

## **Journal of International Management**

Special Issue: *MNEs and Sustainable Business in Emerging Markets*

**Deadline: 1 March 2022**

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### **Background**

In the field of international business (IB) and management, research on sustainable development has been gathering momentum (Holtbrügge & Dögl 2012; Kolk, Kourula, & Pisani, 2017; Kolk & van Tulder, 2010), whereas some aspects of the study of emerging markets might appear to be reaching maturity. Partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, moreover, the focus on the studies seems to be rapidly shifting to pandemic-related issues (Lawton, Dorobantu, Rajwani, & Sun, 2020; Verbeke & Yuan, 2020). However, it should be noted that most emerging economies, let alone other less and least developed countries, have been particularly vulnerable to the volatility of the global market (Narula, 2020). Moreover, because of the pandemic, it is expected that global poverty is likely to increase and eight out of ten “new poor” will be middle-income countries (World Bank, 2020). Against this background, multinational enterprises (MNEs) can be seen as a major player in addressing both economic and social problems in emerging economies (Meyer, 2004; Valente & Crane, 2010). That is, given the idiosyncratic nature of emerging markets, more research is needed on MNEs and sustainable business in emerging markets (Meyer & Peng, 2016).

Sustainable business can be understood as business which achieves economic viability (i.e. profitability and competitiveness) while operating within the capacity, or contributing to the integrity, of social, economic, and ecological systems (Halme, Rintamäki, Knudsen, Lankoski, & Kuisma, 2018; Voegtlin & Scherer, 2017). MNEs have a capacity to conduct sustainable business, thereby contributing to sustainable development in a wider territory. By doing so, MNEs should involve in sustainable development more proactively (Van Zanten & Van

Tulder, 2018). International businesses are now facing many challenges in ensuring economic recovery and configuring more resilient value chains across borders to contribute sustainable policies and practices for the future (Gereffi, 2020). Amid the uncertainty, MNEs are now required to reassess the ways that they operate (Kim & Davis, 2016). While a “new normal” could encourage MNEs to adjust and innovate their business activities, the uncertainty in an international market could weaken MNEs’ commitment to the 2030 Agenda for the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Against this backdrop, businesses and governments need to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable and inclusive world by demonstrating the lessons learned from the current situation (Sachs, Schmidt-Traub, Kroll, Lafortune, Fuller, & Woelm, 2020). This would include emerging markets and the Global South, and doing sustainable business is more important than ever.

### **Aims and scope of this special issue**

This special issue addresses the research agenda in this theme by identifying the main challenges that MNEs may face, as well as by addressing key issues in IB research (Buckley, Doh, & Benischke, 2017; Maksimov, Wang, & Yan, 2019; Strike, Gao, & Bansal, 2006). This will raise questions such as: What are the contextual differences between emerging markets and advanced economies in doing sustainable business? Can such difference generate new theories for the MNE and sustainable development? How can sustainable practices learned from emerging markets shape the mind-set of MNE (and vice versa; how/if could MNEs’ effort in doing sustainable business in advanced countries be applied to emerging markets)? Moreover, while sustainability tends to be discussed in view of environmental issues such as climate change, other issues are also crucial as identified in the 17 SDGs. Sustainability is not only about environmental protection, but also economic prosperity and social equity (Bansal, 2005; Bansal & Song, 2017). With these in mind, this special issue aims to explore how MNEs can contribute to sustainable development focusing on the emerging market contexts.

By doing so, the special issue intends to set a new research agenda for the study of MNE activities and their roles in emerging markets (Reimann, Ehrgotb, Kaufmann & Carter 2012; Luo, Zhang, & Bu, 2019). The call for papers is open to a wide range of regional scopes and different methodological approaches including quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods and case study, as well as theoretical/conceptual papers.

### **Potential Topics**

This special issue welcomes submissions with an interdisciplinary perspective but with a clear focus on international business and management in the contexts of emerging markets. We seek papers on the following and other related topics:

1. How can sustainable business/responsible business be defined for MNEs? Are they different from corporate social responsibility, and if so, how do they differ with each other? What is the fallacy of them?
2. Are sustainable global value chains possible? How does sustainability governance operate in a value and what is the power mechanisms in sustainable business?
3. Are practices and monument of sustainable business different in emerging markets from advanced countries, and also from least developed countries (such as Sab-Saharan Africa)? If so, how and why are they different? And are there any different approaches to sustainable business based on MNEs' country of origin? Are MNEs operate differently in their home countries and in emerging-market contexts?
4. What are the other key issue areas and how can MNEs contribute to the social welfare in emerging/developing countries?
5. In the post-pandemic era, what would MNEs' commitment to sustainability in emerging and developing countries be?
6. What are contributions and controversies of seemingly sustainable business (such as recycling, renewable energy etc.)? What is the dark side of them?
7. What is the role of social enterprises? Can they be any better or worse than MNEs?
8. What type of government policy would facilitate foreign MNEs' sustainable business in emerging markets? Do environmentalist governments really promote sustainable business, and deliver sustainable development?
9. How does the non-market strategy of MNEs impact sustainable development in emerging markets?
10. From local to global, how can sustainable business innovation work at various systems levels?

### **Submission Process:**

The deadline for paper submission to this special issue is **1 March 2022**. We plan to hold a paper development workshop for this special issue, although the attendance at the workshop is not a necessary condition for the acceptance of submitted papers. All papers will be subject to a double - blind review process. Papers for this issue should be prepared as per the Journal's guidelines available at: [https://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws\\_home/601266?generatepdf=true](https://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/601266?generatepdf=true)

Authors should submit an electronic copy of their manuscript via the journal's online submission system via <https://www.editorialmanager.com/intman/default.aspx>

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Maoliang Bu is currently an Associate Professor at Nanjing University and Visiting Professor at Ivey Business School. He has published in leading academic journals, among others, *NATURE Sustainability*, *Journal of International Business Studies* (JIBS) and *Strategic Management Journal* (SMJ). He has served as an editor for *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* (APJM), *Journal of International Management* (JIM), and other journals. Dr Bu is also an Adjunct Professor at Hopkins-Nanjing Center (Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies), and an affiliated researcher at Copenhagen Business School.

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Faith Hatani is Associate Professor of International Business at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark. She completed her PhD in Land Economy at the University of Cambridge. Her research focuses on the role of international business in the sustainable development of economy and society with special attention to the upgrading and governance of global value chains, interactions between MNEs and government policies, and the impact of foreign direct investment in host countries. She is particularly interested in responsible business and industry-specific efforts to achieve sustainability.

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