

Call for Papers

GRAND SOCIETAL CHALLENGES: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION STUDIES

Submission Deadline: 28th February 2021

Guest Editors:

Sven Kunisch (Aarhus University, Denmark)
Dodo zu Knyphausen-Aufseß (TU Berlin, Germany)
Hari Bapuji (University of Melbourne, Australia)

Consulting Editors:

Herman Aguinis (The George Washington University, USA)
Pratima (Tima) Bansal (Ivey Business School, Western University Canada, Canada)
Anne S. Tsui (W.P. Carey School of Business, Arizona State University, USA)

IJMR Advisory Editor:

Jonathan Pinto (Imperial College London, UK)

Background

The 2019 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences went to three scholars who pioneered work in understanding and alleviating poverty. The committee noted that ‘one of humanity’s most urgent issues is the reduction of global poverty, in all its forms’, and the laureates’ research had ‘considerably improved our ability to fight global poverty’. Also, in the autumn of 2019, the *Economist* launched its climate issue, stating, ‘Climate change touches everything this newspaper reports on. It must be tackled urgently and clear-headedly’. These two examples underline the importance of understanding and tackling ‘grand societal challenges’,¹ which affect the well-being and even the survival of humankind. As highlighted in the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, these challenges include such concerns as climate change, energy and water supply, poverty, inequality, and overpopulation.²

¹ The term and basic idea was brought forward by the German mathematician David Hilbert, who, in 1900, at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Paris, presented a set of 23 problems that were collectively termed ‘grand challenges’ in his discipline (Hilbert, 1902).

² www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

Scholars in the disciplines of business, management and organisation studies face increasing pressures to help advance knowledge of these broad societal challenges and provide advice to managers and policymakers on how to tackle them. Many conference themes in recent years, research grant announcements, and initiatives such as Responsible Research for Business and Management (RBBM, www.rrbm.network) also reflect growing pressures to address societal goals (e.g., equality, inclusion, sustainability and well-being) in our research.

This is an opportune time to review the existing knowledge and to provide guidance for future research. Indeed, there is an increasing number of publications on topics that are directly related to grand societal challenges (for examples, see Appendix). The publications span various fields in business, management and organisation studies including, among others, business ethics (e.g., Martí 2018), general management (e.g., DesJardine *et al.* 2019, Kim *et al.* 2019), HR and leadership (e.g., Bapuji 2015, Ortiz-de-Mandojana *et al.* 2019, Schad and Smith 2019), entrepreneurship (e.g., Markman *et al.* 2019), organisational studies (e.g., Ferraro *et al.* 2015, Wright and Nyberg 2017), international business (e.g., Buckley *et al.* 2017), and strategy (e.g., Bowen *et al.* 2018). Moreover, several special issues on grand challenges have recently been published or are currently underway in *Academy of Management Discoveries* (Howard-Grenville *et al.* 2017, Groutsis *et al.* 2019), *Academy of Management Journal* (George *et al.* 2016), *Business & Society* (Bapuji *et al.* 2018), *Journal of Marketing* (Moorman *et al.* 2018), *Journal of Management Studies* (Suddaby *et al.* 2018, Voegtlin *et al.* 2018), *Management Science* (Chandy *et al.* 2019), and *Organization Studies* (Wittneben *et al.* 2010, 2012, Amis *et al.* 2018).³

Yet, the existing knowledge is either still emerging or, if mature, often dispersed in and confined to specific areas of research. To this end, we believe that literature reviews play a crucial role in integrating insights across disciplines, building an accumulated body of knowledge and directing future research efforts, especially in emerging areas (Webster and Watson 2002, Tranfield *et al.* 2003, Kunisch *et al.* 2018). Indeed, this body of knowledge is the foundation of evidence-based management (Rousseau *et al.* 2008, Briner *et al.* 2009, Rynes and Bartunek 2017). For example, Briner *et al.* (2009) argue that ‘systematic reviews have become fundamental to evidence-based practice and represent a key methodology for locating, appraising, synthesizing, and reporting “best evidence”’ (p. 24). Thus, reviews can help improve ‘impact’ and ‘rigor’ (George 2016, Tsui in-press) of business, management and organizational research.

Therefore, we see a great need and an immense potential to synthesize and integrate the findings from individual studies to advance our understanding of grand societal challenges and to generate actionable insights. Indeed, we believe that a concerted effort is necessary to review and integrate the existing knowledge, accumulate bodies of knowledge, direct future research efforts, and provide advice to managers and policymakers on tackling grand societal challenges.

³ For other special issues, see the RBBM website: <https://rrbm.network/taking-action/journals/journal-special-issues/>

Aims and Scope

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this special issue of the *International Journal of Management Reviews (IJMR)* is to take stock of the current state of research concerning grand societal challenges, as well as direct future efforts by summarising and synthesizing the existing knowledge on these topics. Notably, contributions should relate to the roles of business, management and organization studies in influencing or tackling grand societal challenges.

