

Chapter 10

Integrated Reporting, Integrated Thinking and Gaming Companies: Myths and Paradoxes



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10.1 Introduction

The chapter takes its ideas from the concept that there are some situations in which it is very difficult to speak about integrated thinking (Mella 2012) and integrated reporting (Eccles and Krzus 2010; Paternostro 2012; Busco et al. 2013; Mio 2016; Del Baldo and Nesheva-Kiosseva 2017). Especially when there are economic mechanisms that try to follow the patterns of development and money drain.

Moreover, in the transition from weak to strong sustainability (Baldarelli 2009; Baldarelli and Del Baldo 2017) an important role is played by the tools of accountability (Matacena 2017), especially by those tools adopted to measure and to account for corporate sustainability, that have a fundamental function of company legitimisation (Gray et al. 1993) within its own territory. In this chapter, we wish to analyse from the accounting perspective, the myths and paradoxes that can be found in the tools of accountability (Gray et al. 2014) in gambling companies (Cefaloni 2014).

The approach is based on the analysis of literature contributions regarding the relationship between sustainability development and accountability, and especially the transition from weak to strong sustainability (Bebbington and Contrafatto 2006). Furthermore, it is important that we include the role of accounting and social reporting, and integrated reporting too, in this transition (Gray et al. 1993), with particular reference to the role of “social emancipation”, which accounting and reporting may carry out in the aspects of eco-justice (Gray et al. 1993: 307) and therefore, it is especially important to underline legitimacy theory as the base framework for the empirical analyses. Following our view in this “emancipation process” Integrated Reporting (IR) is involved, because may change how to measure

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and to account the value that the company produces. Then IR may pursue to a more comprehensive concept of company as we can read in the IR Framework: “*Strategic focus and future orientation: An integrated report should provide insight into the organization’s strategy, and how it relates to the organization’s ability to create value in the short, medium and long term, and to its use of and effects on the capitals*” (IR Framework: 6). These aspects sum up the relationship between company culture and anthropological culture which foresees a helicoidally relationship (Catturi 2004; Lai 2004).

The chapter is based on the analysis of one significant research case (Naumes and Naumes 2006) related to the SISAL company.

The case analysis helps us understand the stakeholder’s expectations and such reflections can be drawn in the transition from weak to strong eco-justice, so that our idea is at the base of the building of integrated thinking, where gambling companies are involved.

The chapter involves the myths and paradoxes that can be found in the accountability instruments in certain sectors, such as gambling (Cefaloni 2014). These reflections can be considered from the point of view of their relationship between integrated reporting and integrated thinking.

About Integrated thinking derives from the following words: “. . . *But the parts of the world are all so related and linked to one another that I believe it impossible to know one without the other and without the whole. . . I hold it equally impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole and to know the whole without knowing the parts in details.*” (Mella 2012: V. Ed. or: Pascal 1901 (translation): 72).

This work is divided in the following sections: Sect. 10.2 describes literature review about legitimacy theory, weak and strong eco-justice and integrated thinking; Sect. 10.3 presents methodology of case analysis; Sect. 10.4 contains SISAL case and finally Sect. 10.5 is about discussion and conclusion.

In the next section, we are going to present literature regarding the passage from weak and strong eco-justice that consider based on legitimacy theory.

10.2 From Weak to Strong Eco-Justice, Integrated Thinking and the Legitimacy Theory: Some Notes

The company can survive where It is legitimised by society, since, in this way, It can: educate stakeholders, modify their perception of the business, direct attention towards (or distract attention away from) the negative aspects and finally and, eventually, change external expectations (Gray et al. 1996, Ch. 2.6; Lindblom 1993).

Another strand derives from Political Economy theory by Cooper and Sherer (1984) and also by Guthrie and Parker (1990). They affirm that classic Economic Policy, which originates from the thinking of Marx is based upon conflicts between labour and capital while the State plays a role in contributing in resolving such conflicts.

