Introduction

Kenneth Husted and Rudolf R. Sinkovics

The Covid-19 pandemic has a wide-ranging impact across almost all areas of activities in our societies. Because of the disruptive and complex nature of the impact, governments and organisations across all sectors had to urgently and proactively rethink their approach to decision making and management of critical processes and activities (Verma and Gustafsson, 2020).

Faced with a need for remedial action to deal with the global pandemic's largely unknown territory, a wide variety of management approaches has been explored and tested by governments, companies, civil society organisations, and citizens. Many of these approaches are with far-reaching ramifications. They are also characterised by inherent uncertainty about both the immediate outcomes and the long-term consequences. Some of these management approaches rely on, for example, extending well-established management knowledge and research. In contrast, others have been breaking new ground in implementing innovative strategies tailored to their particular context.

The pandemic has also spotlighted strengths and weaknesses in contemporary management theory and some of the fundamental assumptions that frame our understanding of organisations and their impact on stakeholders. One prominent example of this is the call for rethinking organisations' role in creating inequality (Munir, 2020) as evidence is mounting that Covid-19 has a disproportional impact across socio-economic groups in society.

New Zealand (NZ) offers an astonishing story in how the response from various constituents is situated in the broader societal and political discourse.

1. THE RISE OF COVID-19 RELATED MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered significant collaborative science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) research efforts to come to terms with the clinical and biomedical issues of the virus. This has resulted in an unprecedented volume of papers published related to the disease and placed extraordinary pressure on the academic peer-review system (Teixeira da Silva et al., 2020).

STEM disciplines inarguably are instrumental in addressing the clinical and biomedical issues associated with the Covid-19 crisis. However, social sciences are critical for providing cutting-edge insight into how communities, institutions, and people deal with the pandemic (Reisz, 2020). Management research is one social science discipline that has responded to this call.

There have been similar efforts to fast-track Covid-19 related special issues, perspective papers, and scoping studies in the business and management disciplines to highlight implications of the pandemic on business actors, consumers, civil society actors, and governments. A Web of Science literature review of the search terms 'Covid' and 'Pandemic' for top tier articles and Advance online journal publications of 2020 in major business and management domains delivers 485 outputs. As it can be seen in Table 1, most of the management-related outputs are in the general management category (98 papers), with sizeable outputs related to public sector and health journals (93 papers), economics (69 papers), and various social science and sector studies, which includes tourism (53 and 47 papers, respectively). Organisational psychology (39 papers) and general psychology journals (32 papers) capture another big slice of the overall business and management outputs, with regional studies, marketing, entrepreneurship, international business and operations management following suit.

Using bibliometric mapping approaches (Sinkovics, 2016; Sinkovics et al., 2019) six broad themes emerged from the identified sample of management research on Covid-19. These are: (1) public policy and institutional administration issues; (2) development and policy implementation challenges; (3) grand challenges and the futures of management areas (HRM, leadership, supply chain, CSR); (4) gender struggles and family issues; (5) hospitality and travel sector issues; (6) critical issues (psychological, power-related, social media polarisation).

A sizeable body of work deals specifically with Covid-19 matters in hotspots such as, for example, Italy, the USA, and the UK, but a closer thematic analysis of the papers reveals that management perspectives on the Covid-19 crisis from regions with more successful strategies to keeping Covid-19 at bay such as Australia, NZ, and Taiwan are underrepresented. This book intends to make a specific contribution in this space, and interrogate the learnings from the specific NZ context. As the crisis is still unfolding elsewhere, it is becoming clear that the economic and social aftermath will be felt in the years to come. NZ offers an astonishing story in how the response from various constituents is situated in the wider societal and political discourse. In fact, drawing on the chapters in the book we argue that NZ offers lessons for management actors across various institutional, geographical, and political contexts in the world.

