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Special Issue Call for Papers

Grand Synthesis: Unifying the Fragmented Science of Business for All Stakeholders

Letter of inquiry by 25 August 2021
Full papers by 25 February 2022

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We are not doing just another call for papers.
We are requesting revolutionary blueprints of our shared future.

BACKGROUND

The business paradigm in both the academic and the professional worlds is generally shifting towards a pluralistic, multi-objective approach that emphasizes and accounts for "stakeholder values." While the definitions may vary, such values involve typically *economic, social, psychological, physical, and health-related wellbeing for different stakeholders (e.g., investors, customers, suppliers, employees, and communities)* (Barney and Harrison, 2018; Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2014; Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, 2017; Mitchell *et al.*, 1997; Mitchell *et al.*, 2015). Notably, on August 19, 2019, 181 CEOs of the largest US corporations signed the *Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation* at the Business Roundtable (BRT). This leading influential business lobby has an aggregated revenue more significant than any country's GDP except the US and China (Business Roundtable, 2019). This Statement officially revised the BRT's mission from shareholder primacy since 1997 to "commitment to all our stakeholders".

The current technologies, outlets, and incentives of business and management scholarship have been incapable of solving such a complex social problem (Chen & Hitt, 2021). Since Gordon and Howell (1959) and Pierson (1959), later reinforced by Porter and McKibbin (1988), the business and management scholarship has been rewarding incremental research that develops and tests coherent hypotheses of interest from a simplified view of complex problems. This reductionist approach is perpetuated by discipline boundaries, peer pressures for granular specialization, limited space, scope, and frequency of periodical outlets such as journals, and lack of diversity in scholarly incentives. As a consequence, both managers and researchers face a knowledge fragmentation conundrum. The literature, data, and communities for different stakeholder values are becoming increasingly fragmented, distributed into silos, and disconnected. It has become exceedingly difficult to develop complete, explanatory frameworks connecting all the knowledge silos, because the effects across these silos and their interrelatedness (e.g., complementarity) are poorly understood. There are an increasing number of specialists and experts focusing on different topics piecewise, but limited solutions to the complex whole.

The problem of knowledge fragmentation has been recently raised by major funding agencies, which attempt to incentivize the integration of currently isolated knowledge advancements. For instance, in the 2017 consultation of its *Research Excellence Framework*, the UK Research and Innovation, the largest funding agency for higher education institutions, proposed a series of revisions to its old review policies that tend to disadvantage interdisciplinary research. In the US, the National Science Foundation defines *Growing Convergence Research*, a type of research that seeks to integrate advances across disciplines for solving complex problems on societal needs, as one of its current 10 Big Ideas for investment priorities. More specifically, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in the US carried out a $45 million Big Mechanism program between 2014 and 2017 to fund innovations to integrate fragmented cancer models into a holistic causal framework (You, 2015). Although the business scholarship also suffers significant knowledge fragmentation, systematic efforts to innovate our research foundations have been relatively reticent (Chen & Hitt, 2021).

PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

We call for both theory reviews and method reviews to arrive at revolutionary blueprints for the future of business and management scholarship. We call for reviews of theories and methods to create **an integrated knowledge system and enable large-scale, interdisciplinary research collaborations across traditional knowledge silos (e.g., economics, sociology, psychology, operations research, etc.). We encourage submissions within the scope of conceptualizing, measuring, predicting, and managing multiple stakeholder values simultaneously**. Specifically, each research project should demonstrate its capabilities of knowledge integration to overcome two hurdles that result in a fragmented universe of knowledge.

The first hurdle is fragmented science. As suggested by a recent *International Journal of Management Reviews* (*IJMR*) special issue, the theories and methods on organizational performance measurement and management have been advancing within disciplines. A meta-theory has failed to emerge (Bititci, Bourne, Cross, Nudurupati, & Sang, 2018). Creating and distributing stakeholder values is a complex social task, with many levels, disciplines, and heterogeneous stakeholder interests (Hitt *et al.*, 2007; Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2014; Bridoux *et al.*, 2011). The conventional scientific approach is to study these different components in a piecewise manner using discipline-based, coherent theory-driven, and reductionist models (Chen & Hitt, 2021; Cohen, 2015; Bammer, 2013). Instead of studying multiple stakeholder values simultaneously, our knowledge about an organization as a whole is fragmented into granular specializations. They often use different assumptions of human behaviors and prioritize some stakeholder values over others (e.g., human resources management for employees, marketing for customers, corporate strategy/finance for investors, operations management for suppliers, and ethics for community/environment).

