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Embracing non-Western Contexts in Management Scholarship

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ABSTRACT Management is a global phenomenon. Yet, the vast majority of empirical investigations and theoretical explanations of management, managers and those being managed that are published in leading management journals are based on research that predominantly originates from Western contexts, particularly the USA and the larger European countries. Non-Western contexts, in turn, reside at the periphery of mainstream management scholarship. This is problematic for multiple reasons. It provides an inherently limited view on the contextual factors that may explain variation in management practices across the globe, and it leads to a reductionist view of non-Western contexts to offer little more than a means for teasing out the boundary conditions of mainstream 'Western' theories. This exclusion of non-Western contexts has resulted in a marginalization of non-Western scholarly voices, who are often hesitant to submit their research to leading scholarly journals. To address these interrelated problems, we use this introduction to the Thematic Collection on 'Embracing non-Western contexts' in the *Journal of Management Studies* to call on scholars to more fully embrace non-Western contexts in their research, and in doing so, to unleash the explanatory potential of these contexts for our understanding of management.

Keywords: inclusive scholarship, Global South, decolonizing management research and practice, non-Western research contexts

INTRODUCTION

> *I am concerned whether I can submit my research to*
>
> *a top journal if I do not have data from Europe or the US.*

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This and similar statements are what we frequently hear from scholars outside of the Western world at conferences and other events. Although research in emerging market settings has gained traction in some scholarly conversations (e.g., Wright et al., 2005; Xu and Meyer, 2013), it seems that more often than not there is a concern – if not a lack of confidence (e.g., Meyer, 2006) – when it comes to publishing research based on non-Western data, phenomena and theories (broadly understood as anything outside of North America, Europe and Australia). These concerns manifest as limited generalizability of non-Western data and the associated difficulty of making universal claims about 'management', and worries that such data might be overly idiosyncratic. Despite frequent calls of journal editors and other scholars to pay more attention to non-Western contexts (e.g., Alamgir et al., 2022; Banerjee, 2022; Bruton et al., 2022; Filatotchev et al., 2020; George et al.,2016a; Morris et al., 2023; Muzio, 2022; Umphress et al., 2022), research across management and organization studies continues to suffer from the untapped potential of non-Western research contexts for theorizing, and underrepresented voices of researchers from that context as those who theorize.

In this introduction to the Thematic Collection on 'embracing non-Western contexts' in the *Journal of Management Studies* (*JMS*), we seek to rectify the lack of non-Western-based research in our journal with the aim of encouraging management scholars globally to submit more research that is based on non-Western contexts, encompassing not only data and samples, but also phenomena, theories and ideas more generally. We see various benefits for doing so, chief amongst which is because non-Western contexts 'like Brazil, China, India, and South Africa become more central in the global economy and move from the periphery to the core of management practice', which poses an urgent need to study and incorporate these contexts into our theorizing as it might potentially shake up established wisdom (Morris et al., 2023, p. 2). We agree that there is a problematic 'absence of voices from the Global South in the production of management knowledge' (Banerjee, 2022, p. 1075; see also Chowdhury, 2021; Nimruji et al., 2021).

We intend to advance the conversation on embracing non-Western contexts in management research in two ways. First, to motivate such research, we argue that there is little to no reason to assume that non-Western data – or theories – are inferior to Western data when it comes to making universal claims about management and organizations. In fact, we consider the prevalent approach of treating Western theories as universal highly problematic as it may lead to inaccurate and acontextual predictions (see also Bruton et al., 2022; Filatotchev et al., 2020). Likewise, acknowledging idiosyncrasies and concomitant contextual limitations and boundary conditions of a theory is equally important for any kind of study, whether it originates from Western or non-Western contexts. Why would a sample of managers from a US-based multinational allow for generalizable theoretical mechanisms about 'management' while non-Western data can only be used to challenge these mechanisms or to tease out some particularities, and not vice-versa? Why would expectations to reflect on the unique features and limitations of a particular empirical context be different for a sample of firms from Thailand than for one from the UK, given that management is a pervasive, yet multifaceted, feature of organizational life across the globe (Muzio, 2022)?

Our point here is that the ability to make universal and generalizable claims – and vice-versa, the need to acknowledge idiosyncratic features of an empirical context – should not be any different for Western vs. non-Western data. We take issue with the still prevalent view that non-Western contexts are reduced to a means for teasing out the boundary conditions of theories developed in a Western context, while the opposite scenario seems out of scope (Filatotchev et al., 2020). Researchers who have access to a specific context to collect their data should not be expected to justify it beyond explaining why their specific context allows for answering their research question and is theoretically adequate, independent of whether their data come from the West or not. This, we believe, would significantly ease the burden currently faced by those employing non-Western data in their research and create a level playing field for any management scholar globally.

Second, based on these premises and because there is much to learn not just for authors but also for editors and reviewers, we seek to promote the use of non-Western theories, concepts and ideas in mainstream management and organizational research, thus complementing earlier calls for the use of 'Eastern' (Filatotchev et al., 2020) as well as 'indigenous' theories in our research (Bruton et al., 2022). When seeking to publish in the *JMS*, scholars should not be reluctant to submit their non-Western work to us, or to other leading journals, whose editors have made similar calls (e.g., George et al., 2016a; Morris et al., 2023 for *Academy of Management Review*; Tung, 2023 for *Journal of International Business Studies*; Umphress et al., 2022 for *Academy of Management Journal*).

