

## Call for Papers

# PROBLEMATIZATION OF THEORY DEVELOPMENT: ADDRESSING THE NEW THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF GLOBALIZATION

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The trade wars, the COVID-19 pandemic, unexpected market volatility, increased migration, de-globalization, the emergence of multinational enterprises (MNEs) from developing countries, poverty alleviation... all these “new normal” issues are challenging us in terms of theory development and potential paradigm shifts across various organization and management disciplines (Ahlstrom *et al.*, 2020). We suggest that a problematization approach, a novel theoretical approach in the domain of management and organization studies, can help to blaze new trails and address the new threats and opportunities of globalization.

Alvesson and Sandberg (2011, 2013) propose the concept of “problematization”, which aims to identify new questions by overturning incumbent assumptions and modifying alternative theories. The problematization approach is different from a traditional “gap - spotting” methodology which rarely challenges the underlying assumptions of a field, since it constructs questions rooted in the current literature (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011). Indeed, problematization is likely to identify alternative explanations which could engage managers and policy makers in the conversation (Deng, Delios and Peng, 2020). For example, recent years have seen the emerging field of poor economics, which calls for “a radical rethinking of the way to fight global poverty” (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011).

This special issue seeks to include exemplary research on globalization-related issues. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic is hanging over the current architecture of world economic relations. How do MNEs deal with this kind of game change and uncertainty? In addition,

internationalization of emerging market firms (EMFs) is critical not just because of their empirical importance as emerging vital players in the global economy, but also due to the apparent contradictions between some of their strategies and behaviours and the predictions of mainstream theories. When internationalization was primarily a transatlantic affair (i.e., among the U.S., Canada and Western Europe), perhaps it worked as predicted originally by mainstream theories, such as Dunning's eclectic paradigm (Dunning, 1995). However, as an increasing number and diversity of nations, including China, India and Russia, enter the game, the assumptions on the firm-specific advantage of the ownership, location, and internalization hold less well. After all, EMFs mirror the unique aspects of emerging economies, such as fragile institutions, strong home government influences, growing entrepreneurship, and scarce technological and managerial resources (Deng *et al.*, 2020; Shi, Sun, Yan and Zhu, 2017).

In addition, with the rise of nationalism and populism worldwide (Alvarez and Rangan, 2019; Witt, 2019), the above-mentioned differences intensify a variety of conflicting, yet intertwined forces (e.g., income inequality within societies) globally and locally, reflecting how nationalism and globalization are inherently paradoxical tensions due to their oppositions and their interdependencies (Schad *et al.*, 2016). In a world with strengthening states, raising nationalism, and multi-polarization, the theoretical assumptions on governance, power, accountability, and competition dynamics in an interconnected and interdependent world merit greater research and understanding. Therefore, we believe that this is an opportune time to leverage the problematization approach for novel theory development on globalization by challenging the traditional assumptions which can in turn lead to the development of alternative explanations.

We aspire to integrate and go beyond prior views of globalization in the literature of management and organization studies. In essence, we welcome the development of ideas and concepts which may underlie, complement, and challenge other theoretical approaches and viewpoints in the relevant literature, for "understanding how to work with theoretical contradictions and oppositions" (Poole and Van de Ven, 1989: 563). By embracing complexity, holistic, and dynamics and applying paradox as a mean to theorize (De Keyser, Guette and Vendenbempt, 2019; Smith and Lewis, 2011), we believe a problematization approach could open the new directions in theorizing.

### **Specific Focus of the Special Issue**

Given the multidisciplinary nature of globalization-related research, we invite review manuscripts from various scholarly domains including, but not limited to, political science, economics, psychology, sociology, and business and management areas such as finance, marketing, organizational behaviour, strategy, and international business, among others. We welcome a problematization approach on theory development to enrich and deepen our understanding of globalization in the interconnected world.

Papers for this special issue may include but are not limited to the following review topics and questions:

**(1) How do MNEs respond to the new normal of globalization or de-globalization?**

- a. How do MNEs update their entry-related strategic decisions such as the drivers, mode, timing, location, and partner selection under de-globalization?
- b. How do MNEs renew strategic corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate political activity (CPA) under de-globalization?
- c. How do MNEs build new governance and institutions in responses to climate change, environmental crisis, and global emergencies (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic)?

