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# Introduction to the *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management* Special Section on Responsible Research in Operations Management

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In 2015, 24 academics from different disciplines (including the first two authors of this article), business schools, and countries worked together to develop the Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM) Network ([rrbm.network](http://rrbm.network)). This network was created to support and promote credible and useful research in across all business school disciplines. As part of our commitment to support this mission, we were delighted to have the opportunity to coedit this special section to encourage and promote operations management (OM) research that is intended to create value for society at large.

The RRBM Network now unites thousands of endorsers, numerous supporting organizations, and a wider array of people who share our common vision. Its working board manages this organization, including the third author of this article who serves as its vice chair. RRBM defines responsible research as studies that produce credible and useful knowledge that addresses problems important to business and society. Credibility refers to the reliability and validity or trustworthiness of the findings, in inductive and deductive work, regardless of whether the findings are based on qualitative or quantitative data. Usefulness refers to the potential relevance of the knowledge produced to inform policies and practices with positive societal impact. The purpose of RRBM and the responsible research movement is to encourage scholars to pursue studies that contribute knowledge that can make the world a better place through informing evidence-based, high-quality, and

societally beneficial management practices across business, government, and nongovernment organizations.

It is not immediately evident how one can determine when a paper satisfies various responsible research principles. Getting 24 academics from different disciplines to agree on a common definition was a difficult task, as each of our fields has important nuances. Early on, we thought that the academic community itself should define what “responsible” research means by elevating and highlighting papers that our societies deem worthy. To encourage and recognize responsible research, the M&SOM Society established its Award for Responsible Research in Operations Management in 2018, in parallel with similar awards in other fields including Marketing and Management. In addition, RRBM leaders petitioned journal editors to launch special sections highlighting responsible research, which inspired us to propose and coedit this M&SOM special section. Many of these special sections in different disciplines have been published, and more are on the way.<sup>1</sup>

In this special section, we showcase papers in operations management that encapsulate principles of responsible research. At the same time, we hope to create urgency in our community to conduct more OM research on topics of societal importance. Specifically, we assessed each submission by using the following seven principles described in the RRBM position paper entitled “Responsible Research for Business and Management: Striving for Credible and Useful Knowledge”<sup>2</sup>:

**Principle 1—Service to Society:** Research aims to develop knowledge that benefits business/organizations and the broader society, locally and globally, for the ultimate purpose of creating a better world.

**Principle 2—Stakeholder Involvement:** Research has been conducted via a process that values the involvement of different stakeholders who can play a critical role at various stages of the scientific process, without compromising the independence of inquiry (e.g., ethical identification of results and reporting of data.)

**Principle 3—Impact on Stakeholders:** Research has an impact on diverse stakeholders and helps contribute to better business and a better world.

**Principle 4—Valuing Both Basic and Applied Contributions:** Contributions of the research are respected and recognized among school deans, journal editors, funders, accrediting agencies, and other stakeholders.

**Principle 5—Valuing Plurality and Multidisciplinary Collaboration:** Research reflects a diversity in research themes, methods, forms of scholarship, types of inquiry, and interdisciplinary collaboration to reflect the plurality and complexity of business and societal problems.

**Principle 6—Sound Methodology:** Research implements sound scientific methods and processes in both quantitative and qualitative or both theoretical and empirical domains.

**Principle 7—Broad Dissemination:** Research has contributed to diverse forms of knowledge dissemination that collectively advance basic knowledge and practice.

We further encouraged submissions for this special section of research that focuses on any of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>3</sup> including operational issues related to the eradication of poverty and hunger, improving health, increasing quality of education, gender equality, clean sanitation, and affordable and clean energy. We further invited submissions of research tackling some of the risks identified in the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2019,<sup>4</sup> such as operational issues associated with macroeconomic tensions (e.g., impact of tariffs on global supply chains), environmental risks, technological vulnerabilities, biological threats, and rising sea levels.

We received 55 high-quality submissions spanning a number of topics that we had hoped to address, including (roughly classified) healthcare, food and agriculture, pandemic, nonprofit management, sustainability, humanitarian, gender issues, social responsibility,

urbanization, safety and security, supply chains, and racial equity. Eventually, we accepted 13 papers for this special section and include the Distinguished M&SOM Fellow Speech delivered by Serguei Netessine during the M&SOM conference in 2018.

We were very impressed with the quality and diversity of papers that were submitted: clearly, our community is producing responsible research. We are deeply grateful to our guest associate editors for this special section including Vishal Aggrawal (Georgetown University), Gad Allon (The Wharton School), Atalay Atasu (INSEAD), Volodymyr Babich (Georgetown University), Ryan Buell (Harvard Business School), Soo-Haeng Cho (Carnegie Mellon University), Wedad Elmaghraby (University of Maryland), Jeremie Gallien (London School of Business), Saravanan Kesavan (University of North Carolina), Sang-Hyun Kim (Yale University), Cuihong Li (University of Connecticut), Jun Li (University of Michigan), Marcelo Olivares (University of Chile), Sergei Savin (The Wharton School), Enno Siemsen (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Bradley Staats (University of North Carolina), Beril Toktay (Georgia Institute of Technology), Anita Tucker (Boston University), Tunay Tunca (University of Maryland), Fuqiang Zhang (Washington University St. Louis), Dennis Zhang (Washington University St. Louis), Karen Zheng (MIT), and Leon Zhu (Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business). Also, we are indebted to the reviewers for their constructive and informative feedback throughout the review process.

Ultimately, through the support of the authors, reviewers, and associate editors, we are delighted that we have been able to compile a body of excellent work to showcase responsible research in operations management. We hope this special section will serve as a catalyst to prompt more responsible research in OM that creates value for society at large.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.rrbm.network/taking-action/journals/journal-special-issues/>.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://rrbm.network/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Position\\_Paper.pdf](https://rrbm.network/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Position_Paper.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2019/>.