To complete the thought highlighted above, for other Authors legitimacy theory does not cover all aspects that may be investigated, therefore we need to pause more

upon the aspects, which concern the role played by the State. Especially, what is the role of the State in creating conditions that are suitable for the possible development of a greater incentive towards the opening up to information relating to those aspects of social accounting (Archel et al. 2009) as we may read: “. . . *although the state is not necessary conceived as a neutral arbiter of the common good, the forces that shape state interventions are presumed to operate in a pluralistic setting. Furthermore, it is presumed that the state itself does not have ideological inclinations and material needs that predispose it towards some of those groups and not others*” (Archel et al. 2009: 1287).

According to the same Authors, legitimacy theory is based upon the social contract and It is legitimised to use the information which results from social accounting. As regards communication of the social and environmental variables, this is based upon social expectations of the companies and upon the aspects which concern legitimisation. Often however, there are some gaps between expectations and communication which create conflicts. Such conflicts depend on: behaviour of the media, size of the company and ownership layout. In the thought of the authors we are talking about, it is affirmed that whenever there is a conflict between company and society, the company may (strategically) put one of the following action plans into play: the first one regards the modification of the behaviour trying to fill this gap. The second action plan consists in acting upon the expectations of society without modifying its behaviour. The third action plan, instead, consists in manipulating the expectations distracting attention away from the gap. The fourth action, instead, consists in manipulating society, modifying the expectations in order to direct them towards the goals of the company. According to our point of view, the case analysed in this chapter comes precisely within these two final aspects. Such aspects are “mediated” by an important ongoing trend, about which we will talk later, which enters within the dynamics that permit the transition from weak sustainability to strong sustainability, amongst which there is the “pact” (Baldarelli and Del Baldo 2017), that goes beyond strictly contractual aspects.

Regarding Legitimacy theory applied at the opening of company information towards the environment, this neutral vision of the State is not to be taken for granted so much, because many differences between various stakeholder groups persist in society (pluralistic Legitimacy theory).

Within the field of social accounting, various scholars, indeed, criticise the neutrality of the State (Patten 1992; Darrell and Schwartz 1997), they also affirm that the State does not remain neutral with respect to the “common good”, but it intervenes via various factors (pluralistic setting) (Archel et al. 2009: 1287).

Agreeing with this theory, the State intervenes by way of the dominant classes to legitimise the strategies of certain successful companies. They affirm that the financial statement is not neutral or a passive document, yet the numbers may be manipulated in order to orientate and to legitimise actions that are directed by power positions. The same process, in our opinion may happen about integrated reporting.

In this sense, even Political Economy Theory considers the State responsible for maintaining situations of conflict and therefore, situations of inequality (since there is no pact?) (Dillard 1991: 9). These dynamics are inserted, from our point of view, in the transition from weak to strong sustainability (Baldarelli and Del Baldo 2017).

Sustainable development may be defined as follows: *“The key question inherent to sustainable development therefore, seems to interest the ways through which we organise the economic system, in such a way that development is carried through without damaging the environmental heritage, upon which every present thing and any future development is based”* (Bebbington and Contrafatto 2006: 217).

The second viewpoint is that of the company, as evidenced in other works (Baldarelli and Del Baldo 2017), to which we refer, which adapts the behaviour of its particular business to the context previously described and it is translated into a trend aimed at sustainability, which may be implemented by way of actions of differing intensity.

Sticking to the theme of sustainability, the other viewpoint instead considers the integral development of the company, where sustainability takes on connotations linked with the anthropological culture (Sorci 2006; Zadek 2006; Alford et al. 2006).

Within the same strand, we underline Catturi (2009), Who distinguishes between the concepts of: evolution, growth and development. Evolution is defined by later states of programmed perfection (Catturi 2009: 4). So, a growth, even if it is only a quantitative one which is harmonious as well, corresponds to development, Catturi (2009: 20).