Although the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals provide a comprehensive list of topics, we are also open to topics highlighted by other agencies, as long as there is a link to business, management and organization studies (for detailed discussions, see also George 2016, George *et al.* 2016, Howard-Grenville *et al.* 2017). For example, the European Commission mentions topics such as climate change, clean energy, plastics, cybersecurity and the digital economy as most crucial for its Horizon 2020 funding program. Its focus in the near future will be on cancer, adaptation to climate change, healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters, climate-neutral and smart cities, and soil health and food. Other candidates may be corruption, discrimination, social coherence and 'developing Africa'. Finally, the outbreak of the Corona virus also brings topics such as pandemics and healthcare to the forefront. We acknowledge that some issues are more pressing and relevant to business, management and organization studies than others, and this special issue is interested in those topics.

This special issue is open-minded regarding review types and methods (Kunisch *et al.* 2018, Palmatier *et al.* 2018). However, all reviews in the special issue should provide insights and implications for theory, future research (i.e., knowledge gaps) and practice (including policymaking). They should also identify research gaps and provide inspiring ideas for future work (in terms of phenomena, theories and methods).

We are particularly interested in critical and interdisciplinary reviews. Indeed, the very nature of the topic of our special issue is multi- and cross-disciplinary. For example, George *et al.* (2016) argue that grand challenges, 'by their very nature, require coordinated and sustained effort from multiple and diverse stakeholders toward a clearly articulated problem or goal' (p. 1881). Therefore, this special issue aims to bridge various sub-disciplines in business, management and organization studies and to connect them with adjacent research disciplines in areas such as climate change, poverty and inequality.

Moreover, we encourage submissions covering both emerging streams of knowledge (e.g., the role of management in climate change; big data approaches to health) and mature research areas (e.g., sustainability; inequality). As noted by Webster and Watson (2002), for more developed research areas, reviews can play a crucial role in organising knowledge and redirecting research and, for new research areas, they can provide early guidance.

Examples of Review Topics and Types

Areas of investigation could include (but are not limited to):

- Grand societal challenges exemplified by the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals: (1) no poverty, (2) zero hunger, (3) good health and well-being, (4) quality education, (5) gender equality, (6) clean water and sanitation, (7) affordable and clean energy, (8) decent work and economic growth, (9) industry, innovation and infrastructure, (10) reducing inequality, (11) sustainable cities and communities, (12) responsible consumption and production, (13) climate action, (14) life below water, (15) life on land, (16) peace, justice and strong institutions and (17) partnerships for the goals.
- Grand societal challenges highlighted by other agencies: for example, the European Commission's Horizon 2020 topics, which include climate change, clean energy, plastics, cybersecurity and the digital economy. Other future topics include cancer, adaptation to climate change, healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters, climate-neutral and smart cities, and soil health and food.
- Grand societal challenges highlighted by conference themes: for example, the AOM 2020 annual conference stresses the importance of topics such as conflict, discrimination, corruption, well-being, economic opportunity and equality, and climate change. Other examples include the AOM 2019 annual meeting theme entitled 'Improving Lives' and the 2016 Strategic Management Society annual meeting theme 'Strategies That Move the World', as well as several tracks at the EGOS 2020 meeting.

Exemplary research questions pertaining to key debates within the intended scope of this special review issue include, but are not limited to, the following:

- To what extent are businesses responsible for the emergence, aggravation, and alleviation of various grand societal challenges?
- What is the impact of business firms – or specific types of business firms – on climate change or on producing and reproducing economic inequalities in societies?
- How can business firms engage in concerted activities with other profit or non-profit organisations to address grand societal challenges?
- How do firms react to grand societal challenges and what implications do these challenges have on firms' value chains and business models? What determines their reaction speeds and how do firms overcome the resistance of specific stakeholders against the need for change?
- To what extent do firms provide solutions to grand societal challenges? Do these solutions come from start-up firms or from incumbent organisations? What role do specific technologies play?
- What do we know about potential conflicts between goals related to the challenges and how do business firms deal with them?
- How do the grand societal challenges differ based on country and cultural contexts? How do domestic and multinational firms contribute to their emergence, aggravation, and alleviation?
- Which theories and methods in business, management and organization studies contribute to the understanding of various grand societal challenges?
- What is the value of various theories in shedding light on grand societal challenges? Do these theories lead to consistent or conflicting hypotheses and insights? Which theories have been

empirically tested and have been proven as more robust than others? Which theories need to be revisited?