The second hurdle is distributed evidence and data. Except for some shareholder/financial data, stakeholder data are mostly unstructured (e.g., natural language processing [NLP] data, etc.) and kept in dispersed and uncoordinated sources (McAfee *et al.*, 2012; Gerhardt *et al.*, 2012; Sumbal *et al.*, 2019). Thus, empirical tests and replications are likely to run on incomplete or biased data fractions rather than on a coherent, tightly integrated global sample. New methodological approaches are needed to make sense of fragmented evidence and synthesize the fragments into a complete set of evidence. Such approaches could be meta-analytic, and meta-learning, and collective intelligence (CI) approaches, but not limited to, that can mobilize enhanced evidence aggregation, as well as communication and collaboration of large stakeholder groups using crowdsourcing (Malone, Laubacher, & Dellarocas, 2010), thereby transform research collaborations at scale (Ghezzi *et al.*, 2018).

SUBMISSIONS

In response to these hurdles above, each research project should review the state-of-the-art of literature, theories, and methods and integrate them into integrated and novel frameworks that can be used as platforms for knowledge accumulation and synthesis as new knowledge emerges:

Track A – Theory Reviews

In this track, we call for integrated and novel conceptual frameworks that can integrate, navigate, and reason through multiple perspectives, levels, and different stakeholder values simultaneously from the fragmented literature.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Developing and unifying taxonomies/ontologies of stakeholder values, their causes, and context boundaries
2. Constructing unified knowledge graphs for causes-and-effects relationships, logics, empirical evidence, and hypotheses
3. Building multilevel, complex conceptual frameworks that simulate the dynamics of the social-ecological system for creating and distributing stakeholder values
4. Developing a meta-framework from the top leadership perspective on defining, measuring, predicting, and managing all stakeholder values
5. Developing a meta-framework that can capture the shared as well as heterogeneous motivations of individuals situated in different stakeholder roles or holding different stakeholder identities

Please note that our focus is on conceptual and theoretical integration, although empirical synthesis such as meta-analyses is welcomed as a supportive approach to substantiating the key relationships and paths in a meta-theoretical framework. According to the aims and scope of IJMR, we do not publish analyses that draw on primary data. We will assess the following merits to evaluate the strength of submission to this track:

1. Meta-theory: Is it discussing and comparing multiple alternative theories concerning all stakeholder values?
2. Synthesizing: Is it organizing all concepts and their relations in a unified network, identifying similarities, reducing redundancies, contrasting differences, and reconciling conflicts?
3. Mapping: Is it listing the most generous set of variables and relationships in a unified causal path network ready for data analytics?
4. Extendability: Is it explicating the behavioral and contextual assumptions so users will have the flexibility of adapting it in the face of new contexts or new evidence?

We especially invite reviews that will arrive at holistic, meta-theoretical frameworks. You may refer to Ostrom (2009) and Schlüter *et al.* (2017) as examples of such frameworks.

Track B – Method Reviews

In this track, we call for integrated and novel methodological approaches that accelerate and scale the discovery, replication, and synthesis of evidence across distributed sources of data and evidence.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Reviewing the existing mathematical methods of meta-analytic and meta-regression techniques and suggest new approaches to incorporate nonlinearity, missing interactive terms, as well as hidden moderators for evidence synthesis.

2. Reviewing the existing meta-machine learning (ML) algorithms to aggregate evidence from multiple data sources that cannot be perfectly merged.
3. Reviewing NLP algorithms that can detect and compare unstructured data sources based on the taxonomies/ontologies helps the massive synthesis of fragmented data and evidence.
4. Reviewing collective intelligence and crowdsourcing engineering techniques that ingrain in four main disciplines of innovation and management: (i) open innovation, (ii) co-creation, (iii) the wisdom of crowds and predictions, and (iv) crowd-work.
5. Developing logic and principles that can accelerate or automate the detection of logic inconsistencies, identification for contextual boundaries, and discovering hidden new hypotheses from complex conceptual frameworks.