As may be noted, the characteristics that sustainable development takes on are ever more numerous but we can read an evolution going on from those, which are merely quantitative and concern distribution of wealth to those of a qualitative-relational and inclusive character, which are currently emerging as those which are the hardest to implement.

Therefore, in relation to the intensity with which the same sustainability we want to focus on the passage from weak to strong sustainability following the dimension of eco-justice.

Weak sustainability directed towards eco-justice consists, especially, of considering the intra- and inter-generational distribution of resources and wealth produced.

As regards “strong” eco-justice, the company is called to arrange certain rather sophisticated reporting tools and to ask to undergo a social and environmental auditing of a certain standard (Bebbington 2007).

This logic is based on some processes that are involved in the legitimacy theory that let us to understand the dynamics to pass from weak to strong eco-justice using different accountability tools.

The question that we pose is, therefore, to single out the dynamics which allows for the transition from weak eco-justice to strong eco-justice and in the following section we propose reflecting upon methodology to analyse SISAL case.

10.3 Methodology

The case of SISAL (Naumes and Naumes 2006; Maticena 2017) is interesting because: *“In a short number of years, the gambling market has grown exponentially. Total revenues have broken the ceiling of 100 billion Euro per year . . . Italy holds*

the record in Europe and third place in the world . . . 47% of the poor play and 56% of those belonging to the lower middle class . . . The urban backdrops change. Food shops disappear under the pressure of shopping centres in order to cede their place to “buy gold” shops or rooms for gambling, bars become small gambling dens . . . a part of the population lives as if deported and without any links to protection. In front of so many doors which are closed and which are never knocked on out of shame, remains the extreme attempt to try one’s luck. Challenging destiny is all part of the human condition, but the pathological adrift is just a stone’s throw away . . . according to estimates, from 2 to 4% of the population” (Cefaloni 2014: 11–1).

Results will be presented and are relative to accountability documents: financial statements from 2007 to 2016, social reporting and sustainability reporting (2011 and 2016). We chose 2016, because SISAL in this year celebrated its 70th year of activities. At the end of 2017 SISAL incorporated Schumann Ltd and created a new group that is named: SISAL group spa. Furthermore, the analysis of websites of the company and relative social networks has been carried out for the same periods.

We decided to begin the analysis of SISAL from the social report of 2011, since it is particularly important for the time of economic and financial crisis which was slightly abating in western countries and, besides, the publication of the Social Report in 2011 is in its third year and, therefore, assumes an informative worth which is more consolidated than its initial years.

However, the work’s main limitation regards the empirical approach based on only one case, which hinders the generalisation of results and requires further research steps that aimed at considering more cases to be investigated in depth.

10.4 Accountability in the Case of SISAL and Integrated Reporting: Some Missing Links?

SISAL had been founded in 1946 to have sports gaming activities and it is the first Italian Company to operate in the gaming sector as a Government Licensee. Progressively from the field of sport, it changed its activities to include various typologies of gambling, but we want to start with the words that appear on the web site:

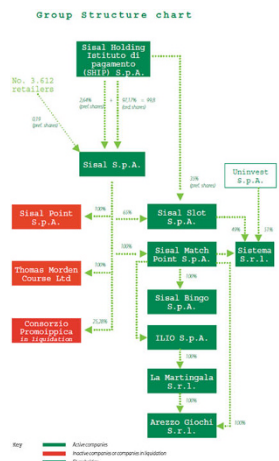
Over the years, SISAL has created a succession of popular, high-quality games, including the Totocalcio, the Totip and, more recently, [SuperEnalotto](#) and [Win for Life](#). SISAL today is a major Italian group operating in the Gaming and Payment Services sector and in 2015 reported a turnover of about €15.1 billion, over 1700 employees and a network of more than 45,000 points of sale; manages a broad offering of on- and offline games: lotteries, betting, casino games and gaming machines; offers the public in excess of 500 payment services, through its network of retailers and over 80 partners (www.SISAL.com/eng).