We encourage the submission of various types of literature reviews and approaches, including:

- Domain-based review articles that focus on reviewing a specific area related to grand societal challenges.
- Inter- and cross-disciplinary reviews on grand societal challenges, with one of the disciplines related to business, management and organization studies and the others related to adjacent fields.
- Theory-based reviews related to business, management and organization studies and grand societal challenges.

Submission Process and Deadlines

- 28th February 2021: Manuscript submission deadline
- 1st June 2021: Decisions on initially submitted manuscripts (first round)
- 1st September 2021: Re-submission deadline for revised manuscripts
- 14th November 2021: Decision on revised manuscripts (second round)
- 14th February 2022: Re-submission deadline for revised manuscripts (if needed)
- 1st June 2022: Final decision on revised manuscripts
- July 2022: Publication

Optional special conference and manuscript development workshops:

- The guest editors of this special issue are considering facilitating a conference and manuscript development workshop. The special conference may be conducted virtually. Final decisions about this event will be made and communicated in due course.
- Authors who are invited to revise and resubmit a manuscript would be invited to attend this workshop. However, attendance would not be a prerequisite for publication nor would participation in the workshop guarantee acceptance of the paper in the special issue.

Paper Submission Information

Manuscripts should follow the Author Guidelines set out by *IJMR* available at:

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/14682370/homepage/ForAuthors.html>

Additionally see also:

- Breslin, D., Gatrell, C. and Bailey, K. (2020). Developing Insights through Reviews: Reflecting on the 20th Anniversary of the *International Journal of Management Reviews*. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 22(1): 3-9. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12219>
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<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1094428118770750>

Manuscripts should be submitted online via <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ijmr> highlighting that you wish to be considered for the Special Issue 'Grand Societal Challenges'.

Further Information

Interested authors are welcome to contact Sven Kunisch: skunisch@btech.au.dk with any questions on the special issue content or fit of certain topics with the special issue.

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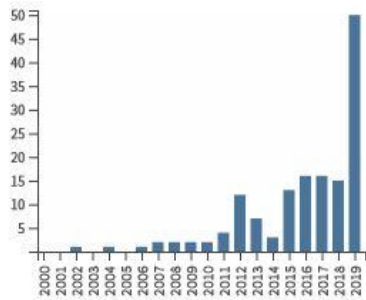
Grand Societal Challenges: The Contributions of Business, Management and Organisation Studies

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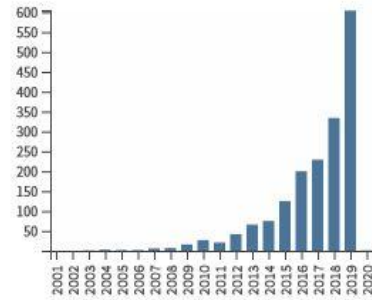
APPENDIX: NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS AND CITATIONS OF EXEMPLARY TOPICS

Keyword “Grand Challenges”

Total Publications by Year

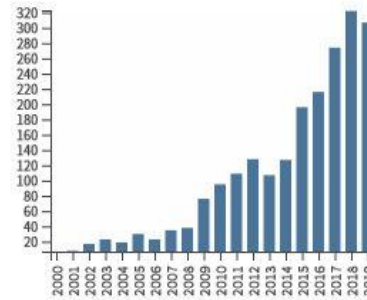


Sum of Times Cited by Year

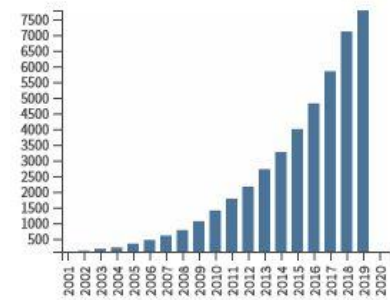


Keyword “Climate Change”

Total Publications by Year

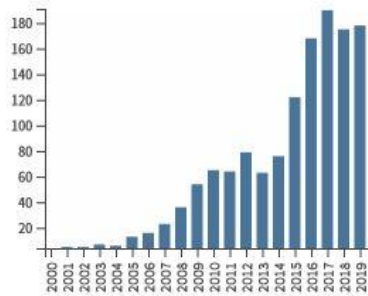


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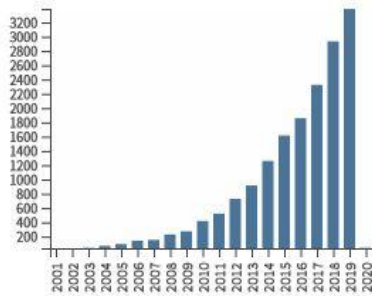


Keyword “Poverty”