While we focus on methods used in management research, we welcome reviews of cutting-edge methods in other areas that can be adapted to management research. We especially welcome efforts that review, compare, and integrate machine learning tools that can be used for empirical synthesis in management studies. Please explicitly prescribe guidelines for how future studies on stakeholder values select and use these methods. We will assess the following merits to evaluate the strength of submission to this track:

1. Accessibility: Is it offering highly accessible guidelines on when and how to use each method?
2. Prescription: Is it comparing different methods and prescribing the best applicable scenarios for each?
3. Beyond meta-analysis: Is it offering systematic solutions to the key limitations of the existing meta-analytic methods used in management research?

You may refer to Gonzalez-Mulé and Aguinis (2018), Villalta and Drissi (2002), Peng (2020) and Ghezzi *et al.* (2018) as examples of method reviews.

We hope that this special issue will contribute ideas for integrated knowledge systems and hopefully serve as a catalyst for future scholarly horizon changes.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

IJMR is one of the most impactful peer-reviewed journals in management and business (impact factor: 8.631, ranked 5/151 in business and 5/226 in management), and amongst the most impactful open forums for knowledge synthesis.

Manuscripts should follow the Author Guidelines set out by *IJMR* available at http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1468-2370/homepage/ForAuthors.html.

Additionally, see also:

Jones O. & Gatrell C. (2014). Editorial: The Future of Writing and Reviewing for IJMR. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 16*, pp. 249-264. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12038

Gatrell C. & Breslin D. (2017). Editors' Statement. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 19*, p. 3. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12133

Breslin D., Gatrell C. & Bailey K. (2020). Developing Insights through Reviews: Reflecting on the 20th Anniversary of the International Journal of Management Reviews. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 20*, pp. 3-9. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12219

To get early feedback from the editors before you invest in producing the full manuscripts, please submit a one-page Letter of Inquiry to the Guest Editors. In the letter, please specify the target track, and then discuss the topic, the scope and method of your review, and the proposed outcome you expect to deliver (e.g., method guidelines and/or meta-theoretical frameworks) (single space, 12 point) by 25 August 2021.

Submission for full manuscripts will be open between 31 January and 25 February 2022. We propose to organize a multi-site (China, Europe and USA) hybrid (in-person and virtual) seminar and invite authors of selected papers in the first round to participate.

All submissions will be made online via http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ijmr highlighting that you wish to be considered for the Special Issue "**Grand Synthesis**". All submissions should also include a letter to the editors specifying which track they target.

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BIOGRAPHIES OF GUEST EDITORS

Dr Flore Bridoux is a Professor of Stakeholder Management at the Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. She worked at Erasmus from 2007 to 2009 and then at the University of Amsterdam. She came back to Erasmus in August 2019. Flore's current research focuses on the management of stakeholders and human capital. In particular, she studies how to organize firms and stakeholder-firm relationships to motivate stakeholders and employees to cooperate with the firm and with each other. She is also interested in stakeholders' reactions to the tradeoffs firms make among different stakeholder groups' interests and in the dynamics that characterize firms-stakeholders interactions. Her work has been published in, among others, the *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies* and *Strategic Management Journal*. She serves as Associate Editor for *Organization & Environment*, a Guest Editor of a current special issue of *Academy of Management Review* and is on the editorial board of the *Academy of Management Review* and *Strategic Organization*, and acts as an ad-hoc reviewer for many journals and conferences. She holds a Ph.D. from the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium.

Dr Victor Z. Chen is an Associate Professor of International Management at the Belk College of Business and an Affiliate Faculty with the Doctoral Program on Organizational Sciences and the School of Data Science, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research focuses on the complexity of institutional environments, corporate governance and strategy, and knowledge synthesis technologies for enterprise performance management. Currently, he is leading a new initiative Global OpenLabs for Performance-Enhancement Analytics and Knowledge System (**GoPeaks.org**), a proposed human-machine open collaboration to integrate knowledge fragments into actionable insights on organizational performance concerning all stakeholders. As part of this initiative, his current research project on developing a unified knowledge graph for explainable

artificial intelligence on enterprise management has been funded by *National Science Foundation (NSF) I-Corps Program*. His research has been published or forthcoming in *Journal of Management, Journal of Corporate Finance, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* among others, and awarded Best Paper Awards or Finalists by AOM and Academy of International Business (AIB). Between 2011 and 2018, he was the global coordinator and editor of *Emerging Market Global Players* research initiative at Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment. He serves on the editorial/review board of *Management and Organizational Review* and *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*. He completed a Ph.D. in strategy from Simon Fraser University, Canada.