The mission of SISAL is: “*SISAL’s widespread presence across Italy represents a social network that allows the Company to offer innovative and responsible gaming experiences. For 65 years, SISAL has played a key role in Italy’s economy, mirroring its growth and keeping pace with socio-cultural developments and the changing habits of Italians from the post-war era to date.*” (Social Report 2011: 7).

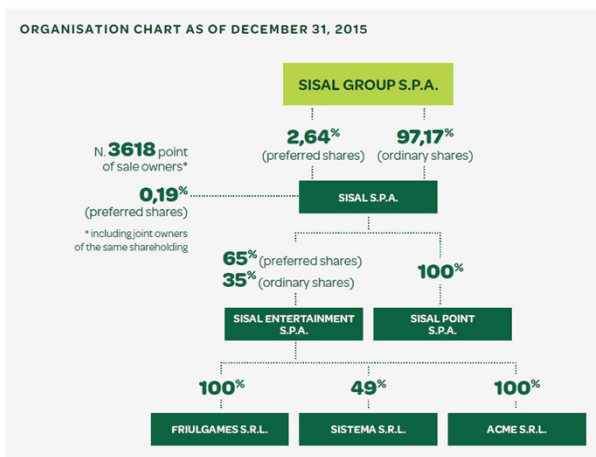
And the objective of 2011 had been: “SISAL’s aim is to become a leader in sustainability by 2016. Its ethical commitment has also resulted in the introduction of a Responsible Gaming Program, in accordance with the guidelines of the Autonomous Administration of State Monopolies and with best practice and international standards. Furthermore, as part of its stakeholder engagement, the SISAL Group has intensified its dialogue with stakeholders and has developed a reporting system—in other words, a documentation and measurement system—that allows it to ‘report’ on the activities carried out, while also encouraging stakeholders within the Company to ‘be aware’ of their actions and consciously quantify them.” (Social Report 2011: 8).

Governance (Table 10.1) is developing as described: “SISAL Holding Istituto di Pagamento (SHIP) S.p.A. The SISAL Group holding company responsible for the management and coordination of companies in the group, offering more than 300 payment services with 70 partners, both private and public, authorised by the Bank of Italy to operate as a payment institution. Its registered office is situated at 13 via di Tocqueville, Milan. It is wholly owned by Gaming Invest Sàrl. The Group’s total profits in 2011 were €13.3 billion, up by 18% compared with 2010. SISAL S.p.A. Controlled by SHIP S.p.A., this manages a network of 41,659 online merchants offering numerous games including SuperEnalotto, SiVinceTutto SuperEnalotto, Vinci per la vita—Win for Life and Eurojackpot. It also sells a wide range of third-party products and services, such as national and international telephone cards and PINs for mobile phone top-ups for all the major Italian mobile operators, as well as pay-per-view cards for digital terrestrial television” (Social Report 2011: 15).

Table 10.1 SISAL structure and organisation charts

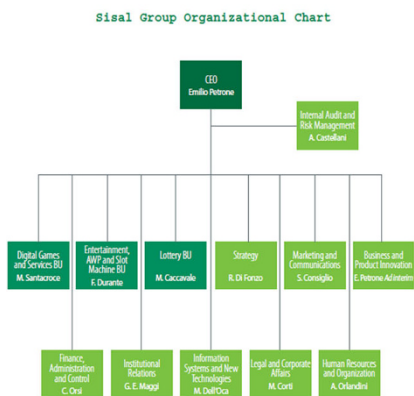


Source: Social Report 2011: 15

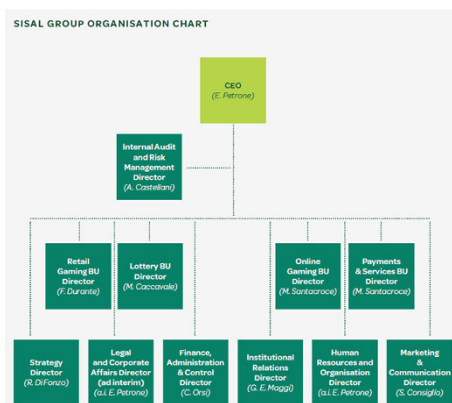


Sustainability Report 2016: 46

We especially underline that ACME srl which is responsible for the slot machine distribution has increased its revenues greatly.