To support and further legitimize this ongoing endeavour, we showcase inspirational examples of studies published in *JMS* that mobilized non-Western contexts to craft theoretical contributions which have notably advanced our field. These studies illustrate the broader themes of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and societal grand challenges, global management practices, entrepreneurship, leadership, and relational strategies. Keeping the aims and scope of *JMS* in mind, we emphasize that advancing our theoretical understanding of important phenomena in impactful and meaningful ways is critical (Healey et al., 2023; Wickert et al., 2021), because an under-researched empirical context alone is not sufficient for publication. Such contexts need to be used to craft novel and original theoretical insights of interest to the broad audience served by *JMS* – yet, as we show, there is untapped potential for doing so. Our admittedly selective overview of studies published in *JMS* shows how non-Western contexts can be leveraged successfully when it comes to data. Yet, it also alerts us that not only 'Western' studies dominate in terms of number of publications, but more strikingly, our review underscores that theories originating from non-Western contexts remain even more scarce. In consequence, a non-Western view that could potentially expand, challenge or redirect our current understanding of management has not yet fully emerged. To further unleash the explanatory potential of non-Western contexts, we outline three avenues of how this can be addressed in future research by means of, first, examining how non-Western phenomena and ideas influence the West, second, using theories originating from non-Western contexts to understand management as a global phenomenon, and third, going beyond the West vs. non-West dichotomy altogether.

IDENTIFYING RESEARCH IN *JMS* MOBILIZING NON-WESTERN CONTEXTS

We first started analysing what *JMS* has to offer when it comes to research in non-Western contexts. To identify relevant articles for inclusion in this Thematic Collection, the publication had to rely on research conducted in any non-Western context, i.e., data outside of North America, Europe and Australia. Searching for relevant papers using the keywords alone might have led to the omission of papers that did not highlight their research or empirical context amongst their keywords. Therefore, we manually searched all *JMS* issues that have been published since 2012 until June, 2023, next to papers that have been accepted for publication but have not been assigned to an issue yet. This search yielded 107 papers. Our analysis shows that only a fraction of the total number of studies published in *JMS* draws from non-Western contexts, thus underscoring the need for this Thematic Collection and our call for more studies from this underrepresented context (see Figure 1). Similar to *JMS* in general, Table I shows that studies mobilizing non-Western contexts rely more on quantitative than on qualitative data, and they are hardly non-empirical. Table I also shows the geographical distribution of studies using non-Western data, with a strong dominance of China, whereas the remaining countries show a somewhat even distribution. Note that for this overview, we did not factor in the affiliations of authors, as non-Western scholars studying their home countries are often based at Western institutions.

Next, we manually screened these articles to identify those we felt best illustrated and exemplified how non-Western contexts can provide novel and original theoretical insights, and not necessarily only because they were well-cited. This selection is by no means exhaustive; rather, it serves illustrative and inspirational purposes for scholars who intend to work with non-Western contexts. Table II summarizes the articles included in this Thematic Collection.

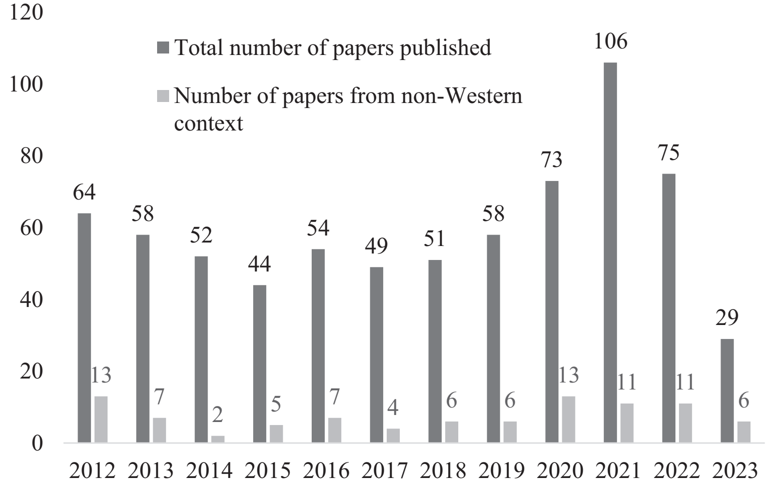

Figure 1. Distribution of papers on non-Western contexts published in *JMS* since 2012, compared to the total number of papers published. Note that 2023 only covers the first four issues

Table I. Overview of methodological approaches and countries underpinning non-Western research published in *JMS* since 2012

	# of papers	*% of papers*
Methodological approach		
Review	1	0.93%
Essay	2	1.87%
Mixed-methods	2	1.87%
Qualitative	34	31.78%
Quantitative	68	63.55%
Country/context		
More than 3 countries	9	8.41%
Global/ generic[a]	8	7.48%
Bangladesh	1	0.93%
Brazil	4	3.74%
Chile	3	2.80%
China	43	40.19%
Democratic Republic of Congo	1	0.93%
Egypt	1	0.93%
Ghana	1	0.93%
Hong Kong	3	2.80%
India	8	7.48%
India and Zimbabwe	1	0.93%
Indonesia	1	0.93%
Japan	6	5.61%
Kenya	1	0.93%
Kingdom of Eswatini	1	0.93%
Korea	3	2.80%
Mexico	1	0.93%
Myanmar	1	0.93%
South Africa	3	2.80%
Sri Lanka	1	0.93%
Taiwan	4	3.74%
Turkey	2	1.87%

[a]Global/generic refers to contexts that encapsulated whole continents or regions without specifying specific countries (e.g., Latin America, Asia, Africa, etc.).

