



**BOOK REVIEW CUCINO V., DI MININ A., FERRUCCI L.,
PICCALUGA A., LA BUONA IMPRESA. STORIE DI START UP PER
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Abstract

The book tries to answer the following research question: can you contribute to the common good by doing business? The need to change our economy is expressed in many quarters due to the enormous environmental and social problems. One of the most accredited theses is that this change can only occur through collective action. In fact, more and more companies operate with the aim of "improving the world": in particular, in many startups - even in the awareness of having to achieve an economic-financial balance - there is a strong desire to generate social impact. The authors of the book devote attention to these types of businesses, describing and telling their stories, with the hope that the examples described can serve as a model and as an inspiration for many young potential entrepreneurs and for managers eager to rethink the traditional way of conceiving business.

Review

Among the many things that the health emergency of COVID 19 has taught us, in addition to the importance of cooperation and solidarity between people, communities, public institutions, States and social actors in general, the strategic role of the firm also stands out. Firms as institutions capable of addressing and solving the needs of citizens and the population in an organized manner, by preparing health systems to fight the virus and in many other ways. However, it also emerges that the firm operating in the current capitalist system according to the traditional paradigms of the creation of value for the shareholders begins to be questioned. An example is the request for greater attention to society, such as the use of knowledge for the manufacture of vaccines worldwide by renouncing – or reducing - the patent protection of know-how which is often created also thanks to the contribution of public funding (Pencarelli, 2020). But the aims of the company have been questioned for some time and are subject to harsh criticism from the media and public opinion, increasing disapproval and intolerance at the emergence of socially deplorable and at least questionable behaviors by many organizations, qualified for this by Gallino (2005) as “irresponsible companies”. These companies, beyond the elementary obligations of the law, believe that they “do not have to answer to any public and private authority, or to public opinion regarding the consequences in the economic, social and environmental fields of its activities”. Gallino underlines how companies that act irresponsibly generate high social costs, such as those involved in corporate scandals, in large fiscal? escapes, in practicing salary levels and working conditions often at the limit of decency (eg. the gig economy sector), increasing their insecurity and in some cases informality, associated with the lack of legal guarantees, in building and relocating unsafe chemical plants in developing countries, in creating highly polluting productions without any environmental remediation action, in manufacturing products incorporating design defects known to the manufacturer that are dangerous for users, or in carrying out sudden productive relocations abroad with mass layoffs, without any scruple towards the communities that originally hosted the production sites. Attention to socially responsible companies and the need for fairness and transparency regarding the activities carried out by companies therefore grows in parallel with the occurrence of irresponsibility phenomena, but is also linked to other important factors of change in the environmental context that are prompting new position taken by public opinion, by governmental and supranational institutions and by pushing companies to take on problems previously considered to be the exclusive competence of the state and civil society. In this context, new challenges are opening up to companies, which are asked to continue producing goods and services to meet people’s needs

by creating value for shareholders, but also for other stakeholders, respecting environmental and ecosystem constraints. The advent of new business models is called for, attentive to the positive impact on a social and environmental level, as well as to profit. We therefore increasingly need “good company”, though we are not really sure what kind of companies they are. This is the subject of the essay by Cucino et al.(2021), which has the merit of collecting in an agile volume that is pleasant to read, a series of start-up stories born in the name of this new paradigm, aimed at creating a better world, like the Authors underline in the subheading of the book. The cases investigated were selected in the context of an Italian network for the enhancement of research, called Netval. These are cases of companies operating in different territories and in different economic sectors. Start-ups with a social vocation were investigated on the basis of some common interpretations: a) the role of previous experiences of entrepreneurs; b) the importance of managerial skills; c) the possession of interpersonal and networking skills; d) innovation that starts from the fragility of the people to whom the solutions are aimed; e) the role of advanced technologies; f) the contribution of universities to new entrepreneurship with a social vocation; g) the importance of local roots; h) the different future perspectives; i) contagious intrapredence.

In detail, the start-ups analyzed are the following: 1) Bioverse, which develops and markets electro-medical equipment designed for areas in difficult health situations and with scarce economic resources; 2) Catalyst srl, which operates in the sector of innovative construction, proposing a new way of producing bricks using waste materials obtained from demolition or from marble quarries 3) Diamante, acronym for diagnosis of autoimmune diseases using nanotechnologies, born as a spin-off of the University of Verona. The goal is to offer a tailor-made customer service for the eco-sustainable production of customized plant viral nanoparticles for applications in the cosmetic, nutraceutical and phytopharmaceutical fields; 4) eP-roInn, acronym of Energy and propulsion innovation, born as a spin-off of the University of Salerno with the aim of developing and marketing a kit for the conversion of traditional cars into solar hybrid vehicles, reducing consumption and emissions; 5) Glass to Power, is a spin-off of the University of Milano Bicocca with the aim of proposing sustainable building solutions, within the so-called Zero-Energy Building. The value proposition consists of photovoltaic windows capable of maintaining the transparency of the glass to allow sunlight to pass through the building and generate electricity at the same time; 6) Greenbone Ortho, born from a group of researchers from the Institute of Science and Technology of Ceramic Materials in Faenza that operates in the market of orthopedic biomaterials to provide solutions to bone defects. The challenge is to offer a possible and fast healing to patients with major bone damage through bone regeneration