Source: Social Report 2011: 19



Sustainability Report 2016: 48

Group Brands



Source: Social Report 2011

Concerning financial information we can show some figures, that are very interesting in underlining the development of gambling (Tables 10.2, 10.3 and 10.4).

Table 10.2 Financial statement- trend of Profit in millions of €

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	CAGR 2007/2011
Lotteries	16,042	17,635	18,876	18,122	19,421	4.9%
Betting and pools*	5,558	6,357	6,142	6,228	5,294	-1.2%
AWP (slot + VLT)	18,072	21,685	25,525	31,534	44,615	25.3%
Bingo	1,753	1,636	1,512	1,954	1,850	1.4%
Skill & Card Games	0	242	2,348	3,146	8,418	226.2%**
Total profit	41,425	47,555	54,402	60,984	79,597	17.7%

Source: Social Report 2011: 22

Table 10.3 Total revenue detail

Dettaglio raccolta totale	2013	2014	2015	2016	CAGR 2013/2016
Lotterie	17.321	17.258	17.195	18.669	2,5%
Scommesse e CPS	4.651	6.285	7.836	10.063	29,3%
ADI	47.391	46.744	48.161	49.440	1,4%
Bingo	1.664	1.624	1.598	1.702	0,8%
Skill, Card & Casinò Games	13.281	12.318	13.229	15.986	6,4%
Totale Mercato dei Giochi	84.308	84.229	88.019	95.859	4,4%

Source: SISAL GROUP-Consolidated Financial statement 31/12/2016 (Italian language): 13 Sustainability Report, 2016

The message that shines through from the very beginning concerns the highlighting of a responsible gaming, when, as we have seen a little bit beforehand, the increase in gambling has gone through the roof over the years.

That which, in 2011, was declared, and that is: “*The SISAL Social Report, now in its third edition, is the Group’s main tool for reporting and communicating responsible corporate governance and social responsibility. It is, therefore, a final statement of corporate social responsibility activities addressed to all SISAL stakeholders that shows, with absolute transparency, all of the activities already carried out and the guidelines for future development. It thus represents, for SISAL, its affiliated companies and stakeholders, a public monitoring and planning tool for improving the Company’s performance*” (Social Report 2011: 9).

Table 10.4 Composition of revenues 2016 (millions of €)

<i>Revenues (in thousands of Euro) 2016</i>	
GNTN (Number Games with National Totalizator)	5,383
Gaming Machines	34,764
Horse Racing Betting	777
Big Bets Revenues	2
Virtual Races Revenues	2,444
Betting Contests	39
Online Gaming	3.159
Total	46.568

Source: Sustainability Report, 2016

SISAL policy is to drive in the direction of responsible gaming. But one can wander: “What is the meaning of responsible gaming if can create a sort of “addiction” and become a damage for the development of civil society?”

The results of accountability that are presented before are showing a progressive increase of gambling that create “addiction” and the terms that the company use to name this activity is: “collection”, that means a term similar to that used by banks to collect money.

From data emerges that each operation is aimed to produce money and profit and focus on “the business model” that is a little bit strange in the respect of its original objectives and mission.

So, what is the role of accountability? May we find integrated thinking in this document about accountability? The answer is negative, because everything, under the umbrella of responsible gaming, is orientated only to gain.

About integrated reporting and especially in the different ways of representation of value created by companies, that is represented by different capitals: social, relational, etc., perhaps It is a good occasion to let possible to communicate the loss of relations and the loss of social capital that companies like SISAL procure.