HOW NON-WESTERN CONTEXTS ADVANCE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

Our selection of *JMS* papers allowed us to group them into five broad themes, all of which mobilize non-Western contexts to illuminate various facets of management

Table II. Articles included in the Thematic Collection on embracing non-Western contexts

TC theme	*Authors & Year*	*Title*	*Context*	*Phenomenon*	*Method*	*Theory*	*Approach to inquiry*
Societal grand challenges	Reinecke and Donaghey (2021)	Political CSR at the Coalface – The Roles and Contradictions of Multinational Corporations in Developing Workplace Dialogue	Bangladesh	Workplace dialogue and workers' rights in global supply chains	Qualitative (interviews and field visits)	Industrial relations; political CSR	Mobilizing Western theory (industrial democracy) to extend other Western theory (PCSR)
Societal grand challenges	Ehrnström-Fuentes (2016)	Delinking Legitimacies: A Pluriversal Perspective on Political CSR	Chile	Stakeholder conflict over a mine	Qualitative (comparative case study)	Political CSR; legitimacy	Contextualizing political CSR theory
Societal grand challenges	Kistruck et al. (2013)	Social Intermediation in Base-of-the-Pyramid Markets	Latin America, Africa, and Asia	Base-of-the-pyramid markets and poverty alleviation	Qualitative (multi-stage)	Intermediation theory	Challenging assumptions in intermediation theory
Societal grand challenges	Adams and Luiz (2022)	Incomplete Institutional Change and the Persistence of Racial Inequality: The Contestation of Institutional Misalignment in South Africa	South Africa	Racial inequality	Qualitative (interviews, focus groups)	Institutional logics and change	Universalizing existing theories of inequality persistence
Understanding variation in global management practices	Chizema and Shinozawa (2012)	The 'Company with committees': Change or Continuity in Japanese Corporate Governance?	Japan	Corporate governance adoption	Quantitative	Institutional theory	Extending and challenging existing theory

(Continues)

Table II. (Continued)

TC theme	*Authors & Year*	*Title*	*Context*	*Phenomenon*	*Method*	*Theory*	*Approach to inquiry*
Understanding variation in global management practices	Mutlu et al. (2018)	Corporate Governance in China: A Meta-Analysis	China	Corporate governance adoption/ mechanisms and firm performance	Quantitative	Dynamic Institution-based view	Extending existing theory
Understanding variation in global management practices	Jia et al. (2019)	Indirect Reciprocity and Corporate Philanthropic Giving: How Visiting Officials Influence Investment in Privately Owned Chinese Firms	China	Corporate Philanthropic giving	Quantitative	Social exchange theory	Extending existing theory
Understanding variation in global management practices	Westney and Piekkari (2020)	Reversing the Translation Flow: Moving Organizational Practices from Japan to the USA	Japan and USA	Movement of Japanese organizational practices to the USA	Qualitative	Neo-institutional organizational translation approach	Challenging existing theory
Entrepreneurship amidst deep constraints	Bradley et al. (2012)	Capital Is Not Enough: Innovation in Developing Economies	Kenya	Poverty alleviation	Quantitative (survey)	Effectuation, Schumpeterian innovation, social capital	Challenging allocative view to poverty alleviation
Entrepreneurship amidst deep constraints	Smith and Kaminishi (2020)	Confucian Entrepreneurship: Towards a Genealogy of a Conceptual Tool	China	Spread of 'Confucian entrepreneur' concept	Historical text analysis	Cultural-cognitive and institutional perspectives on entrepreneurship	Challenging the concept and premises of Confucian entrepreneur

(Continues)

Table II. (Continued)

TC theme	*Authors & Year*	*Title*	*Context*	*Phenomenon*	*Method*	*Theory*	*Approach to inquiry*
Entrepreneurship amidst deep constraints	Chowdhury (2021)	The Mobilization of Noncooperative Spaces: Reflections from Rohingya Refugee Camps	Bangladesh	Refugees in developing countries	Essay	Entrepreneurial agency	Challenging entrepreneurship claims about the power of individual actors
Entrepreneurship amidst deep constraints	Zhang et al. (2022)	Why and When Does CFO Ranking in Top Management Team Informal Hierarchy Affect Entrepreneurial Firm Initial Public Offering Fraud?	China	IPO fraud	Quantitative	Upper echelons and inhibition theory of power	Building theory about entrepreneurial fraud
Entrepreneurship amidst deep constraints	Kimmitt et al. (2023)	Place in Entrepreneurial Storytelling: A Study of Cultural Entrepreneurship in a Deprived Context	Ghana	Entrepreneurial storytelling	Qualitative (case studies)	Cultural entrepreneurship	Extending knowledge about entrepreneurial storytelling
Leading and managing people beyond the West	Wang et al. (2023a)	Actions Speak Louder than Words, Particularly in the East: How Taiwanese Followers Perceive Leaders' Promotion of Ethical Actions Differently from Followers in the States	Taiwan and USA	Ethical leadership	Quantitative	Ethical leadership	Refining ethical leadership theory with Taoism-oriented ethical ideals

(Continues)

Table II. (Continued)

TC theme	*Authors & Year*	*Title*	*Context*	*Phenomenon*	*Method*	*Theory*	*Approach to inquiry*
Leading and managing people beyond the West	Jayasinghe (2022)	The Use of Attendance Incentive Differentials for Managing Worker Shortages: A Study of Export Manufacturers in Global Supply Chains	Sri Lanka	Attendance Incentives	Quantitative	Compensating pay differential perspective	Developing and testing a framework on attendance incentives for perfect monthly performance
Leading and managing people beyond the West	Shepherd et al. (2020)	The Surprising Duality of Jugaad: Low Firm Growth and High Inclusive Growth	India	Jugaad	Qualitative	Inclusive growth and bricolage perspectives on innovation	Building a framework of creative problem solving in resource-scare contexts
Leading and managing people beyond the West	Boone et al. (2022)	How are Competing Logics Combined in Managerial Teams? The Impact of Branch Founding Team Hybridity on the Growth of Islamic Bank Branches in Turkey, 2002–19	Turkey	Hybrid staffing	Quantitative	Institutional logics	Exploring the effects of oppositional institutional logics in managerial teams
Relationship-building in emerging markets	Tello-Rozas et al. (2015)	Uncovering Micro-Practices and Pathways of Engagement that Scale up Social-Driven Collaborations: A Practice View of Power	Brazil	Inadequacy of institutional provision to social problems	Qualitative	Social-driven collaboration; social movement theory	Developing a processual model for micro-practices of engagement