We categorise the learnings into three distinctive sets of dichotomies. The first dichotomy is around proximity and distance, a key feature of the NZ

Table 0.1 Covid-19 related papers, published in selected business and management domains

AJG (CABS) 2018 subject areas	No. of papers
General Management	98
Public Sector and Health	93
Economics	69
Social Sciences	53
Sector Studies	47
Psychology (Organisational)	39
Psychology (General)	32
Regional Studies	20
Marketing	12
Entrepreneurship	7
International Business	6
Operations Management	6
Human Resource Management	3
Innovation	3
Management Development	2
Total	485

Note: Web of Science search terms: Covid and Pandemic, applied to journals within the AJG/CABS 2018 subject areas (CABS, 2018) at 3 and 4 star levels, drawing on journal names and ISSN data from Tüselmann et al. (2016).

geographical and economic position in its regional and global networks. The second dichotomy is what we call the ‘dichotomy of centralisation and decentralisation in decision making’. The NZ government has quickly embraced a top-level expert group around leading scientists and public-health authorities and adopted a centralised response action plan. Key actions include a four-tier alert system introduced in March 2020, closed borders – except for NZ citizens and residents, and a small number of limited critical worker exceptions – prioritised testing and a Covid-19 compliance checking system. In other countries, the private sector and decentralised influencers have made a coordinated government-led response more difficult. The third dichotomy is a function of collective versus individual learning. It relates to NZ’s disaster preparedness (e.g., Orchiston, 2013) and its national focus on health and well-being (OECD, 2019), which has allowed the unfolding of a ‘go hard, go fast’ approach and a significant buy-in to this approach from the NZ population.

2. TENSIONS AND DICHOTOMIES

2.1 Proximity and Distance

The international business and management literatures have placed a keen interest on the concept of ‘distance’, both geographical, cultural and psychic (Ambos and Håkanson, 2014; Beugelsdijk et al., 2018). The effect of distance on firms’ performance when entering, operating, and orchestrating business in and across foreign markets is broadly considered negative and more pronounced with increasing distance. In the political economy literature, the focus has been more along the lines of institutional distance and business systems differences (Hall and Gingerich, 2009; Hotho, 2009) and NZ’s island nation in the southwestern Pacific Ocean is characterised as a free-market ‘liberal market economy’ (LME) (Nicholls, 2018). Despite institutional distance measures similar to the UK, the US, and European economies, and particularly the notion of a ‘happy variety of capitalisms’ (Bergheim, 2007), whereby health and well-being is now at the heart of a NZ governmental policy agenda (OECD, 2019), the key trading partners in 2019 were – using a continental lens – Asian countries, led by China with fellow Oceanian countries, particularly Australia, North America, and European countries. With the distance from Auckland, the major business hub in NZ, to Shanghai being around 9000km and its antipodean distance located at around 20,000km in Spain, it is evident that ‘barriers’ to international expansion and growth are primarily related to the geographical distance dimensions above. Except for Australia, which is ‘only’ 4000km away, this ‘tyranny of distance’ (Blainey, 2001) has shaped the engagement of NZ firms with international partners in major ways and, arguably, diminished the potential of NZ to develop and upgrade towards a robust knowledge-based industrial sector (Nicholls, 2018, p. 161).

However, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the remoteness and insularity of the NZ economy and its relationships with trading partners have been serendipitously transformed into an advantage. As container shipments continued unfettered through the crisis and NZ emerged extraordinarily well connected from the upgrades to undersea fibre-optic cable infrastructures (‘Hawaiki cable’) connecting NZ, Australia, American Samoa, Hawaii, and the US mainland (Starosielski, 2015; Hawaiki, 2020), the management of distant relationships through virtual means became more competitive than other Asian countries and vastly outperformed several OECD countries (FOSN, 2019).

