



Editors' Introduction

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The *European Management Review* has the ambition of being the journal of first choice for scholars interested in the theory and empirical study of management.

(Bruce Kogut, EMR, Volume 3, Issue 1)

These are the first words that Bruce Kogut, the editor of the *European Management Review* (EMR) from 2005 until 2008, wrote in his editorial introduction to the first issue for which he was responsible. He could just as well have written them for us, as we take on the baton from his expert hand. The aspiration he set for our journal, to be the 'first choice' for everyone who is engaged in academic scholarship in the field of management, is an ideal articulation of what we also believe ought to be the goal for which we are all aiming, and Bruce certainly led the journal towards the realization of that overarching ambition with great strides during his three years as chief editor. Under his guidance, EMR has taken on a well-defined character, a personality that we have learned to respect and appreciate, and has begun to develop a strong reputation for quality output and fast, efficient process, both of which are crucial for the future success of the enterprise. Today, the journal offers a unique, and increasingly visible, forum for cutting-edge debate in management scholarship, defined by both innovative insights and rigorous, albeit non-dogmatic, methodologies. You will see an excellent example of the quality level and the attractiveness that the journal has achieved among top scholars in the papers that compose this issue, including contributions from some of the most admired authors in the field.

But let us take a moment to reflect on the challenges before our community of scholars, as we aspire to place EMR among the restricted list of top-rated general management journals. There is no question that this is a tall order. At its sixth volume, EMR is still a young journal, trying to compete in a particularly crowded, non-specialized domain, that of general management. This is a domain where building a specific identity is particularly difficult. It is crucial, therefore, that we are clear on how we intend to pursue this ambitious goal, and on the shared responsibility connected to its realization.

The strategy is relatively simple to describe, but harder to execute. We will build on the distinctive traits that are already emerging and develop an identity for the journal that will be recognized by all scholars, whether European, American or from any other corner of the globe. An

identity that will be based on two, equally important, dimensions: (1) clear editorial principles and top-quality process for scholars as contributors and as members of the editorial board, and (2) content themes for which the journal will be recognized as *leading* the global academic debate.

The editorial principles will not differ substantially from those highlighted by Bruce in his opening editorial, but it is useful to clarify and prioritize them.

Quality above all. To be recognized as the journal of choice for management scholars worldwide, we have no option but to aim for top quality in the selection of published output. Irrespective of the methodology used, and even in theoretical papers, the standards of quality are very clear and understood by any experienced scholar. The paper must have one central idea that is not only innovative *vis-à-vis* the received literature, but also well supported by clear arguments that recognize alternative logics and show the relative strength or distinctiveness of the novel explanation. Alternatively, but even taller an order, the paper will identify novel and relevant managerial questions to pose, to which it offers a sensible and credible set of answers. Achieving this top priority means sharing the responsibility among the editorial board and the senior scholars in the community (especially the non-American ones) of choosing EMR as the journal of choice for our best work. If we do not show the way with a clear commitment to the success of our collective enterprise, then who will? We, as chief editors, will insist that the members of our team of senior editors will contribute some of their best work to the journal, and will leverage their position in the networks of scholars in which they are recognized contributors to identify promising manuscripts. The members of the editorial review board will also be expected to do their part, as they have been chosen especially for the quality of their work and their expertise in the academic publishing game. Finally, the entire community that reads and appreciates this journal, especially the members of the European Academy of Management, have a shared responsibility to contribute to the quality of what they read and use by preferring EMR to the other top journals as they select the publication for at least part of their best work. We cannot overstate the importance of this shared commitment to the success of EMR: the journal can only be as good as the quality of the best work submitted to it.

Diversity. The second principle that has been at the core of the distinctive identity of the Journal is the search for and embrace of diversity in all its multiple dimensions. We

want to build the only top-quality journal where there are no artificial, more or less subtle, barriers to the publication of ideas that might go against common wisdom or generally accepted 'truths', based on observation and data from under-observed contexts, using methodologies that might be less than established in the mainstream, top-quality journals. As long as the quality standards for the specific questions pursued, the context analyzed and the methodology used are the highest possible, in considering publication we will also take into account the constraints under which such research is being conducted. So it is up to us, as a community of scholars, to have the courage to pursue this type of research and to prioritize EMR as the preferred venue to publish it.