Dr Carina Antonia Hallin is the founder of the Collective Intelligence Research Group at IT University of Copenhagen, a research affiliate at MIT Center for Collective Intelligence, and a co-founder of Mindpool – a technology platform to harness workplace collective intelligence. Formerly, she was the founder and head of the Collective Intelligence Unit at Copenhagen Business School until October 2020. Her research interests include collective intelligence, crowd predictions, machine learning/AI, human-computer interaction, and new decision support systems for organizations and governments. She has published in the disciplines of collective intelligence, decision science, artificial intelligence, computer science, strategy, and management, and her work has been cited in Forbes magazine. She has continuously raised funding to conduct collective intelligence research both as a principal investigator and as a co-investigator. She has co-founded a CBS spin-off that has received funding from the Innovation Fund Denmark and other investors. She is a member of the global community of collective intelligence scientists and is a regularly invited speaker by both international and national public and private organizations. She is a member of the global community of collective intelligence scientists. She is a regularly invited speaker by international and national public and private organizations, such as the OECD and the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) in London. In October 2019, she was appointed by the Collective Intelligence Conference Steering Committee to be the Multi-Site Conference Chair for the Association for Computer Machinery's first virtual Collective Intelligence Conference 2020. She is a co-editor with Lex Paulson of *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intelligence and Democracy*.

Dr Michael A. Hitt is currently a University Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Texas A&M University. He has co-authored or co-edited 26 books and authored or co-authored many journal articles. He has served on the editorial review boards of multiple journals. He is a former editor of the *Academy of Management Journal* and a former co-editor of *the Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*. He is currently the editor-in-chief of *Oxford Research Encyclopedia-Business and Management,* which publishes scholarly monographs. He is a Fellow in the Academy of Management, the Strategic Management Society, and the Academy of International Business. He is a former President of both the Academy of Management and of the Strategic Management Society and a member of the Academy of Management Journals' Hall of Fame. He received awards for the best article published in the *Academy of Management Executive* (1999), *Academy of Management*

Journal (2000), *Journal of Management* (2006) and *Family Business Review* (2012). He received the Irwin Outstanding Educator Award, the Distinguished Service Award and the Distinguished Educator Award from the Academy of Management. Since 2014, Dr. Hitt has been listed as a *Thomson Reuters* Highly Cited Researcher (a listing of the world's most influential researchers). He received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado.

Dr Marc van Essen is a Professor in the Sonoco International Business Department and director of the undergraduate international business program at the Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina and a permanent visiting professor at EMLYON Business School. He has previously worked as a professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the School of Management at the University of St. Gallen. His research interests include entrepreneurship, comparative corporate governance, international business, family business, and meta-analytic research methods. The results of this research have been published in leading journals, including the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Banking and Finance*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization Science* and others. He was a guest editor of a recent special issue at the *Journal of Management Studies* and currently serves on the editorial/review board of *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* and *Corporate Governance: An International Review*. He received a Ph.D. in management (cum laude) from Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

Dr Weihua Zhou is Professor of Management, Associate Dean for Research and International Affairs, and Director of International Research Center for Data Analytics and Management at the School of Management, Zhejiang University, China. He received his Ph.D. in industrial engineering and engineering management at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and was a visiting scholar at Stanford University. His research focuses on logistics and supply chain management. He has published in *Management Science*, *Operations Research*, *European Journal of Operations Research*, *Production and Operations Management*, *Omega*, and *Sustainability*. He received the third-class award of the 7th Outstanding Achievement Award (Humanities and Social Sciences) of the China Ministry of Education in 2015. He is a program chair of the *Strategic Management Society* 2020 Special Meeting in Hangzhou.