2.2 Centralisation and Decentralisation in Decision Making

In theory, all of us are vulnerable to coronavirus, but in practice how well we fare has to do with what you could call pre-existing conditions that are not only medical

but economic, social, political, and racial – and the pandemic, which is also an economic catastrophe, has made these differences glaringly clear. (Solnit, 2020)

Covid-19 triggers many questions regarding the resilience of the liberal international order in the face of global shocks and also questions regarding the liberal international order to survive in a ‘rudderless world’ (Norrlöf, 2020). Emergent literature on Covid-19 refers to ‘socially distanced capitalism’ which transforms neoliberal capitalism in previously unimaginable ways (Cline-Cole, 2020), radically rearranges power structures in our societies and there is an argument that refers to and empirically examines Covid-19 as a ‘liberal democratic curse’ (Norrlöf, 2020). Curiously, NZ has withered this curse and gone against the trend of other liberal market economies, as it managed to stamp out community transmissions with its ‘go fast, go hard’ approach and sports low death rates.

The NZ experience showcases that through high centralisation of power in government, whereby a small group of people and scientific advisors adopted a science-based approach, they were able to short-circuit an otherwise long and traditionally more complex consultation process. Despite numerous interacting factors, the NZ government thus managed to get a sophisticated grip on the situation and avoid overload and decision paralysis through human and clear communication (c.f. Foss, 2020). Interestingly, many private firms and public organisations in NZ chose – like many governments across OECD – to decentralise key processes in order to unleash the innovative ability of their organisations in search for appropriate responses to Covid-19.

2.3 Preparedness – Collective and Individual Learning

The NZ Government has taken its 5 million inhabitants on a collective learning journey which started prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and thus contributed to a high level of crisis preparedness and resilience. The countries’ high seismic risk and disasters such as the Christchurch earthquake (2011) and the White Island eruption (2019) have triggered significant science-informed learning. The Government has funded the science, provided platforms for scientists to share their knowledge, and assigned credibility to both scientific knowledge and scientists. Out of such experience, community-based efforts were developed, to prepare specific sectors such as tourism or specific townships, lending support to the concept of collective, community-led disaster planning (Ritchie, 2008; Orchiston, 2013).

Education and individual learning has also propelled NZ towards high levels of disaster preparedness (Johnson et al., 2014) and crisis management capabilities, both at corporate levels (Laufer, 2012, 2015) and country level (National Science Challenges, 2020). Evidence further suggests that participation and

individual levels of compliance to responses to crises are high (Cretney, 2016). Thus, it is not surprising that NZ's response to the coronavirus pandemic has been cited by Joseph Stiglitz, one of the world's top economists, as one of the best in the world (Satherley, 2020).

If the United States represents one extreme, perhaps NZ represents the other. It's a country in which competent government relied on science and expertise to make decisions, a country where there is a high level of social solidarity – citizens recognize that their behavior affects others – and trust, including trust in government. (Stiglitz, 2020, 17)

3. SETUP AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Contributions are structured around three parts. The first part offers a theoretical framing and socio-political background that situates the Covid-19 pandemic within the country context. We conceptualise the Covid-19 crisis as one of the turning points at the intersection of the economic, socio-demographic geopolitical and political gearboxes (Guillén and Ontiveros, 2016). A return to the world that we have lived in before (Gray, 2020), while desired socio-psychologically, is increasingly unlikely. We are witnessing a redefinition of the 'new normal' in terms of social, cultural, and business practices and the challenges that this may prompt.

The second part offers contributions that look at the Covid-19 pandemic from a functional management and organisational perspective. With more and more information unearthed about the immediate consequences of this latest pandemic via news and online media, we witness the intricate complexity of globalised supply chains, the consequences of low levels of buffer in optimised outsourcing and offshoring agreements, and the criticality of 'non-critical' labour for the seamless functioning and organisation of society. At the same time, the powerful force of creative destruction is eroding the foundation for well-tested business models and resource uses to create place for new innovative solutions and organisations. In this part, we draw attention to problems and challenges in specific functional and organisational areas.

The concluding part is devoted to implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for business and management in other countries and the NZ Covid-19 response's geopolitical significance beyond the Pacifica/Oceania region. The Covid-19 experience in NZ has been a cathartic one, redefining the notion of civic partnership (Goddard et al., 2016), where the close interaction of university, policy, and private actors has helped to understand pathways for pivotal and transformative change experiences. Chapters in this part illuminate how the NZ experience can offer insights and learning for other countries.

