

**Call for papers for a Special Issue to mark the 30th birthday of AIMS**

## **Grand challenges and the future of management studies**

**Guest Editors:**

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**Submission deadline: July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Management studies have been increasingly acknowledging the urgency of researching and tackling grand challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, aging societies, big data and digitalization, gender inequalities, labor slavery, resource depletion, poverty and disaster risks (Ferraro et al., 2015; George et al., 2016; Gümüşay et al., 2022; Shrivastava et al., 2019) (see also: United Nations 17 Goals, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). As these challenges require collective action, management studies are well placed to offer original perspectives and tools to understand their nature, their dynamics, and the organizational changes required or that can be considered with a view to solving them. By moving beyond simply acknowledging that organizations are affected by and have to deal with broader social issues (Vaara & Durand, 2012), this trend highlights the growing recognition that businesses are responsible for the current crises (Ergene et al., 2020; Whiteman et al., 2013; Wright & Nyberg, 2017) and that we can no longer consider organizations and economies as being disconnected from socio-ecological ecosystems (Banerjee & Arjaliès, 2021). Grand challenges are complex interconnected issues which have far-reaching effects, affect a broad range of stakeholders at various scales, and are inherently deeply uncertain and unpredictable (Ferraro et al., 2015; George et al., 2016). As such, grand challenges call into question how we conceive strategies and organizations and invite scholars to rethink businesses' roles in and relations with society (Levillain et al., 2014). They invite us to develop alternative forms of organizing (Barin Cruz et al., 2017; Ouahab & Maclouf, 2019; Petrella et al., 2021) or new models that repurpose businesses so that they truly attend to social needs and goals (Crane & Matten, 2021).

Management and organization research has already demonstrated the field's ability to provide alternative actionable theories, tools, and approaches for managers and organizations. Many studies have investigated strategies and organizations in relation to climate change (Chaudhury et al., 2016), value chain resilience and sustainability (Acquier et al., 2011; Longoni et al., 2014), the common good and common resources (Camus et al., 2019; Micheaux & Aggeri, 2019), modern slavery (Crane, 2013), feminist work organization (Dorion, 2021), social innovation and economy (Younes et al., 2019), poverty and low-income populations (Pralhad, 2004), as well as alternatives to capitalism and economic growth (Ford & Kuetting, 2020; Hickel, 2020). However, most scholarly management studies still perpetuate a 'business as usual', profit-oriented, and western vision and fail to address organizations as sources of the

problems and potential solutions to them (Banerjee & Arjaliès, 2021; Ergene et al., 2020; Wright & Nyberg, 2017). This failure to deeply engage with grand challenges could further aggravate current environmental, economic and social crises.

Taking stock of 30 years of research at the International Association of Strategic Management (AIMS, <https://www.strategie-aims.com/>), this special issue invites innovative studies which question strategy and organization theories as we know them and which might help to accelerate the grand challenges 'turn' in management and organization studies (Gümüşay et al., 2022). We are interested in all forms of organizing collective action: firms and non-governmental organizations, communities, public actors, social movements, inter-organizational relationships, etc. The call for papers is open to interdisciplinary approaches which draw on human and natural sciences, engineering, design, and urbanism to examine how strategy and organization studies can help to make sense of and address grand challenges. We will also welcome epistemological, theoretical, methodological and empirical works, as these grand challenges will require new observational tools and new ways of analyzing data.

Potential contributions can address – but are not limited to – the following approaches and topics (the list is indicative only):

**Cognitive approaches** (categories, labels, legitimacy)

- To what extent do we need to adapt and reinvent metrics and tools (for measuring value creation, performance, economic growth, for example) according to new cognitive categories?
- How do we use the new labels or categories that emerge to reflect new relationships and new ways of thinking and how do they constrain actions and initiatives? How do actors make sense of and frame grand challenges? How do they use discourse, visuals, and emotions to do so?
- How do grand challenges affect the legitimacy of organizations, industries, and ecosystems and how do we deal with their environment and stakeholders?

**Critical approaches** (instrumental use of grand challenges, decolonizing, alternative theories)

- To what extent is the focus on science and innovation a political instrumentalization (EUC, 2008)?
- From a critical perspective, can grand challenges constitute a new ideology that could be questioned?
- How can we develop decolonized, more inclusive, and diversified world views in management studies to take account of the realities of minorities, non-western economies, indigenous or traditional knowledge?

**Strategic approaches** (innovation, organizations' relations to the environment)

- What are the strategic initiatives that emerge for tackling grand challenges at the local, national, and international levels? With what consequences?
- How are grand challenges integrated into the strategic formulation and implementation of for-profit organizations, especially multinational organizations? Can these challenges become future sources of differentiation and performance?
- What kind of social innovations emerge to address grand challenges?
- How can digital technologies help with tackling grand challenges and what conditions or institutions are necessary for their sustainable adoption, diffusion, and usage?

## Organizational approaches (use of instruments, forms of organizing)

- How do social actors mobilize, and are mobilized by, the grand challenges to modify their organizations and practices?
- What are the blocking or leveraging mechanisms, paradoxes, contradictions, and tensions that affect organizations and grand challenges? How can we address them?
- Which new governance mechanisms can support the sustainable use of common resources and addressing grand challenges?
- How can organizational and socio-material practices contribute to resilient societies, communities, and territories?

## Methodological issues (dynamics and inter-temporal, multi-level, multi-modal issues)

- Instead of considering grand challenges as exogenous and static objects, how can researchers explore their nature and material, spatial, and temporal dynamics?
- To take account of the complexities of grand challenges, how can management scholars develop more comprehensive insights about the processual and/or cross-level nature of strategic and organizational responses? Given the systemic–analytical trade-offs, which approach should we adopt?
- Given the complex and non-linear nature of grand challenges (with multiple unforeseeable feedback loops), how can we observe the progress being made by organizations in response to them as well as their societal impact? How can interdisciplinarity help to bring new insights to this methodological problem?

## Submitting your paper

Please submit your manuscript through the journal's online submission system (<https://management-aims.com/index.php/mgmt/about/submissions>). You will need to create a user account if you do not already have one, and you must select the appropriate Special Issue at the 'Manuscript Type' stage. The Special Issue Editors will handle all manuscripts in accordance with the journal's policies and procedures; they expect authors to follow the journal's submission guidelines (<https://management-aims.com/index.php/mgmt/preparation>). The deadline for submission is **midnight on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022**.

If you have an idea for a possible paper that may fit this call and would like to discuss it initially, do not hesitate in contacting one of the guest editors:

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