

Organizations in the Global South

Special Issue Editors

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Introduction – Call for Papers

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Organization Science Special Issue Call for Papers

Approximately 85% of the world's population resides in countries commonly referred to as the Global South,¹ accounting for roughly 42% of global GDP. Economies of the Global South continue to grow faster on average than their “northern” counterparts, albeit with wide variation. The oil-driven economy of Guyana saw 43% growth in 2024, for example, while Rwanda grew by 8.9% and Venezuela fell by 20%. The much younger Global South population is also on average growing faster in population. While most of the Global North has median ages in the 40s, countries in the Global South are more typically in the 20s. The Global South also serves as the largest repository of biodiversity while simultaneously facing the most severe biodiversity loss and water stress. This creates profound adaptation challenges for the people and organizations that operate closest to nature.

There is no uniform definition of what constitutes the Global South,² but it typically refers to the countries of Africa, Latin America, Asia (except South Korea, Japan), the Middle East (except Israel), and Oceania (except Australia and New Zealand).³ Countries in the Global South span diverse contexts—from some of the largest countries and economies such as China, India, Brazil, and Indonesia to smaller but rapidly industrializing economies across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Countries in the Global South are primarily comprised of low- and middle-income countries, but

¹ <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2023/much-global-south-ukraines-side?>

² https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tdr2024ch4_en.pdf?

³ <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications.html>

include high-income countries such as Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and UAE that continue to identify with the 134 members of the United Nations G77 group.

While the Global South is often defined geographically, the North-South distinction also captures relative positions of social, economic, and political power. In that broader sense, the Global South defies neat geographic boundaries. Privileged populations and well-resourced firms exist within countries commonly labeled the Global South, while struggling populations and under-resourced firms exist in the Global North. In this special issue, we welcome organizational studies about indigenous populations in the Global North.

Despite the diversity, richness, and importance of these contexts, markets and organizations in the Global South are underrepresented in top management journals (Phillips and Ranganathan 2025). Consequently, much of our theory on organizations, people, and markets is derived from a biased subset of organizations and geographies. This raises fundamental questions about the generalizability, completeness, and the power of existing theory to explain and predict phenomena across the world. When we pay less attention to 85% of humans and an even larger percentage of organizations, we are sure to miss fundamental aspects of how people, organizations, and markets interact. Furthermore, our evidence and theories may become generationally obsolete as the younger Global South cohorts increasingly shape organizational landscapes. In addition, applications of our theories are less likely to influence policy and practice in the Global South if they are solely derived from evidence in the Global North (Alsan et al.). Organizational scholars have long understood that cultural and institutional differences shape how people behave, how organizations operate, and how markets function. Although there have been many calls for the geographic expansion of management research (e.g, Tsui, 2007; George et al., 2016; Phillips & Ranganathan, 2025), the Global South continues to make up only a small percentage of published papers in most management journals.

Expanding the geographic focus of management research to intentionally integrate the Global South matters for at least three complementary reasons. First, we believe that organization and management theory should be useful for managers, employees, and stakeholders. Since most of our theory was developed in the Global North, we lack clarity on the degree to which it can apply to the problems, conditions, and realities faced by Global South organizations. If our theories only speak directly to 15% of the world's population, we opt out of pursuing a broader impact. There is an enormous opportunity—and responsibility—to intentionally expose our theories to the problems and realities of Global South organizations to identify management principles that are robust to varying contexts, those that need to be reframed or adapted to become relevant or useful, and those that fail to apply outside the Global North. Similarly, organizational scholars can learn from the innovative solutions of Global South organizations to persistent challenges of doing business. Second, when most management theory comes from a minority of contexts, organizations, and markets, we risk conflating conditions specific to those contexts with general theoretical mechanisms. Since organizations in the Global South operate under different conditions, they allow us to expand, clarify, and complement our understanding of management theory. Third, the problems and realities faced by Global South

organizations can often challenge the traditional methods of management research. Working in the Global South forces rigorous scholars to push methodological boundaries to find novel, complementary approaches that can capture otherwise unobservable data while retaining—and strengthening—academic rigor.

Studying organizations in the Global South also matters because organizations are key drivers of social change and economic growth. Although some organizations in the Global South have undoubtedly contributed to reduced social welfare and environmental degradation, others have also been drivers of innovation, social mobility, and economic growth, transforming many Global South regions. In recent decades, some of these countries have seen the greatest improvements in outcomes such as per capita income, education, public health, democracy, life expectancy, and gender equity. Literacy rates in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, have grown from 50% in 1985 to nearly 70% today.⁴ The percentage of the world population living in extreme poverty has dropped from 44% in 1990 to 10% in 2025.⁵ Countries such as Bangladesh, Botswana, China, and India have seen an order of magnitude in per-capita income growth during this period. Public and private sector organizations have played major roles in these improvements. Bringing management theory to such contexts allows us to understand the organizational processes that contribute to—and work against—such large-scale human flourishing.

Scope of the Organizations in the Global South Special Issue

This special issue provides an opportunity to showcase the best work on organizations in the Global South. We welcome papers in these settings from a wide range of fields and disciplines that can speak to our broad community of organizational scholars. We welcome diverse methods, disciplines, and approaches to studying these organizations.

For the purposes of this special issue, we chose an intentionally broad definition of the Global South consistent with common usage by institutions such as the United Nations and Group of 77. This includes, as mentioned above, the countries of Africa, Latin America, Asia (excluding South Korea, Japan, but including India and China), the Middle East (excluding Israel), and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).⁶ Our definition also includes indigenous populations within otherwise Global North contexts. To be considered, papers should document research based on a preponderance of data from Global South contexts. While we encourage a variety of approaches and methods, we will not consider any review papers and will only consider germane and exceptional theory or perspective papers, consistent with the journal's guidelines. Papers will be evaluated with the same standards for rigor and theoretical development that Organization Science is known for, while leveraging reviewers who can understand the challenges, potential, and demands of conducting research in the Global South. In this way, we strive to avoid conflating theoretical and empirical unfamiliarity with perceptions of scholarly rigor.