Based on the parts outlined above, the book and its chapters unfold in a flowering structure, as depicted in Figure 0.1. The central connection and core of the flower is the notion of Covid-19 and the NZ country perspective. The petals represent keywords that cover the themes in the various chapters. Some chapters deal with personal characteristics of managers and leaders; expert leadership is a dimension that stands out in a chapter dealing with the government response. Several chapters address the notion of economic growth, well-being on a national level and on a personal level, for example through laughter as a coping and response strategy, one chapter deals specifically with the notion of talents and the potential of Covid-19 reversing the brain drain of the past. A further topic represented in one of the topic petals of the flowering structure is the notion of business recovery and how NZ's exporting and internationalisation strategies have been affected by Covid-19. Innovation, labour market implications, and commercialisation issues as well as economic policy topics are more frequently mentioned in the chapters in the book. Finally, another key theme and associated keywords in the book are related to sustainable value creation. The keywords are interrelated and make connections between the various parts of the book.

Figure 0.1 The flowering structure of the book and its chapters

REFERENCES

- Ambos, B. and L. Håkanson (2014), 'The concept of distance in international management research', *Journal of International Management*, **20** (1), 1–7. doi: 10.1016/j.intman.2013.10.003
- Bergheim, S. (2007), *The Happy Variety of Capitalism*, Deutsche Bank Research, pp. 1–24.
- Beugelsdijk, S., T. Kostova, V.E. Kunst, E. Spadafora and M. van Essen (2018), 'Cultural distance and firm internationalization: A meta-analytical review and theoretical implications', *Journal of Management*, **44** (1), 89–130. doi: 10.1177/0149206317729027
- Blainey, G. (2001), *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, London: Macmillan.
- CABS (2018), 'Academic journal guide', Retrieved June 13, 2019, from <https://chartereddabs.org/academic-journal-guide-2018/>
- Cline-Cole, R. (2020), 'Socially distanced capitalism in a time of coronavirus', *Review of African Political Economy*, **47** (164), 169–196. doi: 10.1080/03056244.2020.1814627
- Cretny, R.M. (2016), 'Local responses to disaster: The value of community led post disaster response action in a resilience framework', *Disaster Prevention and Management*, **25** (1), 27–40. doi: 10.1108/DPM-02-2015-0043
- FOSN (2019), 'Asian countries lead the fthh-fttb global ranking', Retrieved Dec 26, 2020, from <https://www.fomsn.com/market-research/sobhana/asian-countries-lead-the-fthh-fttb-global-ranking/>
- Foss, N.J. (2020), 'Behavioral strategy and the Covid-19 disruption', *Journal of Management*, **46** (8), 1322–1329. doi: 10.1177/0149206320945015
- Goddard, J.B., E. Hazelkorn, L. Kempton and P. Vallance (2016), *The Civic University: The Policy and Leadership Challenges*, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Gray, J. (2020, 2020/04/05/), 'Why this crisis is a turning point in history', Retrieved Apr 5, 2020, from https://www.newstatesman.com/america/2020/04/why-crisis-turning-point-history?utm_source=pocket-newtab
- Guillén, M.F. and E.B. Ontiveros (2016), *Global Turning Points: The Challenges for Business and Society in the 21st Century*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hall, P.A. and D.W. Gingerich (2009), 'Varieties of capitalism and institutional complementarities in the political economy: An empirical analysis', *British Journal of Political Science*, **39** (3), 449–482. doi: 10.1017/S0007123409000672
- Hawaiki (2020, 2020/12/26/), 'Hawaiki cable – the power of greater connectivity in the Pacific', Retrieved Nov 15, 2020, from <https://www.hawaiki.co.nz>
- Hotho, J.J. (2009), 'A measure of comparative institutional distance', *SMG Working Paper*, **7**, 1–54. https://research-api.cbs.dk/ws/portalfiles/portal/58953388/SMG_WP_2009_07.pdf
- Johnson, V.A., K.R. Ronan, D.M. Johnston and R. Peace (2014), 'Implementing disaster preparedness education in New Zealand primary schools', *Disaster Prevention and Management*, **23** (4), 370–380. doi: 10.1108/DPM-09-2013-0151
- Laufer, D. (2012), 'Incorporating a global perspective in teaching crisis management', *AIB Insights*, **12** (2), 13–17. https://documents.aib.msu.edu/publications/insights/archive/insights_v012n02.pdf

