

## University of Massachusetts Boston – EM Normandie Research Conference 2021

### Call for Papers

### *Assessing Corporate Social Performance: Taking the Context into Account and Lessons from COVID-19 Crisis Management*

**Online Conference, June 17-18, 2021**

That companies ought to be responsible for the impact of their activities on society is widely recognized as an approach to managing business often associated with the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). But the extent to which CSR practices and research have resulted in firms straying from a business case narrative (with its emphasis on financial performance objectives) and demonstrating a distinctive “*responsibility to society and a broader set of stakeholders beyond its shareholders*” (Wang et al., 2016, p. 534) remains questionable (Grisard et al., 2020). At the heart of the Corporate Social Performance (CSP) debate is the question of how CSR in its most authentic form can be combined with business economic (or financial) performance without being co-opted or annihilated by it. The literature suggests that the link between CSP and financial performance is highly dynamic and context-dependent, and by extension assessments of CSP processes and outcomes are to embrace a diverse set of (institutional, industrial, environmental, organizational or individual) dimensions that (uniquely) influence a firm’s operations (e.g., Awaysseh et al., 2020; Ben Lahouel et al., 2019; Zhao and Murrell, 2016).

Against this background, we call for papers that advance our understanding of context-specific assessment of CSP. We particularly aim to bring together researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds and using a variety of theoretical perspectives and methodologies to explore CSP as a mediator between CSR and business performance. Often (limitedly) expressed through accounting and market measures of profitability (Magnanelli Barbara and Izzo Maria, 2017), CSP has generally fallen short of embracing consideration of; e.g., (i) the pressures stemming from the broad institutional, industrial and environmental contexts of the firm (Arminen et al., 2018), (ii) the propensity of these pressures to evolve more or less predictably over time (Rikhardsson et al., 2020), and (iii) the capacity of firms to (re-)purpose themselves (Wang et al., 2016) and allocate resources to respond effectively (Shahzad et al., 2016) – i.e., avert societal harms and contribute to resiliency efforts.

In line with our focus on context as a central element of CSP assessment, we further encourage submissions from CSR/CSP scholars exploring how genuine and authentic CSR practices may have blossomed as a result of the necessity of responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. This extension of

the call will enable us to take stock of the lessons that can be learnt from the fight against the spread of the virus, develop our understanding of how organizations manage crisis through CSR, and eventually bring CSP to a level at which it may be distinctively refocused on stakeholders and society (Wood, 2010), notably thanks to the willingness of business managers to respond to a social/environmental issue as a moral imperative, and presumably without giving in to the temptation of ad ho utilitarianism (Sandin, 2008).

Submissions can be related to at least one of the following themes and questions:

- How does CSP assessment account for the diversity of institutional contexts?
- How does CSP assessment account for the specific characteristics of industries, in terms of pressures or stakeholders' expectations? Are some industries more advanced than others in terms of CSP measurement or assessment? [Proposals related to the maritime industry are particularly welcome since it represents a key research focus at EM Normandie Business School].
- Ontological and epistemological challenges:
  - How do business disciplines (accounting, finance, marketing, strategy etc.) matter for the assessment of CSP? Can/should other scholarly domains be incorporated?
  - What are the advantages and drawbacks of qualitative/quantitative studies to take into the context-specific dimensions of CSP?
- What can be learnt from the management of the COVID-19 crisis that can be usefully extended to develop a better assessment of CSP?
- Have business organizations manifesting strong CSR before the crisis been more resilient during the crisis than those who did not?
- How do companies use CSR to simultaneously demonstrate strong crisis management capabilities, maintain business continuity and contribute to societal resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Can the COVID-19 crisis act as a platform from which new distinctively more sustainable business (or CSR) practices can be developed? What are the similarities between the COVID-19 crisis and fully-fledged climate or biodiversity crisis?
- Do investors and other stakeholders recognize and appreciate companies' responses to COVID-19?
- Are corporate responses to COVID-19 shaped by governance structures and executives' individual characteristics, including gender and background?

**Special issue in 'Business Ethics, the Environment & Responsibility' (BEER) – formerly 'Business Ethics: A European Review'**

A special issue of BEER focusing on the implications of the COVID-19 on CSR research and practice is associated with the conference. Scholars who submit their work to the conference are encouraged to consider a submission to the special issue. A dedicated paper development workshop will be included in the conference program to facilitate exchanges between interested researchers and the special issue editors. Participation in the conference however is not necessary for submission to the

special issue. The call for paper can be downloaded [here](#).

### Submission schedule and format

The deadline for submissions to the 2021 UMASS-EM Normandie Business School conference is March 15, 2021. Submissions must be sent to Antonia Bonifacio ([abonifacio@em-normandie.fr](mailto:abonifacio@em-normandie.fr)) in electronic format (doc or pdf files).

We welcome both full papers up to 6,000 words and extended abstracts from 1,000 to 3,000 words.

A **Best Paper Award** will be presented to the full paper author(s) judged by the Scientific Committee to have written the best paper appearing in the conference. For a paper to be considered for the award, the following eligibility criteria must be met:

- The paper must be aligned with at least one of the themes or questions outlined in this call.
- The paper must have a clear link to theory and practice of CSR and CSP.
- The paper must be original work, not published or considered for publication elsewhere.
- At least one of the authors must have presented the paper during the conference.

The selection process, notification to authors, and registration of participants follows the following schedule:

<b>February 1, 2021</b>	Registration opens → <a href="https://www.em-normandie.com/fr/colloque-umass-em-normandie-assessing-corporate-social-performance">https://www.em-normandie.com/fr/colloque-umass-em-normandie-assessing-corporate-social-performance</a>
<b>March 15, 2021</b>	Deadline for submissions
<b>April 15, 2021</b>	Notification of acceptance
<b>May 17, 2021</b>	Deadline for registration
<b>June 17-18</b>	UMASS-EM Normandie Business School conference

**Conference fees:** 200€ (full fee), 140€ (Doctoral students).

### Scientific Committee:

- *Prof Sarah Alves*, EM Normandie Business School.
- *Prof Sylvaine Castellano*, EM Normandie Business School.
- *Dr Fabien Martinez*, EM Normandie Business School.
- *Prof Olivier Lamotte*, EM Normandie Business School.
- *Prof Atreya Chakraborty*, Professor of Finance, UMass Boston.
- *Dr Lucia Silva Gao*, UMass Boston.
- *Prof Frank Figge*, Kedge Business School.
- *Dr Tanusree Jain*, Trinity Business School.
- *Prof Yoann Bazin*, EM Normandie Business School.
- *Dr Khaled Saadaoui*, EM Normandie Business School.
- *Dr Mohammed Benlemlih*, EM Normandie Business School.
- *Dr Sabrina Tanquerel*, EM Normandie Business School.

**Conference web page:** <https://www.em-normandie.com/fr/colloque-umass-em-normandie-assessing-corporate-social-performance>.

For any questions, please contact: [abonifacio@em-normandie.fr](mailto:abonifacio@em-normandie.fr).

**We look forward to welcoming you to Paris in 2021!**

*The Organization Committee:*

*Fabien Martinez*, Associate Professor, EM Normandie Business School.

*Sylvaine Castellano*, Dean of Research, EM Normandie Business School

*Olivier Lamotte*, Associate Dean for Paris Campus, EM Normandie Business School

*Atreya Chakraborty*, Professor of Finance, UMass Boston.

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