

## **Special issue of *Business & Society***

### **BUSINESS, SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN AFRICA**

Deadline for submissions: 1 December 2013

#### *Guest editors*

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#### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

This special issue of *Business and Society* aims to contribute to the development of theoretical and empirical insights on the role of business in African countries, in the context of the important environmental, social and governance challenges faced by the Continent. The need for knowledge to help further sustainable development, in an equitable and accountable way, makes a better understanding of business in Africa particularly urgent, especially considering the relative lack of research published on these themes in management and organization journals. To address the specific situation in African countries, existing theories and frameworks may need to be extended, adjusted or replaced by approaches that could have implications beyond the continent. Conversely, current paradigms may be directly applicable to the African context as such, but data limitations may require methodological adaptations.

While environmental and social issues exist across the globe, leading to a thriving literature on a range of topics, Africa seems to accumulate both major environmental problems and social problems. Environmental problems include, among others, the effects of global warming and climate variability, pollution, the loss of biodiversity, deforestation and desertification, which affect the availability of land and food. Compounding environmental issues, social problems are also prevalent throughout the African continent. The World Bank's ranked 26 African countries among the 30 poorest countries in the world in GDP (PPP) in 2009 and the UN's Economic Commission for Africa shows at best mixed results in the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, sharply contrasting with other continents, such as Asia or Latin America. Poverty, human rights violations, health problems and lack of social security are coupled with often weak governance, corruption and conflict. While the number of wars across the continent has decreased since the 1990s, some countries still face conflict or continue to show worrying signs of political instability. At the same time, African countries exhibit strong and resilient economic growth in spite of the global economic crisis, with a continent-wide forecasted growth of 5.3% for 2011, according to the International Monetary Fund, and huge potential and promising economic developments have been noted.

Yet, in spite of the scale and importance of the environmental and social issues in Africa, and in spite of the sustained economic growth that the continent has experienced for a decade, very few published papers in mainstream management journals use African data. A literature search for published papers on Africa in leading management journals yielded a

total of twenty-seven published papers, of which only seven were published in the last decade. Among African countries, South Africa in particular, and to a lesser extent Nigeria, receives attention. This same pattern is found for more specific outlets on corporate social responsibility, sustainability and business ethics, in which South Africa is also a main focus, followed by Nigeria (Kolk & Lenfant, 2010; Visser, 2006). In international business and management, overview articles on the “state of the art” in corporate (social) responsibility and sustainable development showed a serious lack of attention for Africa as well (Egri & Ralston, 2008; Kolk & Van Tulder, 2010). Egri and Ralston (2008, p. 325) noted that “it is particularly troubling that there has been relatively little on-the-ground corporate responsibility research in countries where the need for corporate responsibility is most pressing due to greater poverty, environmental degradation, and institutional governance issues”. Remarkably, even in research on the base/bottom of the pyramid most of the cases and examples stem from India and other emerging economies, leaving the African relatively understudied, as shown in a recent article on a decade of BOP article (Kolk, Rivera-Santos, & Rufín, forthcoming).

We believe that this dearth of studies uncovers two distinct issues. First, while emerging countries such as China or India have recently become relatively common empirical settings in management studies, Africa may simply not always be on the radar as a place to conduct research. Second, conducting research in Africa creates specific challenges, which stem directly from the social, environmental and governance problems mentioned above, coupled with complexities related to linguistic, security, cultural and/or political issues. This particularly affects the possibility to collect empirical data in the absence of large-scale databases. While scholars start to better recognize the implications of conducting research in nontraditional contexts (Kriauciunas et al., 2011), the challenges associated with data collection in contexts characterized by high levels of poverty, conflict and poor governance may seem daunting to many researchers.

With a goal of putting Africa on the scholarly map, this special issue aims to publish papers on business, society and environment in the African context. We welcome innovative papers, both conceptual and empirical, both qualitative and quantitative, with a focus on or data from the African continent. The possible topic list covers the whole range of environmental, social and governance issues mentioned above. The special issue is open to papers from different theoretical backgrounds and academic disciplines as long as it relates to the business and society domain in line with the overall focus of the journal.

### **Submission guidelines**

All paper submissions should conform to *Business & Society's* standard guidelines for authors, details of which can be found at the B&S website: <http://bas.sagepub.com>

Questions about the special issue can be directed at the guest editors via e-mail: [akolk@uva.nl](mailto:akolk@uva.nl) (Ans Kolk) or [mrivera@babson.edu](mailto:mrivera@babson.edu) (Miguel Rivera-Santos)

Deadline: Manuscripts must be received by 1 December 2013, and should be sent to [mrivera@babson.edu](mailto:mrivera@babson.edu).

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