⁴ World Bank Data.

⁵ <https://ourworldindata.org/poverty>

⁶ <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications.html>

Special Issue Themes and Research Questions

There are numerous themes and research questions related to organizations in the Global South. This list is not meant to be exhaustive:

- How does research in the Global South clarify, challenge, confirm, and expand our understanding of the underlying assumptions, cross-level dynamics, boundary conditions, and generalizability of management theories?
- How do the unique challenges and contexts faced by Global South organizations expand, question, confirm, and complement existing management theory?
- What are problems or challenges faced by Global South organizations, or solutions proposed, that benefit from better understanding and adaptations of our theories?
- What are the existing management theories that could be usefully confirmed, adapted, or deepened through application and testing in Global South contexts?
- What are solutions developed and tested in the Global South that could help solve organizational challenges in the Global North?
- What can we learn from organizing in the Global South that can help us rethink how growth, innovation, and performance are conceptualized and operationalized?
- How does research in the Global South expand and improve our research methods?
- How can new or expanded data help us understand the landscape of organizations in the Global South?
- What micro-level processes (e.g., information sharing, conflict resolution, collaborative problem-solving, culturally-specific cognitive orientations) play important and potentially different roles in how Global South organizations operate?
- How do culturally-specific cognitive processes and mental models among Global South organizational members influence their decision-making processes?
- How can applications of theory to Global South contexts improve social welfare and environmental stewardship?

Instructions for Authors

We encourage submissions addressing these and other important questions facing organizations in the Global South aligned with *Organizational Science*'s mission and audience. These include fundamental research about organizations and their people, processes, structures, strategies, economics, technologies, identities, forms, and social purpose. We encourage authors to consider the [Organization Science editorial statement](#) with its inclusion of fields and disciplines indicated above. As noted in the editorial statement, we are receptive to a broad range of theoretical perspectives and particularly value papers that connect them. Submissions only examining individual-level phenomena, without

considering at least one aspect of their relationship to the group/team, organizational, or societal context in which they are embedded are less likely to be a fit for this special issue.

There is no defined quota or limit on the number of articles we can accept for the special issue, so authors are not competing for publication. Papers will be processed and reviewed when received, and will proceed through any revisions without delay. Accepted papers will be immediately published online until the complete issue can be published. Journal policies on special issue processes and ethics [can be viewed here](#).

Considering the focused expertise of submitting authors, authors are expected to accept an invitation to review at least one special issue submission. We also invite authors to publicize this call across their broad networks. Authors should submit papers to the special issue between November 1, 2025 and April 30, 2026 at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgsci>. For questions on the special issue, please reach out to any of the special issue editors.

References

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Appendix: The Review and Decision-Making Process

- The review process will follow the standard principles and processes of *Organization Science*
- Submitted papers are not competing against one another for limited publication slots in the Special Issue (SI). Papers will be evaluated and accepted based on their own merit alone, without any comparisons or rankings of papers relative to each other.
- A set of lead editors (LE) will make initial decisions on desk rejects and editor review assignments. To preserve reviewer resources, some papers will be desk-rejected for fit or when

the LE assesses them as highly unlikely to meet the standards for publication within three rounds of revision.

- Authors can request a preferred editor to handle their paper, which the LE will try to honor, but such requests may not be possible due to load balancing and judgment on editorial fit and expertise.
- Special Issue Editorial Team members will not submit their own papers, except for an introduction to the special issue that they will co-author.
- Lead editors will process and distribute submissions to the editorial team on a rolling basis to expedite special issue completion and online publication of fast-progressing papers.
- All authors submitting manuscripts for the Special Issue that pass an initial screening and are sent out for review are expected to serve as reviewers on at least one other paper under consideration for the Special Issue if requested. We will ensure that SI authors understand that the review process is not a zero-sum game, and that we do not want to see competitive behavior among reviewers. We will ensure that we follow all guidelines to avoid conflicts of interest in making review assignments.
- Each member of the Editorial Team will have autonomy in making initial decisions on the manuscripts they are assigned.
- The LEs will remain informed about the status and outlook of papers under review as they progress through the process and with input from other AEs and the CE will review decisions that have gone out to ensure consistency in standards and process. The team will confer periodically to monitor progress on the SI overall and share updates and information to help the team stay on track.
- We will be amenable to granting one-to-two-week extensions to all authors who request one; for those working on revisions, longer extensions may be considered based on their individual circumstances.
- We aim to meet the 90-day window between the date of submission of a manuscript and the time of decision. Those papers submitted just before the deadline, however, may take somewhat longer due to the anticipated wave of last-minute submissions.
- We are committed to minimizing the chances of “Reject” decisions beyond the first round of review. The majority of manuscripts being invited for revision will have a clear path toward publication going into the second round; few papers will proceed to a third review round if more than a “minor revision” is required.
- If a paper goes out for review for the SI, and is rejected, it cannot be resubmitted for consideration for a regular issue of Organization Science. If a paper is desk-rejected for the SI for reasons of SI fit, then authors can submit it subsequently for consideration in the regular review process.
- Unanimity in judgment among reviewers is not required to accept a paper (and does not dictate a decision even when reviewers are unanimous). Final decisions are solely the discretion of the Special Issue Editors and the Editor-in-Chief. Consistent with journal policy, editors make decisions based on our own manuscript evaluation, informed by reviewers' input.