After the presentation of the case, we are going to show, in the next section, discussion and conclusion.

10.5 Discussion and Conclusion

In the previous paragraphs We highlighted certain data to underline that from a company which started its operations to introduce positive “games” and however to develop, if we may say so, our country, it has transformed into a company which is

completely different and which tries to involve all stakeholders in this process. Above and beyond what is written in the analysed documents, the presence of a “movement”, among the Italian people, which tries, from the bottom, to face this overflowing of “chances” of addiction as does the association we mentioned previously: “EconomiaFelicità” makes us reflect.

This association includes, among its various activities, the Slot-mob campaign too which was established in 2013 to face up to the flood of compulsive gambling: “(<http://www.economiafelicitaslotmob.it>)” *“The Slotmob campaign was set up in July 2013, promoted by various exponents of Civil Society, to combat the problem of legalised gambling which is inundating all Italy. The gambling business is enormous in size: in 2012 in Italy €80 billion were bet, for a net intake of €8 billion for the Italian State. However, the social costs associated with this business are no less: more than 800,000 people at risk of addiction (GAP—Gioco d’Azzardo Patologico [Compulsive Gambling]), families destroyed, numerous cases of suicides due to too many debts, without counting Mafia involvement which launders money via Slot machine halls as well as the cases of usury which are ever increasing. The State, practically, fills in the holes in the financial statement by promoting gambling through a short-term, short-sighted vision, without considering the social impact this brings. And, as usual, should the profits go into the hands of the businesses operating in this sector, the costs fall upon the general public (costs for Local Health Authorities for the care of gamblers, for the fight against crime). The idea is that a bar without a slot machine holds more space for people. The basic idea is always the same: as consumers always reward the bars which chose to give Slot machines up by consuming hundreds of breakfasts and cocktails, this in order to train ourselves to vote with our pockets and to make people aware of the matter. In the end, if from today we chose to buy only in those bars that have no slot machines, the issue would already be solved: no bartender would be willing to offer a product that nobody wants onto the market. It is market logics, but used for ethical purposes. To this we add gaming, any gaming, as long as it is healthy and leads to human relationship, and as long as it is not the ill gaming of the slot machines which leads to isolation and addiction. This is the reason why, in every Slotmob a table-football tournament is organised. Within the space of a few months, the associations which joined have reached nearly 90 in number and this number grows with the passing of each day and the Slotmob campaigns continue, week after week, to win enormous uptake throughout all Italy.”*

It is not our intention to analyse specifically such an association rather, take a very initial conclusion upon the role played by accountability and upon the role of the transparency of information, on the one hand, recalling legitimacy theory and, on the other, considering the transition from weak to strong eco-justice in order to pursue sustainability matters. These considerations reflect upon the construction of a system thinking, which has the construction of positive and not “pathological”, social relationships as its central aim.

Actually, the attempt at these activities puts into doubt that certain aspects highlighted in SISAL accountability documents consider every stakeholder and that a reading map of that which is “good” for stakeholders has developed, which

