

The Role of Meta-organizations in Environmental Sustainability in Emerging Markets

This special issue of *International Studies of Management & Organization* (ISMO) aims to advance models and theories of "The Role of Meta-Organizations in Environmental Sustainability in Emerging Markets."

https://think.taylorandfrancis.com/special_issues/meta-organizations-environmental-sustainability-emerging-markets/

Manuscript Deadline: 30 May 2022

Meta-organizations—that is, organizations which are formed of other organizations— are unique autonomous network organizational forms and are in contrast to “traditional organizational forms [that] employ hierarchical mechanisms as the primary means of control and coordination” (Fjeldstad et al. 2012, 735; Gulati et al. 2012). Unlike traditional organizations, such organizations take collective actions (e.g., Ahrne and Brunsson 2008; Berkowitz and Bor 2017). Example of meta-organizations include sports associations, international government organizations, industry associations, living labs, and cooperatives, among others. Meta-organizations bring together different firms (e.g., global business initiatives), gather industry standards as well as sector specific schemes (e.g., ISO Standards, Sustainability British Standards, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Round table on Sustainable Palm Oil, and the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, among others), or unite diverse stakeholders (e.g., universities, civil societies, businesses, and research institutions). Nowadays, there are thousands of diverse meta- organizations where their number has been increasing and their forms have been evolving (Berkowitz, Bucheli, and Dumez 2017).

Meta-organizations act as network agent which requires inter-organization collaboration (Shin 2017). In this regard, the consistency between their goals and objectives, and the degree of directions of relationship between a meta-organization and its members have been examined (Garaudel 2020). Meta-organization theory suggests extensive delegation of decision-making (Ahrne 2016). This is because firms with differing logics and agenda come together to forms a large network of organizations, thus it is vital to understand how the differing and often time conflicting logics and decision-making enable such organizations to play crucial roles in modern society and in overcoming sustainability related challenges. Particularly, sustainability related issues are taking a central stage in the business and management domains, given their impact on organizational performance and legitimacy.

Stakeholders are requiring firms to become more responsible, and sustainability related issues are glaring in the context of fast-growing emerging markets, which encounter institutional voids (Khanna and Palepu 2010). In this context, meta-organizations have emerged on a global scale to address sustainability related challenges.

Diversity and heterogeneity of meta-organizations and their capabilities pose concerns to managerial issues pertaining to societal changes, including sustainable development (Berkowitz and Dumez 2016; Valente and Oliver 2018). These challenges may arise due to meta-organization's dependence on as well as competition with their members. Hence, it requires better understanding regarding their dynamics, functioning and interactions with network partners to address societal issues. Against such a backdrop, we would like to encourage authors to examine the role of meta-organizations in sustainability in the context of emerging markets, and to answer questions such as: *Are meta-organizations useful in overcoming institutional voids and enhancing sustainability in emerging markets? How do the collective actions of meta-organizations influence sustainability and firms' legitimacy in emerging markets? And what are the differences in the role of meta-organizations in sustainability in developed vs. emerging markets settings?*

The role of meta-organizations is critical for examination in the context of emerging markets. For example, after massive floods in Pakistan in 2011, a non-profit organization known as *leadership for environment and development (LEAD)* recruited international donors to support government in out of reach flood prone areas (Chaudhury et al. 2016). The network includes union councils operating in different districts that are most prone to weather related disasters. Similarly, in Ghana, *National climate change adaptation strategy (NCCAS)* program was initiated in 2012 to increase countries' resilience to climate change (Chaudhury et al. 2016). This initiative brought together The Ministry of Environment and National Climate Change committees to jointly manage NCCAS. Besides addressing grand challenges pertaining to climate change, meta-organizations also play a key role in sustainable innovations (Berkowitz 2018) and global value chain (Carmagnac and Carbone 2018). These examples present potential avenues for research in emerging markets.

The above-mentioned topics and questions are still under-explored in the emerging markets context. We believe the special issue can significantly contribute to extending existing knowledge on this subject and provide new insights to scholars and practitioners. As such, the special issue offers novel insights in terms of the role of meta-organizations in environmental sustainability across emerging markets. We welcome empirical and conceptual papers on one of the following or other related themes:

- Meta-organizations' actions and their contribution to environmental sustainability in emerging markets.

- Meta-organizations and firms' legitimacy building strategies in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations and their role in addressing grand challenges in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations and their role in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations' meta-governance practices and their role in environmental sustainability in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations' stakeholders and their impact on environmental sustainability in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations' business model for environmental sustainability in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations and corporate social responsibility of network partners in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations' market and non-market capabilities in addressing environmental sustainability issues.
- Meta-organizations, global value chains and environmental sustainability in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations knowledge management strategies for environmental sustainability in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations' meta-governance systems and their impact on environmental sustainability in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations' use of digital technologies and collective intelligence to shape the economic and environmental performance in emerging markets.
- Meta-organizations' platform, trade-off pertaining to a high redundancy of member capabilities, and residual profits.
- A comparison of meta-organizations' actions and capabilities in environmental sustainability in emerging vs advanced markets.

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About the Guest Editors

Huda Khan is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at the University of Aberdeen, UK. Huda's research focuses on dynamic marketing capabilities of emerging market firms, competition between MNEs from advanced and emerging markets when they enter into each other's market and ambidexterity. Huda has published in *International Business Review*, *Annals of Tourism*, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* etc. Huda has also worked with Ehrenberg-bass institute of Marketing Science as a Marketing Scientist whereby she has

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