(Continues)

Table II. (Continued)

TC theme	*Authors & Year*	*Title*	*Context*	*Phenomenon*	*Method*	*Theory*	*Approach to inquiry*
Relationship-building in emerging markets	Velamuri et al. (2017)	Seizing the Ethical High Ground: Ethical Reputation Building in Corrupt Environments	India and Zimbabwe	Corporate corruption	Qualitative	Stakeholder theory and ethics	Analysing stakeholder effects on reputation building as an ethical actor
Relationship-building in emerging markets	Girschik (2020)	Managing Legitimacy in Business-Driven Social Change: The Role of Relational Work	Indonesia	Legitimacy building through relational work	Qualitative	Legitimacy-as-process	Unpacking relational work with local nonmarket actors in business-driven social change
Relationship-building in emerging markets	Bhatt et al. (2022)	How do Intermediaries Build Inclusive Markets? The Role of the Social Context	India	Markets and social inequality	Qualitative	Intermediation theory	Proposing a contingent view for building inclusive markets
Relationship-building in emerging markets	Moschieri et al. (2022)	Why do Some Multinational Firms Respond Better Than Others to the Hostility of Host Governments? Proximal Embedding and the Side Effects of Local Partnerships	Latin America	Hostility of host governments to MNCs	Qualitative	Obsolescent bargaining theory; nonmarket strategy	Proposing a cognitive perspective on relational responses to escalating host government hostility

and organizations, and thus cover a range of topics about which authors generally publish in *JMS*. First, we show that non-Western contexts are well-suited to examine societal grand challenges in-situ. Second, they are important for understanding variation in global management practices. Third, they allow for studying entrepreneurs amidst deep constraints. Fourth, they shed light on leading and managing people beyond the West. Lastly, they provide valuable insights into relational approaches adopted by organizational actors.

Examining Societal Grand Challenges In-Situ

Examining non-Western contexts is critical when aiming to understand societal grand challenges because such challenges occur most forcefully and potentially cause the most suffering in these contexts. In management studies, and *JMS* in particular, the examination of grand challenges such as human and labour rights violations, inequality, poverty, and climate change have become increasingly topical (for overviews see e.g., George et al., 2016b; Gümüsay et al., 2022; Wickert, 2021; Wickert et al., 2021). What links such challenges is that while they are global in scope, they typically materialize most severely in the Global South and related economically-disadvantaged non-Western contexts. Searching for the origins and causes of these grand challenges is beyond the scope of this paper, and in fact scholars examining postcolonial legacies and other forms of long-term consequences of Western heritage and concomitant socio-political and economic domination have been discussing these questions for decades (e.g., Banerjee, 2022; Said, 1978). Yet, there is little doubt that many grand challenges affect populations in the Global South more directly than those in the Global North. With this premise, it is imperative that management scholars examine their effects, consequences and empirical manifestations at the source.

Research published in *JMS* has much to offer for this type of inquiry. For instance, addressing the debate on political CSR (e.g., Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Scherer et al., 2016), Reinecke and Donaghey (2021) mobilize industrial democracy theory to dive into 'the coalface' of workplace relations to identify the local contextual conditions where labour-rights violations occur. They study workplace dialogue in Bangladeshi apparel factories, a context where health and safety, fair pay and respectful treatment of workers continue to be at stake. An in-depth sample of various types of qualitative data, including field visits, provided a deep understanding of the worker's point of view, rather than the typical 'top-down' perspective of MNC managers who are literally thousands of miles away from those problems. Similarly, Ehrnström-Fuentes (2016) dives into the local context of political CSR and examines marginalized and oftentimes excluded stakeholders 'that lack the power to make their voices heard and have views that are incommensurable with the solutions proposed by large multinational corporations' (p. 434). Her comparative case study portrays the local contextual conditions of a protracted conflict over a pulp mill in the south of Chile, with data collected over several years, including field research, interviews, and local newspapers. It examines deliberation over the desirability of the mill based on the voices of those stakeholders in its immediate proximity, rather than, for instance, examining deliberation in the context of a globally present multistakeholder initiative located far away from where relevant problems surface.

Research by Kistruck et al. (2013) is similarly illuminating. They study base-of-the-pyramid (BOP) markets from the perspective of intermediation theory. BOP markets comprise nearly 4 billion people worldwide that live on less than two dollars per day, largely in the Global South. In fact, with this large size they are more common than what might be considered 'top-of-the-pyramid' markets. BOP markets lack strong formal institutions and trade is typically constricted to informal and largely local networks. Interested in the decisions made by intermediaries seeking to alleviate poverty by connecting BOP with more developed markets, they conducted a multi-phase qualitative study involving interviews with 29 social intermediation projects located in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia. Their findings challenge contemporary 'Western' assumptions about the functioning of market actors, namely that in BOP markets, organizations that altruistically pursue both financial and social goals often make very rational and purposeful decisions to be inefficient. They maximize their overall utility function that prioritizes poverty alleviation over profit maximization.

Poverty, as investigated by Kistruck and colleagues, is deeply intertwined with various forms of structural and systemic inequality as studied in different African countries by Lashitew et al. (2024). While being a global challenge, its socio-political and economic effects hit populations in the Global South disproportionally more (Hamann and Bertels, 2018). Adams and Luiz (2022), for instance, explore the role that organizations and institutions play in reproducing racial oppression and inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. They use qualitative data to understand local participants' experiences of inequality through interviews with farmers, farmworkers and other key stakeholders. Importantly, the strong salience of such experiences of inequality and racial oppression allow them to show how organizations affect inequality through incomplete processes of institutional change, thus contributing to the broader institutional theory literature and offering valuable insights for scholars studying inequality in other settings.

