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Letter from the Editor

At the July 3 Chinese Management Scholars Workshop (CMSW, 中国管理学者交流营), I was honored as 'Editor-in-Chief of our time' for my long career as a journal editor. The substantive discussion in the workshop was moderated by Professor Ming-Jer Chen (University of Virginia), the founder of the CMSW, and involved Professor Jay Barney (University of Utah) and myself. Space does not permit a full synopsis of this workshop, but I believe that two of the questions raised by Professor Ming-Jer Chen deserve sharing here as they are directly related to MOR.

> *Following your successful tenure at JIBS, what attracted you to the editorship MOR? Did you feel your commitment to management research, as deep and extensive as it had been, was yet unfinished?*

By the time of the founding conference of the International Association for Chinese Management Research (IACMR) initiated by Anne Tsui in Beijing in 2004, I had already been developing early interest in China. Since 1982, I had been teaching and leading MBA and Global MBA study tours to Japan. In 1985, the study tour also included China and, to my surprise, a visit with Legend's (now Lenovo) founder Liu Chuanzhi, who with a small group of colleagues created the company with a small grant from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. In subsequent visits to China, I also met the founders of other startup companies, including The Stone Group and The Insigma Group in Hangzhou.

When I received the invitation to follow Anne as the next Editor of MOR, I simply could not decline the call from the 'Empress'. Immersing myself in learning about management research in China was an eye opener. The challenge was audacious, especially when combined with a moral obligation to be on the ground in China and mentor advanced PhD students and faculty members. Early on I realized that the extant management research being applied to China rarely was embedded in, or applicable to, the context of China, including its history, culture, and institutional configuration. China became my new intellectual focus starting with the inaugural MOR Research Frontiers Conference that was hosted and sponsored by Dean Hongbin Cai at the Guanghua School of Management in January 2015, and the subsequent publication of *China's Innovation Challenge: Overcoming the Middle-Income Trap*, co-edited with Martin Kenney and Johann Peter Murmann.

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However, very early on in my editorship the untrustworthiness and criticism of empirical social science emerged as a major issue affecting all empirical social science scholarship. MOR was one of a few journals (e.g., SMJ, AER, and OBHDP) to take the lead and published the perspective paper 'The Critique of Empirical Social Science: New Policies at *Management and Organization Review*', co-authored with Deputy Editors Chi-Yue Chiu, Carl F. Fey, Sheen S. Levine, Gerald McDermott, Johann Peter Murmann, and Eric Tsang (2016).[1] Over the past few years, I found myself presenting research seminars on the above issue in China as well (see, for example, China Academy of Science seminar supplementary materials).

As an expert of co-evolution theory, do you believe decoupled systems can evolve in parallel to achieve independently their highest potential for growth? And how do you see the field of management research overall evolving in the next 10 to 20 years?

Management scholarship takes place at many levels. We have theories that focus on the internal organization of the firm, such as theories about leadership, decision-making, learning, etc. We have theories centered on the boundary of the firm and its environment, such as contingency formulations, resource dependence, and institutional theories. In addition, the management of companies varies from one country to the next due to country-specific historical trajectories, cultural differences, and various varieties of capitalism (including forms of state capitalism with competing logics; see, for example, slide 14 of the supplementary materials). This framework represents a complex adaptive system involving the competition between countries and firms along with the emergence of disruptive technological innovations, rare Black Swan type events (as happened with COVID), etc. Co-evolution is an encompassing process involving the interaction between ecosystem (e.g., resources and institutions) and actors (e.g., strategic choices and trial-and-error experiments), often punctuated by the emergence of new 'out of the box' superior innovative solutions.

The next two decades promise to be especially disruptive and, therefore, ripe with research opportunities affecting China, the US, and the rest of the world in the dynamic context of de-globalization (and perhaps a prolonged new economic and technological 'cold war'), which will be played out in the trenches of decoupling. That is where supply chains are being reconfigured on a global basis, and where competing standards will be developed in the context of emerging new technologies and new industries, such as electric vehicles, autonomous driving, robotics, AI, digitalization, platformization, pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and space exploration. This is also where competing international institutions will come into existence and where MNEs may reemerge as instruments of projecting national power. Assuming continued pressure to decouple, it is reasonable to expect that management research specific to China will evolve in the context of renewed geopolitical conflict and the fourth industrial revolution.

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However, the US and other liberal democracies will concurrently have to address and cope with the consequences of market capitalism's crisis of legitimacy while also engaging with China, whose national aspiration is to be recognized as an equal or superior economic power to the US. Liberal market economies (LMEs) such as the United States will strive to devise means of achieving a new and more effective alignment of private sector activities with national security interests without straying too far into state capitalism territory. Societal coordination as practiced in coordinated market economies (CMEs) may provide a 'middle way', and a model for increased coordination in LMEs. Almost certainly, industrial policy will make a come-back, both in practice and as an active research area.