- Laufer, D. (2015), 'Emerging issues in crisis management', *Business Horizons*, **58** (2), 137–139. doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2014.10.002
- Munir, K.A. (2021), 'Inequality in the time of corona virus', *Journal of Management Studies*, Advance online publication. doi: 10.1111/joms.12674
- National Science Challenges (2020, 2020/12/26/), 'Resilience to nature's challenges', Retrieved Dec 26, 2020, from <https://resiliencechallenge.nz>
- Nicholls, K. (2018), 'Economic outcomes in New Zealand: A varieties of capitalism lens', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, **53** (2), 160–175. doi: 10.1080/10361146.2017.1416581
- Norrlöf, C. (2020), 'Is Covid-19 a liberal democratic curse? Risks for liberal international order', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, **33** (5), 799–813. doi: 10.1080/09557571.2020.1812529
- OECD (2019), *OECD Economic Surveys – New Zealand, Focus Well-being*, Paris: OECD.
- Orchiston, C. (2013), 'Tourism business preparedness, resilience and disaster planning in a region of high seismic risk: The case of the Southern Alps, New Zealand', *Current Issues in Tourism*, **16** (5), 477–494. doi: 10.1080/13683500.2012.741115
- Reisz, M. (2020), 'Post-pandemic future: What does Covid-19 mean for HE?', *Times Higher Education*, **2**, 456.
- Ritchie, B. (2008), 'Tourism disaster planning and management: From response and recovery to reduction and readiness', *Current Issues in Tourism*, **11** (4), 315–348. doi: 10.1080/13683500802140372
- Satherley, D. (2020, 2020/09/03/), 'Coronavirus: Nobel prize-winning economist praises NZ's handling of Covid-19, slams United States', Retrieved Sep 3, 2020, from <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2020/09/coronavirus-nobel-prize-winning-economist-praises-nz-s-handling-of-covid-19-slams-united-states.html> (VPN)
- Sinkovics, N. (2016), 'Enhancing the foundations for theorising through bibliometric mapping', *International Marketing Review*, **33** (3), 327–350. doi: 10.1108/IMR-10-2014-0341
- Sinkovics, N., R.R. Sinkovics and J. Archie-Acheampong (2019), 'An overview of social responsibility dimensions in international business', in L.C. Leonidou, C.S. Katsikeas, S. Samiee and C.N. Leonidou (eds), *Socially-Responsible International Business: Critical Issues and the Way Forward*, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 29–72. doi: 10.4337/9781788114127.00009
- Solnit, R. (2020, 2020/07/01/), 'Coronavirus does discriminate, because that's what humans do', *The Guardian*. Retrieved April 17, 2020, from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/17/coronavirus-discriminate-humans-racism-sexism-inequality>
- Starosielski, N. (2015), *The Undersea Network*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Stiglitz, J. (2020), 'Conquering the great divide', *Finance & Development* (September), 17–19.
- Teixeira da Silva, J.A., P. Tsigaris and M. Erfanmanesh (2020), 'Publishing volumes in major databases related to Covid-19', *Scientometrics*. doi: 10.1007/s11192-020-03675-3
- Tüselmann, H., R.R. Sinkovics and G. Pishchulov (2016), 'Revisiting the standing of international business journals in the competitive landscape', *Journal of World Business*, **51** (4), 487–498. doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2016.01.006

Verma, S. and A. Gustafsson (2020), 'Investigating the emerging Covid-19 research trends in the field of business and management: A bibliometric analysis approach', *Journal of Business Research*, **118**, 253–261. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.06.057