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CALL FOR PAPERS

Norms and organizational behavior

Guest editors

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In a period where numerous economic and political actors are denouncing "normative fundamentalism" and "norm inflation" that penalize organizations, it seems necessary and relevant to us to mobilize research on organizational behaviors to enrich the debate. As stated by Maugis G, president of AFNOR (2024), the public debate maintains confusion between norms (voluntary, co-constructed by expert consensus, and promoting a common language for proper functioning among actors) and legal texts (rules, laws) issued by the government to mandate or prohibit specific actions.

A norm is a specification approved by a recognized standardization body for repeated and continuous application, whose compliance is not mandatory. It provides recommendations, characteristics, or examples of best practices related to products, services, methods, processes, or organizations (Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs 2016, Page 6). Within the framework of the new approach (1985), regulatory directives set the essential minimum requirements, and norms propose the means to achieve these requirements. At this level, the norm thus implies an interpretative logic: the means to achieve the result are not imposed a priori, allowing organizations to define the most suitable means to meet these regulatory requirements (Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs 2016).

Some norms are mandatory because they reflect a regulatory directive. For example, ISO 17021, which sets requirements for the competence of personnel involved in the certification process of quality management systems (QMS), such as ISO 9001, which is voluntary. In addition to mandatory certifications resulting from compliance with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) norms, mandatory certifications can also be observed at the national level, such as the Qualiopi certification, which is mandatory in France for any organization seeking access to public funds for professional training. Some norms are not certifiable by a trusted third party. This is the case, for example, of ISO 26000, which pro-

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vides guidelines for implementing a CSR approach. At this level, organizations may seek to obtain a label from a private structure (e.g., Lucie, B-Corp) to certify their CSR approach built on meta-norms (e.g., ISO, SA) (Asif et al. 2019). Other reference frameworks have been specially created by specific industries, such as the MASE framework for the Company Safety Improvement Manual (initially in France and now internationally), initiated by industrial organizations with a high level of risk, intended for their SME-SMI subcontractors. These examples of mandatory or non-mandatory systems, vectors of trust for markets or institutions, fit into a broader set that includes certifications, sectoral labels (e.g., RGE, Qualibat), or regulatory labels (e.g., IGP, AOC, AOP), causing confusion and creating a mixture.

Ideally, the research expected for this call for contributions should address the concept of the norm in the strict sense (voluntary adoption and/or with an interpretative logic) and consider it as a management tool. For management research, the norm is a "management tool," public or private. Management tools are conceptualizations or materials aimed at reducing complexity and simplifying the reality of organizations. According to Dreveton (2008), the management tool is a formalization of activity that guides the company in its actions, its evolution, and allows its members to act according to predetermined orientations. The norm, as a management tool, will be interpreted differently depending on individuals and contexts and will influence employee behavior differently (Eve and Sprimont 2016). The norm is an artifact that, when it meets the user's action schemes (the way actors conceive the use of the tool), becomes an organization-specific instrument.

Contributions can be aligned with recent research on organizational factors, motivations, and processes that favor (or not) the adoption of norms by organizations. France has been the most critical country regarding the ISO 45001 standard on occupational health and safety (Heras-Saizarbitoria et al. 2020). Traits related to performance and collectivism in national culture influence the diffusion of the ISO 14001 standard (Orcos et al. 2019). The social norms of the organization (e.g., values) and the formalization of practices (e.g., routines, structures, tools) affect engagement in the SA 8000 standard on corporate social responsibility (Testa et al. 2020) or the adoption of IFRS norms (Reisch 2021). According to the Cereq survey (2022), 11% of French employees experience a change in their activities following the introduction of environmental norms (NF Environment, HQE, ISO...). These various themes can be studied and deepened in the contributions.

Contributions offering a critical view on norms are welcome. Tetranormalization refers to the proliferation of norms within which organizations operate. This trend conceptualizes the articulation of these norms and questions their effects on the organization: the proliferation of norms, competition and conflicts between norms, and non-compliance with norms constitute the three issues of Tetranormalization (Savall and Zardet, 2005). For example, according to Nava and Tampe (2022), the adoption of voluntary norms on sustainability (e.g., ISO, ESRS, UNGC, GRI) can create tensions between the need to adhere to these norms (risk of decoupling between discourse and practice) and the need to allow for adaptation (risk of decoupling between means and ends). The management of norm interweaving, paradoxical normative injunctions, and power dynamics are themes that can inform contributions.

Through this special issue, we hope to promote research that updates knowledge on norms, re-conceptualizes norms, addresses new norms, and analyzes how norms influence the discourse and behavior of organizational actors.

Ideally, this special issue will aim to answer the following questions:

1. How do actors (managers, employees, executives, stakeholders) perceive norms?

2. How is the place of the norm arbitrated and negotiated within the organization?

3. What is the effect of norms on personnel training and management?

4. Can cultural differences influence the processes of norm adoption?

5. What are the attitudes and behaviors of organizational actors towards norms?

6. How do organizations manage the balance between compliance with norms and differentiation strategies?

7. Given the new challenges faced by companies (e.g., religious considerations, remote work, inclusivity), should new norms be created?

8. What role do norms play in specific sectors and particular organizations (e.g., small businesses, public sector)?

9. How do labels, charters, codes of ethics, social norms, certifications, and duties relate to norms?

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