Total Publications by Year

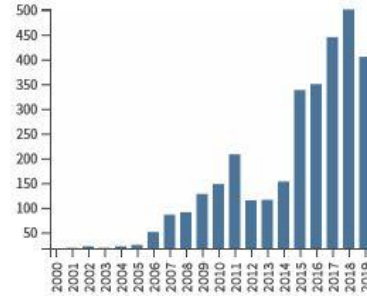


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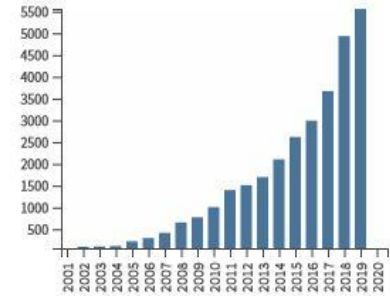


Keyword “Africa”

Total Publications by Year



Sum of Times Cited by Year



Note: Web of Science keyword searches in the management and business categories (accessed: December 2019).

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF EACH GUEST EDITOR

The guest editors have extensive experience in editorial work and with literature reviews on a broad range of topics. The team brings complementary expertise with respect to various areas of management, business and organisation studies, as well as diverse perspectives and communities.

[Sven Kunisch](#) is an Associate Professor at Aarhus University (Denmark). His research centres on topics related to strategic and international management with a focus on grand societal challenges, such as digital transformation and climate change. Sven has extensive experience in literature reviews. He has published several reviews, including two in *IJMR* and two in the *Academy of Management Annals*. He is also a co-guest editor of a feature topic at *Organizational Research Methods* on conducting rigorous and impactful literature reviews. He serves on several editorial boards of journals, such as *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of Organization Design* and *Journal of World Business*. He is a co-editor of several books on topics such as demographic change and responsible strategic leadership.

[Dodo zu Knyphausen-Aufseß](#) is a Professor of strategic leadership and global management at TU Berlin (Germany). Among others, he has served as the vice president and president of the German Academic Association of Business Research from 2011–2014. His research focuses on stakeholder influence on strategic decisions, corporate strategy and the strategic management of cities and has been published in various journals such as *British Journal of Management*, *Long Range Planning*, *Strategic Management Journal* and *Strategic Organization*. He has also published several review articles in journals such as *IJMR* and *Journal of Business Ethics*. He served as a co-program chair of the 2016 Strategic Management Society's annual conference in Berlin, focusing on 'strategies that move the world'.

[Hari Bapuji](#) is a Professor of strategic management and international business at the University of Melbourne (Australia). His research is predominantly focused on how economic inequality affects organizations, and vice versa. His research appeared in leading management journals and has also been noted for its impact on practice and policy.

[Herman Aguinis](#) is the Avram Tucker Distinguished Scholar and Professor of management at The George Washington University School of Business (USA). He has been elected for the presidency track of the Academy of Management (AOM) and is serving as its vice president and program chair, president-elect, president, and past president during 2019–2023. The 2019 and 2018 Web of Science Highly Cited Researchers reports ranked him among the world's 100 most impactful researchers in economics and business. Herman has written more than 160 refereed journal articles, approximately 45 book chapters, monographs in edited series, and other publications. He served as editor-in-chief of *Organizational Research Methods* and co-editor of several special issues. He serves or has served on the editorial board of 26 management journals.

[Pratima \(Tima\) Bansal](#) is a Professor and Canada Research Chair of business sustainability and strategy at the Ivey Business School (Canada). She founded Ivey's Centre on Building Sustainable Value and the Network for Business Sustainability, both aiming to increase the impact of sustainability research on practice. She has published extensively on sustainability issues, in both academic journals and the popular press, including two edited volumes on

Business and the Natural Environment. She served as a Deputy Editor (2016-2019) and an associate editor (2010–2013) of *Academy of Management Journal* and has also served on over nine editorial review boards in the past.

[Anne S. Tsui](#) is Motorola Professor Emerita of international management at Arizona State University (USA). She is currently an adjunct distinguished Professor at the University of Notre Dame and visiting distinguished professor of management at Peking University and Fudan University, China. She is the 67th president of the AOM, a Fellow of both AOM and AIB, and served as editor-in-chief of the *Academy of Management Journal* from 1996 to 1999. She is the Founder of the International Association for Chinese Management Research, Founding Editor-in-Chief of *Management and Organization Review*, and a co-founder of the Responsible Research for Business and Management initiative (www.rrbm.network).

[Jonathan Pinto](#) is Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour and Negotiations at Imperial College Business School. His research focuses on the grand challenges of organizational corruption and misconduct. His work has been published in the *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *Group & Organization Management (GOM)*, *Human Relations*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Organizational Psychology Review*, *Physica A*, and Best Paper Proceedings of the Academy of Management. His article with Mark Stein was awarded the Best Micro Paper (2011) in *GOM* and his submission to the Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (2007) won a Top Poster award. Apart from serving as an Associate Editor of *IJMR* he is on the editorial board of two other management journals.