based on wood materials. 7) IntendiMe, born as part of a Contamination Lab project of the University of Cagliari with the aim of improving the life of deaf and hearing impaired people. The solution offered consists of a system, named KitMoe, that, through special sensors, is able to detect any sound or vibration within the home or in similar places, such as offices, hotel rooms, transmitting a notice in real time to the person through a smartwatch that receives the reports and a specific app for device management; 8) LiMix, born from the idea of an industrial computer science student at the University of Camerino, developing a prototype of a support exoskeleton for people with motor disabilities in collaboration with teachers of the mathematics department of the same University. The innovation consists of a wearable device, called Talking Hands, which through sensors applied on the fingers, on the back of the hands and on the forearm, detects and translates every movement into data that it sends to the smartphone, which translates it into language thanks to a synthesizer vocal; 9) New Gluten World, born from a study by a researcher from the University of Foggia, which led to the creation of a patent entitled "Method for detoxifying gluten proteins from cereal grains". The patent allowed the start of the spin-off of the University of Foggia to create a technology that through a physico-chemical process reshapes the gluten proteins directly in the wheat, creating value for people with celiac disease; 10) Orange Fiber, is a Sicilian company born from the idea (later patented) of a Fashion Design student at the AFOL Moda institute in Milan and from the collaboration with the chemistry department of the Politecnico di Milano. The company produces sustainable fabrics for major fashion brands, such as Ferragamo and H&M, fabrics created using by-products of the citrus processing industry as raw material; 11) Personal Factory, born from the idea of an engineering student from the University of Trento, who creates a platform, called Origami, for the management of construction manufacturing processes in the cloud that today allows you to manage plants all over the world. The innovation allows the plant to dose, mix and bag the premixed product for construction, consisting of sand, cement, lime and gypsum. Value is created by promoting the use of local raw materials, reducing the polluted impact of transport and increasing the competitiveness of local producers; 12) PCUP (Public Cup), born from the idea of a student in philosophy of the University of Milan with the aim of offering an innovative glass, an alternative to disposable plastic cups, taking advantage of the approach of the internet of things. The innovative product is made of food-grade silicone, a light, flexible and versatile material, and includes chips that enable some integrated digital services, accessible via an app. The glass can be placed in your pocket, does not get damaged, withstands very high temperatures and does not generate chemical reactions with the drinks it comes into contact with. The innovation allows event organizers

to give it as a deposit to customers and customers to communicate with friends and carry out other operations via smartphone. All this eliminating the use of plastic with obvious environmental benefits; 13) Quid, is a social cooperative born from the idea of a young girl from Verona to make clothing using surplus and unused fabrics from other companies, usually of large size. The products are made thanks to the contribution of workers belonging to fragile population groups, at high risk of social exclusion; 14) TomaPaint, TomaPaint, born from the idea of a group of people with complementary skills in order to produce a natural bioresin extracted from the waste of the food industry, in particular from tomato peels. This is the cutin, which in nature has a protective action in the leaves and fruits of plants. The goal was to replace artificial resins with natural bioresins in the production of paints, with benefits for the environment and people's health; 15) UBT, Umbria Bioengineering Technology is a company born as a spin-off of the University of Perugia which operates mainly in the field of production and marketing of mammographs based on non-ionizing radiation. The company belongs to the world of benefit corporations and realizes innovations for the diagnosis of breast tumors as well as a saving of about 30% compared to traditional mammograms, also the carrying out of cancer diagnoses without any risk to women's health; 16) Transpar3nt has developed a digital platform based on a proprietary blockchain with the aim of facilitating and securing interactions between people, companies and organizations. Born from an idea of one entrepreneur. Transpar3nt offers a new vision of the world of business and relationships by enabling people and companies to create a global system of transparency through the promotion of ethical, collaborative and sustainable behaviors. The goal is to guarantee a relationship of trust in the interactions and economic transactions between different actors. thanks to the protection of data and information exchanged by actors; 17) The Baglioni brothers, who do not carry out a new enterprise, but propose an original artistic and musical path, creating didactic songs with a very high social impact on entire school groups. The goal is to combat high school drop-out through songs, trying to bring schools and high school students closer to that of music which usually absorb much of the life time of young people. The description of these entrepreneurial stories with a social vocation highlights that also in Italy the approach to business management is beginning to be inspired by new values, trying to reconcile the necessary pursuit of profit and economic balance with the ability to create value for the territory and for people, in full respect of natural capital and the environment. The text has the merit of bringing out positive entrepreneurial stories, often unknown, but representative of a model of "good business" that responds to the new challenges that the idea of creating a better world places before us all. Very important in these start-up events is the role played by many players in the

ecosystem of technological and social innovation, starting with universities, research centers, business networks and the system of venture capital lenders, both private and public.