Beyond the studies we have illustrated above, examples of non-Western-based research include studies on corruption in transition economies (Eddleston et al., 2020), and on different forms of CSR in emerging markets (Corciolani et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023b). What all these studies have in common is that they investigate globally occurring phenomena that are by no means restricted to non-Western contexts, be it labour rights, corruption, poverty or inequality. Yet, these phenomena manifest typically much more forcefully in those contexts. From a theoretical point of view, studying them is important because it allows not only for teasing out their conceptual idiosyncrasies based on sharper illustration, but also to develop new inductive theoretical models. From a moral point of view, it is imperative to give voice to those who suffer the harmful consequences of societal grand challenges the most (Bothello and Bonfim, 2023).

Understanding the Variation in Global Management Practices

JMS has consistently published influential articles that seek to better understand management practices' variation in a global context, for instance by emphasizing the unique features of those management practices in non-Western contexts, while also contrasting these differences to Western contexts. The non-Western lens is important, because it extends and challenges the traditional Anglo-American view of seemingly universal management practices.

Research in *JMS* that mobilized non-Western contexts for studying variation in management practices has mostly centred on Eastern Asia, with China as the leading context.

For instance, Chizema and Shinozawa (2012) explore the potential diffusion and adoption of a contested governance practice from Anglo to non-Anglo governance systems, namely Japan. They collected data from 2003 to 2009 of the top 500 Japanese firms listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange and found that adoptions faced strong resistance as Japan demonstrates unique sets of institutional and market conditions. Japanese companies struggle between global capital market forces and deeply rooted local institutional path dependencies. From these insights, the authors explain how and why changes of governance practices are country-specific in their nature. In another meta-analytic study, Mutlu et al. (2018) ask how the impact of 'good corporate governance' principles on firm performance changed over time in China. Their findings advance a dynamic institution-based view by explaining how institutional transitions affect the relationship between governance mechanisms and firm performance in the second largest economy in the world.

Others investigated unique phenomena occurring in a non-Western context, and in doing so, aimed to enrich related theoretical perspectives that are largely derived from the West. Jia et al. (2019), for example, study the role of religion in management (Chan-Serafin et al., 2013) and examined how China's unique Buddhist and Taoist cultures impact the relationship between philanthropic giving and how visiting officials influence investment in privately owned Chinese firms, listed on Chinese stock exchanges from 2001 to 2012. While they use social-exchange theory, a theory developed in a Western context, their focus on religion in general, and Buddhist and Taoist in particular, enlarges the boundary condition of the theory on indirect reciprocity – a core tenet of social-exchange theory.

Lastly, Westney and Piekkari (2020) challenge the traditional wisdom on knowledge transfer that has long been accepted in Western contexts. They show that when studying knowledge transfer, scholars tend to rely on the widely accepted model of decontextualizing and recontextualizing. However, according to the authors, this type of model only works well when practices originate from an established centre of knowledge production such as the USA and where travel routes have been well established (such as from the USA to the Nordic countries). They develop a historical case study covering almost three and a half decades since 1971 to explore the temporal dynamics of management practices in Japan. As they found, when knowledge transfer occurs outside of an established centre (such as Japan) and uses a different route (such as from Japan to USA), the focus on the context becomes increasingly important. To allow for successful knowledge transfer, Japanese translators needed to explain the roots of these practices, the historical legacy of feudalism, and even the epistemological tradition to their American audiences.

In summary, the view that there are globally universal management practices needs to be challenged. For doing so, the study of non-Western contexts provides a fruitful avenue for researchers to explore the diversity of unique features of different non-Western countries and practices common in these contexts.

Studying Entrepreneurship Amidst Deep Constraints

Examining non-Western perspectives and contexts is exciting for research on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is present around the world in places such as Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Middle East. We can learn a lot from these diverse settings to both build and test theory about how entrepreneurs develop and scale business models around the world. Research published in *JMS* has touched on topics such as poverty reduction through entrepreneurship in Kenya (Bradley et al., 2012), initial public offerings (IPOs) in China (Zhang et al., 2022), and use of place as material and symbolic resource by entrepreneurs in Ghana (Kimmitt et al., 2023). In the latter study, the authors follow ten new ventures and their stakeholders over four years, conducting over 80 interviews in a deprived context, and uncovering how impoverished entrepreneurs leverage place in their storytelling. Place allows entrepreneurs to tell a story about economic and temporal stability and future growth, connect to others, and showcase their personal capacity to convey trustworthiness, business viability, and future potential of their ventures. Such findings about the importance of place-based storytelling for entrepreneurship would be interesting to explore in other contexts given the increasing attention to how entrepreneurs frame their ventures to audiences such as investors, customers, or employees (Snihur et al., 2022).

More generally, non-Western contexts can offer new insights to scholars of entrepreneurship and management both theoretically and empirically. Empirically, different data can be available to study phenomena such as innovative entrepreneurship (Bradley et al., 2012) or even entrepreneurial fraud that can help develop novel theory, like in the case of Zhang et al. (2022). They explain why CFOs with high rankings in TMT informal hierarchy are more likely to engage in fraud during initial public offering using a sample of Chinese entrepreneurial firms listed on growth enterprise market (similar to the US NASDAQ stock market) and find support for the hypothesis that CEO narcissism negatively moderates such relationship. Different data collected in various countries make non-Western contexts ideal sites to develop and test theories for which data might simply not be available in the USA or Europe.

At the same time, studies of entrepreneurship published in *JMS* point out the persistence of deeply ingrained tendencies such as conceptualizing Chinese entrepreneurship through a stereotype of a 'Confucian entrepreneur', a term traced back to the writings of the 19th century missionaries and other colonialist writers including Max Weber (Smith and Kaminishi, 2020). This article suggests that scholarly reflexivity about constructs and their history is needed to be aware and potentially reconsider some of the past assumptions about non-Western settings in the research and publishing process.

