the best or provide effective support to current and future leaders, so they become the sustainable leaders our world desperately needs.

Coaching itself needs to embrace the interconnectedness that characterizes our planetary reality. Beyond coaching from multiple perspectives, global coaching implies this paradigm shift, from separation (mechanistic worldview) to interconnection (complex, organic, holographic worldview).

It is outside the scope of this article to discuss this, but I refer the interested reader to Part III of 'Global Coaching' for an exploration of this domain, with reflections and examples for coaching and leadership development.

Let me just mention that embracing the interconnectedness has been associated with high levels of adult development (Erikson, 1963; Kegan in Berger, 2006), which is turn have been linked by several authors to sustainable development (MacKie, 2024b).

Through a combination of caring benevolence and constructive challenge, in a protected space (non-judgmental and confidential), global coaching provides a supportive context for leaders to engage in a deep personal reflection, to try out new behaviors and to devise concrete actions that will benefit them as well as the world at large. The process takes place over a period of time (typically 6 to 12 months), giving each leader the chance to convert intentions into actions, to learn from successes and to address difficulties along the way. Global coaching is not reserved for an elite though and could be more systematically included in education in universities and even in high schools (see notably Sell, Lynch, & Doe, 2016).

Global coaches are engaged in a life-long journey of learning from diverse disciplines including psychology as well as medicine, management, interculturalism, politics, philosophy, and more. Coaches may not have the expert knowledge of specialists in these various fields. Their unique strength is in being generalists interested in all these disciplines and integrators of multiple perspectives, helping leaders address complex challenges from various angles to promote sustainability and flourishing for all living species.

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