Influence. We will also actively seek publications that aim to influence the global academic debate on issues that are broader than the specific research questions pursued. A top-quality journal in the general management domain has a responsibility, in our view, to not only describe reality with the highest-quality research, but also to shape it towards ever-improving quality of managerial practice, of public policy related to micro-economic activity, and of the resulting social and environmental development. This is reflected, of course, in the themes that will be identified as particularly relevant to building the distinctive identity of the journal, but also in the type of work that the community of scholars that recognizes itself as part of this collective enterprise will choose to pursue and to publish with EMR. European scholars, in particular, are citizens of an important experiment of socio-political integration. The European project, with all its strengths and weaknesses, stands before us as management scholars with a tacit request of engagement to contribute to the definition of the model of the firm and the model of the economic system that will allow it to grow and flourish. The recent developments, with governments from all over the world (including the US, India and China) looking with increasing interest to the 'European model' as a possible answer to the economic crisis puts us even more in the spotlight. Our voice in the debate has been, however, barely audible, and certainly marginal to its evolutionary course. Should we leave the role and the responsibility to provide insights and scientific evidence about the shaping of this as well as other global change processes to other, better-organized communities of scholars, such as the economists, sociologists, psychologists, political scientists, etc.? We certainly hope your answer is 'no'. Then, coherence requires that we explicitly aim to pursue research that has implications for the broader, global, socio-economic and political debates, and for the profound change processes that we are witnessing as they unfold. EMR is ready to prioritize management research work that exhibits also these types of aspirations, over and above the more specific contributions to debates internal to the management academy.

Ideas vs precision. In a similar spirit, we recognize that there is a trade-off between papers that provide new contributions to fairly navigated topics and papers that propose new ideas or theories that have not been raised earlier, that have been poorly understood or that have not been studied systematically. We expect the former type of paper to be extremely rigorous in terms of theory, precision of data (types of variables, methods and measurement) and tightness of logic. If we asked the same of the latter type of paper, we may end

up with a bias against publishing work with new ideas. By definition, a new idea cannot rely on the same longstanding background and experience of previous work. It is bound to be more explorative, and hence more imperfect. The criteria that we shall use to identify these papers are that they have to explore a new area or suggest a new perspective, while at the same time showing the potential for encouraging work by others. In such cases, we may be more lenient about precision of measurements or about the tightness of the theory if the paper can trigger new research that can solve these problems and open up new trajectories of inquiry.

Speed and efficiency. Finally, a distinctive trait of any top journal is the quality of the process that characterizes its operations. Bruce has brought the speed of the reviewing and selection process to the highest levels among management journals. EMR has had an average of 45 days from submission to editorial decision (without considering desk rejections) during his tenure, a statistic that any American journal can only dream about. There are still, however, areas of improvement that we will prioritize, especially in the quality of the information systems that support the process. As we have been witnessing an impressive growth in the number of submissions to the journal in the last few months, we expect that our ability to maintain the speed and reliability that are now part of the journal's legacy will crucially depend on the user-friendliness and flexibility of the support systems. To build a world-class publishing operation, however, we will also rely on the input in the form of constructive criticism and concrete suggestions, coming from you, the users of the system in your capacity as authors, reviewers and associate editors. Please keep the flow of ideas coming; we are certainly committed to systematically evaluating and selectively implementing them.

We hope that the above serves to enhance clarity and transparency on the ambitions we want to set for the journal, and, more importantly, about how we see us accomplishing them through the combination of our work and choices as editors and your work and choices as authors and reviewers. The other dimension of the problem relates to the content of what we aim to publish. This is a sensitive matter, as whatever we will describe as priorities will inevitably be read as discounting anything else that is not mentioned. This is a misleading read of our intentions. We are committed to publishing research work that reflects the standards of quality, diversity and influence that we have described above, no matter what the content is, as long as it responds to research questions pertinent to the management field. However, we also want to give priority to a small number of carefully selected themes, where we believe that our journal, and the community that refers to it, will have the greatest chances of playing that leading role in the global academic debate that will define its identity and recognition as a top-level outlet for scholarly work. The list of these themes might find minor variations as we progress in the future, and is always subject to dialog and debate among our community of scholars. At the current time, here are the themes that we believe merit particular attention for the overarching strategy of placing EMR among the top journals in the field:

1. *The theory of the firm.* The answer to foundational questions such as those related to the logic for the



existence and the boundaries of firms, to their role in the broader socio-economic and political context, and to the consequent ways in which they should best be governed, have never been more current and topical. The crisis that we are currently experiencing had its origins in fundamental managerial errors, despite its more frequent description as a public policy problem: errors such as the over-confidence in the availability of financial service firms to manage risk, and the unprecedented levels of managerial greed in their leadership teams all over the world in the pursuit of personal wealth; errors for which we as management scholars have both a direct (related to our teaching activity) and an indirect (related to the content of our research) responsibility. We aspire to position EMR as the leading forum for the debate on the most appropriate model of the firm and of its relationship with the socio-political environment, and the consequent model of economic system, to develop and pursue: a debate that will be grounded on descriptive power of the current state of affairs, as well as on evidence-based prescriptions for the future evolution of the role of firms in the pursuit of both sustainable advantage *vis-à-vis* its competitors and sustainable development for the societies and the natural environment in which they are immersed.