Also examining entrepreneurship amidst deep constraints, Chowdhury (2021) questions the reliance on assumptions about the power of individual agency and microfinance solutions in contexts such as refugee camps, where local arrangements and institutions thwart entrepreneurial actions. This critical essay, based on the author's observations of the Rohingya refugee camp hosting over 750 thousand refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh, urges scholars to reconsider how entrepreneurship can thrive in noncooperative spaces and questions the role of elite NGOs and MNCs that sell microcredit or consumer products in such camps to vulnerable refugees.

In sum, delving into non-Western contexts offers fresh perspectives for entrepreneurship scholars. The prevalence and plurality of entrepreneurship around the world holds immense potential to advance management theory and challenge latent assumptions in entrepreneurship research, such as unbridled individual agency and resource access, typical in studies anchored in the data from traditional Western settings. There is an opportunity to rethink what entrepreneurial agency means in different contexts.

Leading and Managing People beyond the West

As with most areas in management and organization studies, leading and managing people has been dominated by Western theories and paradigms, despite some effort to study cultural differences in leadership (Javidan et al., 2006; Lonati, 2020). Although these studies provide evidence towards both culturally contingent and universal leadership traits and behaviours, they show little to no consideration for how the unique attributes of specific cultural contexts shape leadership and management practices in different non-Western countries (Nkomo, 2011; Rowley et al., 2019). More research is needed to theorize how and why a specific cultural context shapes leadership and management practices in the Global South and other non-Westerns parts of the world (Nguyen et al., 2023).

At *JMS*, we have made some progress to this end, giving space to studies that theorize why and how leading and managing differs between non-Western and Western contexts. Drawing from Taoism-oriented ethical ideals, which amongst other tenants assume that individuals with higher morality are more humble and engage in good acts anonymously, Wang et al. (2023a) predicted that leaders from Taiwan would use different strategies to promote ethical actions compared to their US counterparts. Their findings partially supported their theorizing, showing that Taiwanese leaders who only engaged in role modelling were seen just as positively as those who engaged in both role modelling and communicating about the ethical rules, whereas only those US leaders who engaged in both types of behaviours received positive approval. Directly contrasting Western and non-Western empirical contexts, this study showed and explained cultural differences in ethical leadership based on the unique and deeply engrained cultural traditions, which have a profound impact on how individuals relate to each other.

Leading and managing people is also likely to be shaped by geopolitical forces, which make a study of certain phenomena relevant only in specific contexts. For instance, a study by Jayasinghe (2022) explored reward management practices in Sri Lankan apparel manufacturing sector, specifically looking at how employers in this sector reward their workers for perfect monthly attendance. Drawing from the compensating pay differential perspective, this study theorized how different attributes can explain the use of such incentives and, amongst other findings, observed that higher attendance incentives were set by unionized and less accessible employers. The framework developed and tested in this study is applicable to other export manufacturers in developing economies, which are particularly sensitive to workers exhibiting perfect attendance in order to meet their targets.

In another study, Shepherd et al. (2020) explored a resource-poor environment in rural India. They investigated innovative problem solving, referred to as *jugaad*, in order to explain how innovative outcomes are achieved when the resources are scarce. The key findings of this study – such as the need for assertive defiance, combining resources, and engaging in experimental learning for creative solutions – should be considered when designing management practices for innovation in any context where the resources are limited.

Another contextual aspect that may vary across cultures and can explain differences in leading and managing people is the extent to which organizations are dominated by different institutional logics. A study by Boone et al. (2022) in the context of Islamic banking focused on hybrid staffing or recruitment of individuals with oppositional institutional logics in managerial teams. They found that hybrid teams, led by managers with a legitimate logic based on the audience's perspective, showed better long-term performance compared to non-hybrid teams, but those hybrid teams that were led by managers with contested logic from the audience's perspective showed poorer long-term performance than non-hybrid teams. These results were more pronounced in teams operating in ideologically polarized communities. Future research could replicate these findings in other empirical settings that are characterized by oppositional logics either in non-Western or in Western contexts.

The evidence above illustrates how much the broader cultural, political, religious, and/ or historic influences can shape leadership and management practices beyond the West, which calls for more research in non-Western contexts. Such studies could develop insightful theorizing that may be generalizable across different contexts. We hope that many studies on this matter will find home in *JMS*.

Relationship-Building in Emerging Markets

As a result of their institutional characteristics, non-Western emerging market contexts offer a fertile setting in which to explore relational behaviours of organizational actors (Prashantham and Dhanaraj, 2010). Five articles in this collection, based on in-depth qualitative research in settings spanning Africa, Asia and South America, illustrate the potential for management studies in non-Western settings to shed valuable light on relationship-building. A consistent feature of the articles highlighted here is that they eschew the typical ego network-based approach to relational phenomena taken in Western management journals.

These studies shed light on the drivers, processes and outcomes of relationship-building in emerging markets. The methods used are longitudinal and qualitative as opposed to cross-sectional and quantitative. Thus, both a conceptual and empirical perspective, the studies do not delve into classical questions such as the contingent effects of strong and weak ties, but rather around various relational processual issues that are pertinent to non-Western contexts.

In terms of the *drivers* of relationship-building, there are two important ones that these studies highlight. First, the inadequacy of institutional provision (of say, healthcare infrastructure or market access) calls for relationship-building as a compensatory means to access and pool together resources. To illustrate, Tello-Rozas et al.'s (2015) study highlights relational responses to social problems (e.g., pollution), based on a qualitative study of a large-scale collaboration platform spanning over 700 actors in Brazil. Also, Bhatt et al.'s (2022) study in rural India considers relational responses to the lack of access to market intermediaries such as buyer–seller exchange markets. Second, the need for firms to overcome resistance from nonmarket actors to their activities and initiatives often warrants relationship-building to ameliorate the concerns of the nonmarket actors. For example, Girschik's (2020) study examines the relational responses of a Western multinational that is seeking to gain legitimacy for its efforts to profitably and effectively address lacking healthcare provision around diabetes in Indonesia – efforts that were initially not welcomed by the local government authorities. Moschieri et al.'s (2022) study of disputes between Western multinationals in South America (e.g., Telefonica, the Spanish telecom company, in Argentina and Shell in Nicaragua) looks at relational responses that are also triggered by hostility from governments.