Geographically, Africa is expected to become an arena of competition between China, other emerging economies (e.g., India), and the advanced Western economies, which could transform Africa into a battlefield of proxy wars, but perhaps also give rise to the emergence of the next factory of the world and all that this will entail.

The overarching research challenge will involve the framing of research questions that incorporate different factors at different levels of analysis, such as firm, industry, country, institutional configuration, technological disruption, and geopolitical conflict. It is a time when detailed processual studies would be especially welcome and salient in advancing new insights and understanding. Good examples of this type of scholarship include Andrew Pettigrew (1985), *The Awakening Giant: Continuity and Change in Imperial Chemical Industries*, or Johann Peter Murmann (2003) *Knowledge and Competitive Advantage: The Coevolution of Firms, Technology, and National Advantage*.

The emerging agenda for research on decoupling represents a wide-open opportunity. It will require a more encompassing understanding of geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics in IB modeling. Decoupling involves the engagement of competing logics in reshaping global value chains, locations, and operations of sourcing (for example, choice of outsourcing relative to wholly owned), and even new or reborn organizational forms such as international cartels (e.g., Buckley & Casson, in press; Peng, Kathuria, Viana, & Lima, 2021). Decoupling strategies can be expected to be impacted by platformization and ecosystem formation (e.g., Kenney & Zysman, 2020) and vary across and within industries as local companies and MNEs dynamically cycle between tightly and loosely coupled organizational designs, including holistic and dynamic processes of resource and capability orchestration with multiple dimensions of assembly and application.

A forthcoming paper by Hochstrasser and Murmann (2021), 'China Innovation Capacity Growth Index 2015 and 2020', proposes and illustrates an alternative innovation index for China that offers a specific example for a new index to track the diffusion of decoupling in China and across the world. Such an index could track the growth and diffusion of decoupling at the micro level, as a special form of de-globalization, but also the extent of fragmentation and separation of supply chains; standard-setting ranging from semiconductor designs and

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manufacturing to medical therapeutics, and provoking new roles for international bodies such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO, and WHO. As national ideologies influence the direction, implementation, and diffusion rate of decoupling, this phenomenon is already rapidly attracting growing attention from academic research and management consultancies. My only regret is that my own involvement is destined to be limited.

This issue also brings to a close to the MOR forum on de-globalization and global decoupling with the publication of four commentaries: 'The Vulnerability Problem of Business Ecosystems Under Global Decoupling', by Hongryol Cha, Jie Wu, and Masaaki Kotabe; 'The New Liability of Origin in Global Decoupling', by Hao Tan and Mengying Yang; 'An Outcome of Decoupling and De-globalization? The Weakened Impact of Internationalization on Innovation of Chinese Firms Since 2016', by Liang Wang and Zaiyang Xie; and 'How Is China Impacting African Cities?', by Jeffrey W. Paller. We received far more commentaries than expected for this forum, highlighting the interest in this important area of research. I wish to express my appreciation to Peter Ping Li, Liisa Välikangas, and Michael A. Witt for serving as forum editors for this special collection.

Lastly, this issue features the following papers, 'The Failure of Hybrid Organizations: A Legitimation Perspective', by Julian Siwale, Jonathan Kimmitt, and Joseph Amankwah-Amoah; 'Leverage Logics to Address the Paradox: Commentary on "The Failure of Hybrid Organizations: A Legitimation Perspective"', by Chenjian Zhang; 'Unraveling the Philosophical Foundations of Co-opetition Strategy', by Giovanni Batista Dagnino and Anna Minà; 'The Danger of Blindly Following: Examining the Relationship Between Authoritarian Leadership and Unethical Pro-organizational Behaviors', by Fangzhou Liu, Jian Liang, and Mo Chen; 'The Micro-Foundations of Ambidextrous Foreign Direct Investment', by Xinli Huang, Di Fan, Xiaomeng He, and Yiyi Su; and 'Following the Old Road: Organizational Imprinting and the Regional Development of Russia' by Nooa Nykänen. I wish to thank Deputy Editors Helena Barnard, Xu Huang, and Peter Ping Li, and Senior Editors Lin Cui and Zhi-Xue Zhang for their dedicated editorial guidance in moving these papers to publication.



Supplementary Material

The supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/mor.2021.54

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NOTE

[1] Please view the full collection of MOR papers addressing all aspects of discussing and reporting empirical social science findings and instructions for compliance here: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/management-and-organization-review/collections/reviewing-policies-collection

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