Call for Papers

Academy of Management Review Special Topic Forum

THE NEW NORMAL: POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT IN AN AGE OF DISRUPTION

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Guest Editors: Flore Bridoux, Jonathan Bundy, Jean-Pascal Gond, Patrick Haack, Jennifer Petriglieri, John Paul Stephens, Kathleen Sutcliffe

The new normal. This is the catch phrase of our times. It is on the cover of every magazine and newspaper, on the lips of every newscaster and pundit across the world. Simply put, we are living in an age of disruption. The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered our way of life. At the same time, businesses and organizations continue to deal with other major social and economic disruptions, including those related to racial injustice, rising nationalism and threats to globalization, evolutions and revolutions in technology, and the enduring problems of climate change and social and economic inequality. The extremeness and urgency of the current environment—including an environment filled with multiple significant disruptions—suggests the need for fundamentally new approaches for understanding the role of organizations and the task of management. That is, indeed, the essence of *the new normal* – a new reality that cannot be sufficiently explained by existing theories. We need new theories, assumptions, norms, practices, and ways of understanding to cope with the increasing stream of disruptions humanity is facing.

Organizations and managers, as powerful social actors, will play a critical role in forging the new normal. However, as social, health, economic, and environmental disruptions mount, the role of organizations is both more vital but also more in question than ever. While organizations and managers are certainly capable of positive impact, their actual impact is often questioned as reflected by a dramatic decline in the social approval of business organizations and institutions more generally (Bhattacharjee & Dana, 2017; Gioia, 2003; King, Felin & Whetten, 2010). This increasing doubt about the positive impact and role of organizations has led many to emphasize not only the challenges inherent in our current age of disruption, but also the opportunities, namely: *that our new normal can be better than our old normal* (Brammer, Branicki, & Linnenluecke, in-press).

Academy of Management Review is uniquely positioned for considering how organizations and organizational actors can work to create a new and better normal. This Special Topic Forum is particularly interested in new theories that can help create and foster such a new normal. As noted by Simon (1981: ix), theorizing in management is fundamentally concerned "not with how things are but how they might be." Because our theories can become self-fulfilling (Gergen, 1973; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005; Marti & Gond, 2018), organizational and management scholars have the opportunity—through our theorizing—to envision a new normal that emphasizes the ways in which organizations can have a positive impact on society and the broader environment. Rather than being limited by existing assumptions or even current realities

about people, work, organizations, and social systems, we can theorize what they *might be* or *might become,* as well as the conditions under which they could emerge (Bartunek, 2020). Such theory can help to reveal new possibilities, not only in terms of how to deal with disruption, but also in terms of creating new positive realities out of disruption.

As such, the goal of this Special Topic Forum is to foster ideas and scholarship on the task of developing a positive new normal out of an age of disruption. Consistent with the current editorial team's vision, we seek to be intentionally inclusive of diverse perspectives and approaches. We broadly invite theory that envisions a positive new normal by considering the relevant potential outcomes and explicates the organizational phenomena, processes, and/or underlying assumptions that would make such a new normal possible. To address the features of our *new normal* – such as the extremeness, urgency, and simultaneous multiplicity of disruptions – we welcome theory on a range of topics and areas of focus, including, but not limited to:

- *Organizational outcomes*: We are open to different perspectives on and ways of considering a positive new normal. Relevant outcomes to consider might include, but are not limited to: social value creation, workplace and social health, inclusion and diversity, reduced inequalities, happiness/commitment/satisfaction, economic resilience, sustainability, responsible consumption, new forms of competitive advantage, new managerial practices, and new workplace structures.

- *Organizational phenomena and processes*: We are open to research that considers organizational phenomena and processes at the individual (micro), organizational (meso), and institutional (macro) levels.
  - We invite theorizing on phenomena and processes related to a wide array of domains, including: leadership, wellbeing, organizational resilience and change, corporate governance, crisis and stakeholder management, corporate social responsibility, ethics, entrepreneurship and innovation, social networks, diversity, cognition and sensemaking, culture, learning, collaboration, strategic decision making, work/life balance, just to name a few.
  - Though not a requirement, we anticipate value in elaborating and integrating diverse existing theoretical perspectives from within and beyond the field of management so as to propose new theoretical directions for a positive new normal.
  - We particularly welcome multi-level and cross-level theorizing as it may lend itself to understanding the idea of a positive new normal holistically.
  - We equally see potential to further develop scholarly understandings of flat ontologies, and encourage creative combinations with levels-based theorizing. For instance, how can we theorize the conditions and processes under which levels of analysis can be flattened?
  - Potential authors might also consider the unintended consequences, hidden downsides, or problematic aspects associated with the quest for a positive new normal.

- *Underlying assumptions*. Authors might consider the underlying assumptions that would be critical for establishing a positive new normal.

- These assumptions could pertain to human nature, organizational purpose, resources, roles (e.g., leadership), dominant ideologies, responsibilities and values, the meaning of work, performance, etc.
- These assumptions could also apply to dominant ontologies and epistemologies in management research, including empiricist and rationalist modes of theorizing (Suddaby, 2014).
- In considering the underlying assumptions, we encourage theorizing that integrates, incorporates, or develops new cultural perspectives.
- We can envision some papers foregrounding underlying assumptions – perhaps by contrasting an existing set of assumptions with a revised set or by offering interdisciplinary support for a bold and consequential new assumption – while others may foreground other aspects and background assumptions.
- Considering that in social science most theories are socially constructed, we encourage submissions that discuss the usefulness of theories (Suddaby, 2014). That is, what theories are more useful than others in considering a positive new normal?
- How can we adopt different, but valid, assumptions about organizations in a way that will allow us to revise theories to better reflect new and broadly desirable organizational realities?
- We also welcome perspectives that are critical to established assumptions and attempts to critically redefine the new normal.

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TIMELINE AND SUBMISSION

The deadline for submissions is September 30th, 2021. All submissions must be uploaded to the Manuscript Central/Scholar One website (https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/amr) between September 1st, 2021 and September 30th, 2021. Guidelines for contributors (https://aom.org/research/publishing-with-aom) and the AMR Style Guide for Authors must be followed.

For questions about submissions, contact the managing editor via publications@aom.org. For questions about the content of this special topic forum, contact Jonathan Bundy (jonathan.bundy@asu.edu), Patrick Haack (Patrick.haack@unil.ch), Flore Bridoux (bridoux@rsm.nl), Jean-Pascal Gond (jean-pascal.gond.1@city.ac.uk), Jennifer Petriglieri (jennifer.petriglieri@insead.edu), John Paul Stephens (jps136@case.edu), Kathleen Sutcliffe (ksutcli1@jhu.edu)