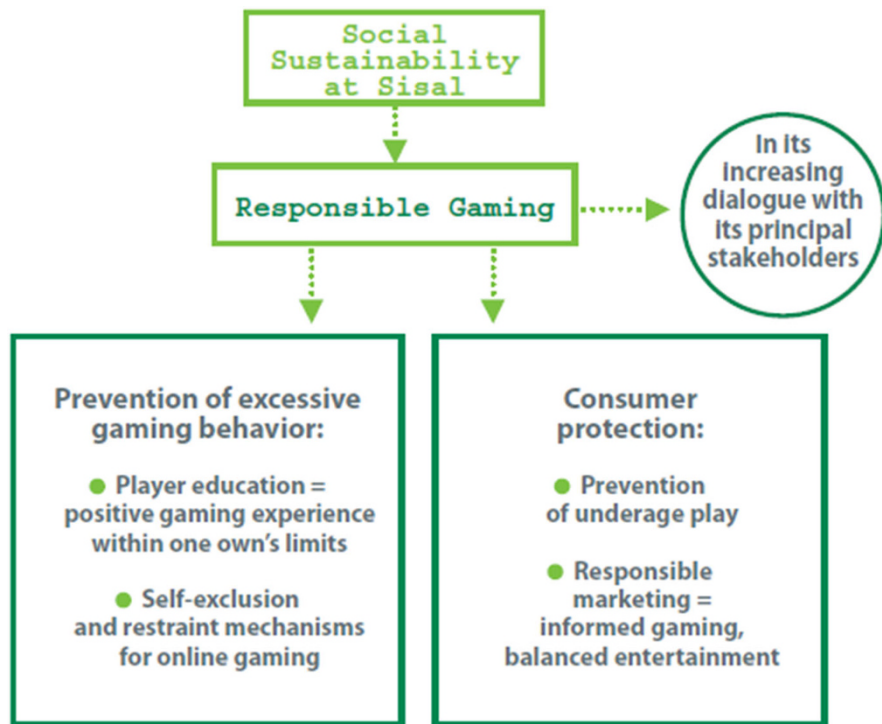
does not correspond to the culture that emerges from the Civil Economy, expressed by the countless initiatives of Slot-mob. Indeed, these players strongly affirm that they prefer not to have slot machines in the bars where they have their coffee and that they want a “healthy” economy, which places the person and not “addiction” at its core. This apparently “banal” aspect renders itself carrier of an anthropological/economic culture, which questions companies like SISAL as regards the future.

In that, the relationship between anthropological culture and company culture is very important (Catturi 2009) and shows that the engaging message coming from documents published by SISAL is not very effective and that it cannot totally manipulate a collective thinking towards a profit at the expense of “addiction” as shown in legitimacy theory (Patten 1992; Darrell and Schwartz 1997; Archel et al. 2009) (Table 10.5).

Thus, those we have named “myths” are highlighted: accountability advances a relational improvement within the economic system, between companies, and especially the presence of an “integrated” reporting system would lead to an integral development and to a system thinking towards a non-generic, but specific, common good where all “poverties” are eliminated.

We are spectators, instead, to the development of “new and silent poverties”, like that of gambling addiction, which, in the case analysed, is masked up in the points

Table 10.5 Social Report 2011—accountability and stakeholder engagement



where with engaging and charming words, the mirage of «gaming» which «produces wealth» is introduced.

The paradoxes we may bring to the fore are that, through this type of accountability, maybe even any other typology: sustainability reporting and integrated reporting (Eccles and Krzus 2010; Paternostro 2012; Busco et al. 2013; Mio 2016; Del Baldo and Nesheva-Kiosseva 2017), an improvement of the economic conditions and the elimination of poverties is not obtained. Otherwise, social/civil phenomena, such as the Slot-mob associations, could not be explained.

To sum up, the transition from weak to strong ec-justice seems impossible to us in certain sectors of business and, therefore, also the “mirage” of a pathway towards a system thinking, supported by mere tools of accountability, which must be integrated and investigated carefully, in that process of eco-justice we spoke above.

The case of SISAL represents an example that falls within those actions of manipulation while distracting attention from the “void”/gap. In this case, the void becomes an “abyss” of words and “misleading” information (Archel et al. 2009) which, at their base, have no positive relational circuits that obstacle the building of system thinking.

In this case, we are assisting to the “game” to create information, not surely “integrated information” to make confusion and to create misunderstanding showing that is positive what in reality is negative that is good what in reality is bad.

Scientific researches and publications about integrated reporting and integrated thinking, are good occasions to try to see accountability using other eyes and to try to begin a process to record and to account the real responsibility of enterprise using new tools and new words, that are more and more important in the sustainability world, that each one of us want to contribute to build.

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