We also see interesting *processes* of relationship-building. First, the characteristics of the alter (the other party in a relationship with a focal actor) matter greatly. For example, distinction is made between market and non-market actors, with the latter being important for the legitimacy for the focal actor. Notably, Girschik (2020), in her study of Novo Nordisk introducing higher-quality insulin in the Indonesian market, shows that social approval from non-market actors such as governmental entities can be gained through processes such as cultivating communal relations, extending organizational support and articulating a posture of partnership which affords legitimacy to the multinational. Second, the multiplicity of actors and amount of time involved may be considerable, because in essence the relational efforts described in these studies essentially entail modifying aspects of the institutional environment. For example, through two in-depth case studies, one in India and the other in Zimbabwe, Velamuri et al. (2017) argue that the process of relationship-building with relevant stakeholders (beyond the immediate circle of family and friends) – in other words, network expansion beyond initial ties – is essential for firms to resist corruption and, thereby, build a reputation as an ethical actor. Tello-Rozas et al.'s (2015) previously cited study in Brazil uncovers practices that initially entail increasing the scale of the collaboration effort, followed by preparing for action, and finally, acting and empowering by involving not only NGOs but also influential individuals such as well-regarded soccer players, church officials and entrepreneurs.

As for *outcomes* of relationship-building, non-Western settings throw into relief the notion that the fit between relational efforts and the situational context is key. Furthermore, the range of outcomes that could be relevant include organizational success (e.g., product adoption, reputation enhancement and joint venture survival) as well as social impact (e.g., market inclusion). To return to Moschieri et al.'s (2022) study of disputes between Western multinationals in non-Western settings (e.g., Shell in Nicaragua), there is sociocognitive value in building relationships through *direct* interaction with nonmarket actors such as government and trade unions. In their study of market inclusion in rural India, Bhatt et al. (2022) find that relational strategies are effective in terms of the outcome of increasing market inclusiveness when they are consistent with the situation in a given village. As such, it can be inferred that achieving these outcomes is effortful and complex, and that non-Western settings offer a great laboratory in which to study these relational phenomena.

To conclude, relationship-building constitutes an important aspect of management, and research set in non-Western contexts can shed useful light on the associated drivers, processes and outcomes. Further to this, it is important to acknowledge potential inequalities of relationship building within these contexts, when, for instance, network ties and social capital are not evenly spread.

EMBRACING NON-WESTERN CONTEXTS IN FUTURE RESEARCH

The examples we have showcased above underscore the value of examining non-Western contexts to advance our understanding of management and organizations as global phenomena. They underscore that impactful and societally relevant research often emerges from those contexts where phenomena occur with high degrees of salience and forcefully affect the livelihoods of local populations.

While we hope that these examples are inspirational for scholars in their future research endeavours, our non-exhaustive but representative collection of work published in *JMS* also shows that there is much untapped potential when it comes to mobilizing non-Western contexts in management research. By and large, the studies we have showcased build on established and arguably Western theories, and by using non-Western perspectives they problematize these theories, their assumptions, predictions and presumably universal knowledge claims. This has allowed to advance, challenge or redirect established wisdom in notable ways, for example by teasing out Western theories' lack of contextuality and how it could be corrected, or even showing that despite strong cultural differences, there is indeed some universality in a given theory. This is laudable and should continue to be an objective for management scholars. Perhaps non-Western contexts are even more useful to challenge conventional wisdom than only relying on data within our comfort zone.

Yet, while useful in many ways, there is more than that to gain for management scholarship. Below, we expand a research agenda that embraces non-Western contexts along three interrelated directions. First, given the prevalence of management as a global phenomenon, we call for more research that examines how non-Western ideas of management influence those we practice in the West. Second, we see an urgent need to enrich our theoretical repertoire in management and organization studies with theories originating from non-Western contexts – not only to explain non-Western phenomena, but also to shed a different light on those facets of management we may take for granted given the prevalent discourse in academia. Third, we argue that there is a need to overcome the too simplistic West vs. non-West dichotomy, even though we have fallen into that trap ourselves.

Examining how non-Western Phenomena and Ideas Influence Management in the West

While management scholars have examined how Western phenomena and ideas about management influence non-Western contexts, the reverse is less well understood, if not blatantly ignored in the mainstream discourse (Alcadipani et al., 2012; Banerjee, 2022). Thus, given the prevalence of management as a global phenomenon there is a need to examine how different aspects of social, economic, political, and cultural life originating from non-Western contexts influence management and its various facets in the West – for instance through the emergence of globally active multinational corporations not headquartered in the West or movement of people through immigration or expatriation.

Comparative studies that mobilize data from contexts widely apart in the above-mentioned continua are very useful (e.g., Wang et al., 2023a). In their discussion of Eastern and Western perspectives, Filatotchev et al. (2020) analysed several issues that should be considered when studying established management theories in the East and West. Theories that study corporate governance, for example, should address the strong emphasis on formal and informal business networks in the East, which are important for information sharing and may significantly contribute to the relationship-based governance. Other examples of how non-Western phenomena can inform Western-based theories relate to the role of the state, founder control, particularly in the case of family businesses, and managing in resource-poor contexts for inclusive growth (see George et al., 2012). The realities that organizations in non-Western contexts face should therefore be considered when expanding the repertoire of global management theories.

