

Journal of Business Ethics
Call for papers

Co-evolution of Strategy, Innovation and Ethics: The China Story and Beyond

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Journal of Business Ethics is pleased to invite submissions to a special issue on *Co-evolution of Strategy, Innovation and Ethics: The China Story and Beyond*.

As an emerging economy, China has made astonishing achievements in innovation and technology in a wide variety of areas, including mobile commerce, high-speed railway, innovative solution to environmental problems (e.g., the restoration of Kubuqi desert), etc. Shenzhen, a former fishing village, is emerging as “the global hub of innovation in hardware and manufacturing” (*The Economist* special report, 2017). Evidences like these indicate China’s progress in turning itself into an “innovation society” (Lewin et al., 2016; Yip and McKern, 2016). What accompanies these achievements are the growing awareness of, and calls for, a higher corporate social responsibility (CSR) standard in China, because this emerging economy is still facing wide-spreading ethical, social and environmental challenges, including but not limited to air pollution, poor labor standard, corporate scandals, weak intellectual property protection, regulatory loopholes, privacy infringement, etc. Unlike the advanced economies, China has witnessed rapid advancements in technology and innovation in a unique and changing institutional environment. As *The Economist* recently posited, “ethical governance has long been the Achilles’ heel of China’s scientific endeavor” (2018).

How should academic researchers, business practitioners, and policy makers account for such paradoxical phenomenon? We posit that theoretical explanations could benefit from a co-evolutionary perspective (Tan, 2009; Tan and Litschert, 1994; Tan and Tan, 2005; Tan and Wang, 2011), which emphasizes the temporal co-evolution and co-alignment between a changing environment, transitional institutions, strategic adaptations, and the performance implications (financial, social and environmental). From this perspective, the practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Jamali and Mirshak, 2007; Garriga and Melé, 2004; Snider et al., 2003; Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Tan and Wang, 2011) evolves over time, and at each point of time strategic choices of firms are shaped by, and will reshape, the changing environment (Tan and Tan, 2005).

For example, domestic firms in China like DJI more recently started calling for stronger intellectual property protection in China as their intellectual property outputs rapidly grow (Peng et al., 2017), potentially leading to a stronger intellectual property protection system in the future. Similarly, Alibaba as a technology giant in China is also leading social innovation (Mirvis et al., 2016; Osburg, 2013; Jenkins, 2009; Prahalad, 2006) by using its technology and platform to help poor people in remote area become entrepreneurs and sell products to the global market (Mirvis et al., 2016; Osburg, 2013; Jenkins, 2009; Prahalad, 2006). On the other hand, the country also witnesses social and environment problems created by technological innovation. For example, the bike-sharing business initially was a solution to environmental problems of urban congestion, yet it turned into both an environmental problem as hundreds and thousands of bicycles ended in bicycle graveyard, and a social problem as millions of users find it hard to get their deposit money back. Examples like these show that co-evolution as a powerful theoretical perspective will help us explain and predict the interplay and alignment between strategy, business ethics, technology innovation, and institutions in transitional China. China offers a laboratory setting to test existing theories and to build new ones.

Inspired by a deep curiosity about these profound development, this special issue aims at exploring the theories and practices of the co-evolution and co-alignment between strategy, business ethics, technology innovation, and institutions over time in China from a co-evolutionary perspective. The unique co-evolutionary pathways of China, in comparison to the other economies, will have profound implication to the business ethics literature. Topics of Special Interest include but are not limited to:

- Moral implications of technology in China. How do managers in China approach morally important issues in designing, developing and commercializing technologies (Martin and Freeman, 2004)? What are the antecedents and consequences (Marshall, 1999)?
- Ethical issues of emerging technologies, including but not limited to artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, E-commerce and Internet technologies in China. How does the rapid development of technologies in China shape, and is shaped by, ethical issues such as privacy (Martin, 2008; Kracher and Corritore, 2004; Drake et al., 2000; Donaldson, 2001)?
- Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in China. How business ethics as foundation of economic activities shape the pathways towards technology and innovation? How do Chinese firms adopt the CSR philosophy and practices? How does this affect the Chinese firms' strategy, innovation, and performance?
- Social innovation and entrepreneurship in China. How Chinese firms equipped with the advanced technology turn social issues and problems into business opportunities? What are the implications for organizations and the society?
- CSR and social innovation of MNCs in China. How do the subsidiaries of MNCs, particularly those in the high-tech industries, practice CSR and social innovation in China, and what are the impacts (Tan and Wang, 2011)?
- Intellectual property protection and technology innovation. How does the intellectual property system in China shape innovation and entrepreneurship (Lewin et al., 2016; Miles et al., 2004), and frame-breaking innovation in particular (Liou et al., 2016)?

- Sustainability, environmental issues and technology innovation. How has the technology innovation of companies, both domestic and foreign, helped China address its environmental problem and build a more sustainable society? How do firms in China practice the triple bottom line? How do the choices of new technologies affect ethics in China (Poesche, 1998; Stieb, 2001)?
- Triple bottom line of Chinese firms. How do Chinese firms embrace and adopt the triple bottom line performance matrix (Norman and MacDonald, 2004)? What are the impacts?
- Sustainable development goals (SDGs) of Chinese firms (Payne and Raiborn, 2001; López et al., 2007; Chang, 2011). How do Chinese firms embrace and adopt the SDGs as proposed by the United Nations? What are the impacts?
- Business ethics with Chinese characters. How business ethics is embedded in China's unique cultural, social and institutional environment, and how different is it from the rest of the world (Ip, 2009; Su and Littlefield, 2001; Whitcomb et al., 1998)?
- Comparative study between Chinese firms and their counterparts in the co-evolution of technology innovation and CSR practices.

The topics listed are meant to be illustrative; submissions on any topic that relates to the theme of the interplay between technology, innovation and business ethics in China are encouraged. Submissions should be prepared in accordance with *Journal of Business Ethics* style guide and submitted to www.editorialmanager.com/busi/ between **April 1** and **June 1, 2020**.

Be sure to indicate that it is for the special issue, “*Co-evolution of Strategy, Innovation and Ethics: The China Story and Beyond*”. Selected authors of submissions will be invited to attend a *Journal of Business Ethics* special issue workshop in China in late 2020. At this conference, authors will receive developmental feedback from the editorial team and invited discussants. Detail about the conference will be announced later with sufficient advance notice. Participation in the workshop is not a necessary condition for paper submission and editorial decision. Similarly, invitation to the workshop does not guarantee acceptance.

Please note that as a journal policy, an article submitted to this Special Issue is considered a submission to *Journal of Business Ethics* and therefore cannot be resubmitted to a regular issue of the journal.

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