**(2) How does a new multi-polar world affect firm behaviour and sustainability?**

- a. How does the emergence of power blocs affect MNEs' business strategies and social actions in both home and host societies?
- b. What is the trend of decoupling under trade wars or after the COVID-19 pandemic? What affects the global value chain of a world of multi-polar innovations?
- c. How does the globalization of digital technology affect a firm's innovation and value co-creation?

**(3) EMFs**

- a. How do EMFs meet stakeholders' multiple (and often complicating) interests and co-create with them?
- b. How do EMFs achieve the challenging outcome of simultaneously satisfying multiple and often conflicting priorities and goals?
- c. How do EMFs change their strategies related to intellectual property right (IPR) and reverse knowledge transfer in the trade war?
- d. How do EMFs catch up and innovate in global value chains?

**(4) Inclusive organization, inclusive growth and globalization**

- a. What are the characteristics of inclusive organizations under globalization? How do inclusive organizations create, operate, and perform?
- b. How are inclusive business models (e.g., microfinance model) diffused globally, regionally, and locally?
- c. What are firms' strategies on inclusive growth and poverty alleviation? How do firms develop social innovation? How do firms work with the international agencies (e.g., United Nations), local governments, NGOs (e.g. Kiva.org) at the bottom of pyramid?
- d. How are firms shaped by their situation in both local and transnational social spaces and mediated by multi-layered political processes of intra-firm competition and inter-organization relationships?

## Paper Submission Information

Manuscripts should follow the Author Guidelines set out by the *International Journal of Management Reviews* available at:

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

Manuscripts should be submitted online at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ijmr> highlighting that you wish to be considered for the Special Issue 'Problematization of Theory Development'.

## Guest Editors

**Sunny Li Sun** is Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in University of Massachusetts Lowell. He received his PhD from the University of Texas at Dallas in 2010. His work has appeared in journals such as *Strategic Management Journal*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Organization Science*, and *Academy of Management Perspectives* (With a decade award). His four papers are listed in "Highly Cited Papers" (in the top 1% of field of Economics and Business) by Thomson Reuters Essential Science Indicators. He received a Global Peer Review Award 2016, 2018, and 2019 for his place in the top 1% of global reviewers in Economics and Business by Publons. Dr. Sun serves as the senior editor of *Management and Organization Review* and on the editorial boards of multiple journals including *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, and *Quarterly Journal of Management*. He served as a guest editor for *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* and *Journal of Production Innovation Management*.

**Ping Deng** is the Monte Ahuja Chair of Global Business and a Professor of Management at the Monte Ahuja College of Business, Cleveland State University, Ohio, USA. He received his PhD from Old Dominion University in 1998. His research interests are multinationals (MNCs) and outward foreign direct investment (OFDI), with a focus on emerging economies and particularly China. His highly impactful articles appeared in international journals such as *Business Horizons*,

*International Business Review, International Journal of Management Reviews, Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of World Business and Management and Organization Review.* Just in the last 5 years, Dr. Deng's academic publications (mainly as solo author) have been cited more than 2,000 times, putting him among the most influential scholars on the internationalization of Chinese MNCs via OFDI. Based on the Web of Science and Google Scholar, his 2009 *JWB* article, "Why do Chinese firms tend to acquire strategic assets in international expansion?" has consistently been ranked as among the top 1% most influential articles in the field.

**Xuefei Ma** is a Professor of Management at the City University of Hong Kong. He received his PhD in Strategy from NUS Business School, National University of Singapore. His current research examines strategy, innovation, and management of multinational and entrepreneurial firms in and from emerging economies. His research has appeared in leading management journals such as *Strategic Management Journal, Academy of Management Journal, Journal of International Business Studies* and *Journal of Management*. He was the winner of the Haynes Prize for the Most Promising Scholar awarded by Academy of International Business, and the Dunning Visiting Fellow of the John H. Dunning Center for International Business, and a recipient of JIBS Silver Medal for Outstanding Contributions. Professor Xuefei Ma has served as a guest editor for *Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of Management Studies*, and *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*.

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