In addition to non-Western phenomena informing how management is practiced and understood in the West, there are also theories and management practices that have origins in non-Western contexts, albeit they often remain insufficiently acknowledged. One such influential framework is the theory of paradox (Smith and Lewis, 2011), which is underpinned by Eastern philosophy that argues how most phenomena are characterized by competing and opposing tendencies, and how individuals, organizations, and societies can manage and embrace dualities and opposites (Potočnik et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2015). In their seminal paper, Smith and Lewis (2011) depicted paradox by means of Taoist symbol of yin yang and defined paradox as 'contradictory yet interrelated elements (dualities) that exist simultaneously and persist over time' (p. 387). Advanced predominantly by Western scholars and originating from non-Western ontological assumptions, the theory of paradox has driven a large body of work both in the non-Western and Western contexts, and has informed other theories and concepts, such as paradoxical leadership (Zhang et al., 2015), and paradox mindset (Miron-Spektor et al., 2018).

There are also numerous management practices that pioneered in the non-Western business world, and have expanded to the West. For example, quality circles, advice teams, or '*kaizen*', originating from Japan, relate to a set of management principles that are used to promote organizational improvement, learning and development (Imai, 1986). Another management tool that has been widely adopted in the West and comes from Japanese context is Toyota's '5 why' principles of solving problems and analysing their root causes. Similar to *kaizen*, 'Toyota's 5 whys' are a quality improvement tool that has been adopted in multiple sectors, from healthcare to consulting and manufacturing, and is considered as a key building block of Six Sigma and lean practices. Non-Western ideas and phenomena can therefore greatly inform management theories and practices in the West. We call for more non-Western research to provide further insights to our understanding of such phenomena.

Using non-Western Theories to Understand Management as a Global Phenomenon

We see an urgent need to enrich our theoretical repertoire in management and organization studies with theories that did not originate in the West – not only to explain non-Western phenomena, but also to shed a different light on those facets of management we may take for granted given the prevalent discourse in academia. It will require a concerted effort of authors, reviewers and editors to make this possible, but we see tremendous benefits from learning from unfamiliar theories and their explanatory potential. We do not believe this is an easy task, as it will require careful illustration and also justification of those mobilizing said theories.

Yet, there is a rich but largely untapped repertoire of theoretical perspectives that we believe should move from the periphery to the centre of our attention. For instance, Banerjee (2022) reminds us that scholars particularly working in the critical management studies tradition have used insights from postcolonial studies to advance a different understanding of a range of traditional management theories (see also Smith and Kaminishi, 2020), such as 'African' leadership in management studies (Nkomo, 2011), and international business and management practices in Latin America (Faria et al., 2010). These examples represent the type of research that addresses local phenomena in-situ drawing from the insight of local participants with the purpose of developing and testing novel theories to explain these phenomena. In short, these studies have developed indigenous theories to enrich our understanding of phenomena that occur globally but in different forms across diverse contexts.

We believe that research advancing non-Western theories can provide rich and generalizable insights to our understanding of management as a global phenomenon. Studies that explore how unique philosophies such as Buddhism or Taoism shape management practices in the East could provide useful implications for management practices globally, such as mindfulness-based interventions to manage occupational wellbeing, and management practices that focus on nurturing people rather than generating profit. We certainly need more indigenous theories that can enhance our understanding of management practices across the world.

Going beyond the West vs. non-West Dichotomy

Many attempts have been made to demarcate 'the West' from all that does not belong to it. For instance, scholars have distinguished 'West' from 'East' (e.g., Filatotchev et al., 2020), the Global South from the Global North (e.g., Banerjee, 2022), or developed vs. developing countries. While analytically helpful, we argue that this distinction is too simplistic – even if we have mobilized it ourselves. For instance, where do countries like Singapore or Japan belong to when looking at economic wealth and global connectedness? Are countries in North America and Europe necessarily more democratic or equal than those in Asia, or more reliant on liberal vs. coordinated forms of capitalism? As such, the world is more complex than simple dichotomies, and important variation exists within seemingly opposing 'camps'.

In other words, important socio-economic, political and cultural factors such as affluence, economic integration, inequality, discrimination, democracy and authoritarianism, and the prevalence of religious beliefs vary not only between presumably Western and non-Western contexts, but also within those contexts, all of which make a simple distinction almost impossible. In fact, the idea of overcoming the Global South and Global North geographical divide is not new. Interdisciplinary research has discussed the need to study 'Global South' and 'Global North' more as a conceptual framework to address contextual factors in terms of power relations, inequality, racism, poverty, etc. rather than considering them only in terms of their geographical location (Trefzer et al., 2014). Such approach can indeed help us identify pockets of 'Global South' in 'Global North', and vice versa. Similarly, Seremani and Clegg (2016) have argued for the need to study epistemological third places to overcome the divide and binary logic between 'Western' and 'non-Western' or 'colonial' and 'post-colonial' to allow for the coexistence of different worldviews, ideologies, and epistemologies.

Future research should thus go beyond the West vs. non-West dichotomy and tease out more precise contextual factors that might influence management, such as economic strength, degrees of inequality, respect of human rights, etc. Different societal characteristics are probably better portrayed along a continuum, or along dimensions to be developed, than to categorize them as either Western or non-Western. Thus, we call for more research that studies variation both within and across contexts, for instance along aspects of economic capabilities, historical background, religion, values and social norms, forms of governance, and prevalent institutions. Overcoming geographical divides by focusing on how different societal dimensions shape business and management phenomena across the world should also provide legitimacy to any scholar, regardless of their origin, to conduct impactful and meaningful research in any context.

CONCLUSION

This introduction to the *Thematic Collection* on embracing non-Western contexts presents an overview of certainly non-exhaustive but nevertheless inspirational examples that we hope will ease potential concerns of scholars mobilizing non-Western data and theories and encourage them to submit their work to the *JMS*. We believe this is important not only to advance our understanding of management as a global phenomenon, but also to create a more inclusive conversation about it.

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