2. *Micro-foundations*. If the first domain described above builds on distinctive traits and legacy of European scholarship, the study of the role of the individual as foundational actor to explain firm-level outcomes, more recently labeled as the 'quest for micro-foundations', is not ascribable to any specific community of research scholars, whether defined in geographic or in domain terms. Organizational psychologists have generally not been able to link their work to organizational phenomena and outcomes, whereas scholars with either an economic or sociological bent have traditionally failed to recognize the importance and role of the individual actor in their models and theories of firm-level characteristics, choices and outcomes. Nonetheless, the tide is rapidly turning away from these artificial separations along levels of analysis and (at least on an aspirational level) towards a more integrated study of managerial phenomena that encompasses both individual and collective action. It is our intention for EMR to be the place where this convergence might occur, and where scholars worldwide can draw inspiration to shape the questions and the methods that they pursue. We will look with skepticism to work that implicitly assumes a view of the firm as a unitary actor, and will welcome studies that attempt to consider explicitly the role of the individual manager, leader and employee in the context of broader organizational dynamics. The psychological determinants of decisions, behaviors and performance, based on the influence of cognitive, emotional and identity-based (values) factors are becoming front-stage concerns of an increasing number of leading scholars for which EMR wants to be the venue of choice, and thus contribute to the development and integration of the management field.
3. *Entrepreneurship, in its widest sense*. The study of founding processes, either at the enterprise level or of innovative initiatives within established firms, is a third

crucial area of development for management research. This research domain is particularly relevant for non-American scholars, given the industrial structure of their sectors and economies, where small and medium enterprises and family-owned enterprises own the lion's share *vis-à-vis* large and publicly owned companies. However, and strangely enough, European scholars have historically played a marginal role in the global academic debate, despite their best intentions. EMR intends to offer a forum where quality research on the dynamics of enterprise foundations, as well as of innovative initiatives in established firms, can find its home. This will be even more attractive to us if there is an explicit treatment of the micro-foundational issues related to the psychological traits characterizing the behavior and performance of the individuals involved in these initiatives. Alternatively, the development of theoretical and empirical contribution linking the study of entrepreneurial initiatives with that of theory-of-the-firm questions described above (consider the study of social entrepreneurship, or of innovative modes of governance for highly innovative activities, for example) would be particularly welcome.

4. *Dynamics of growth, learning and change in established enterprises*. The next logical step in a progression of content domains that begins from macro- and micro-foundational issues and continues with the study of entrepreneurial initiatives, is the analysis of the dynamic processes through which firms grow, develop competence and adapt to constantly changing environments. The three dynamics are clearly distinct processes, but they are strongly linked to each other in interdependent causalities of decisions and performance implications. They also occur and can be studied at different levels of analysis: starting from macro-processes that see social communities and sectors grow, learn and adapt through relatively poorly understood interactions between firms and their contexts, and continuing with more classic analysis of organizational deliberate and emergent learning and change processes, to then dive deeply inside the firm with the study of groups and individuals' knowledge development and evolutionary (in a Lamarckian sense) processes.
5. *Social Dynamics*. The study of dynamics of learning and change has been studied primarily in terms of the evolution of knowledge capital and the consequent accumulation of stocks of competence and of resources. It is clear, however, that these processes can hardly be considered divorced from the dynamics of social relationships, reputation, legitimacy and trust, which produce critical evolutionary processes shaping stocks of social capital at the community, sectoral, organizational, group and individual levels of analysis. Understanding how the dynamics of knowledge and those of relationship influence each other to determine the growth and demise of firms and of their human actors inside and outside their boundaries, constitutes perhaps the most challenging and fascinating set of questions that management scholarship can consider today: questions that this editorial team is convinced can shape the future of our scientific endeavor as well as, hopefully, the object of our study; questions that we are committed



to pursuing and prioritizing in our collective quest for intellectual leadership and impact in the management field.

Most of the themes described above are especially congenial to European scholars, either because of historical trajectories that shaped the context of their study or because of traditional interest and well-advanced debate among the academic networks present in the various countries that make up this variegated continent. However, none of them are of exclusive interest to European scholars, as they have been shaped by contributions from scholars worldwide. We are clearly determined to strengthen the debate across the different academic communities within and outside Europe, on themes that are of crucial relevance, not only for our knowledge development quests, but for the development of entire economies and of the societies that rely on and evolve around them.

These are highly ambitious goals, no question about it. We indeed see the setting of clear and high aspirations as one of

our main responsibilities as incoming editors. But we are fully conscious that none of these aspirations can be achieved without your commitment as author, reader and reviewer. A commitment that begins with the selection and the promotion of EMR as the venue for some of your and your colleagues' best work; that continues with the reading and sharing of the work published in EMR with students and colleagues; and that reaches completion with the dedication to high-quality and swift reviews of the manuscripts that our colleagues entrust us with, when you will be asked to provide that crucial service for the journal and the community.

We are very excited about taking on this challenge, and are committed to providing our best effort to establish EMR as a leading forum for management scholarship, a journal that we will all be proud of. With the enthusiasm and the active support of the community of scholars that shares the views highlighted above, we have little reason to doubt that the challenge will be met and passed with flying colors. We welcome you to join us in this exciting, and important, academic enterprise!