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Special Issue on: "X-Culture: New Directions for Experiential Learning, Cross-Cultural Collaboration, Remote Work and Leadership in Global Virtual Teams"

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The current COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown imposed in many countries in the world is having a huge impact on the way that humans behave and interact. One of the areas with the greatest impact is the workplace. As social distancing is usually required and physical proximity discouraged, a growing number of companies are increasingly relying on remote work, whenever possible.

In addition, the restrictions on international travel further necessitate the reliance of online collaboration among workgroup members located in different countries. Likewise, education, faced with new realities, must generally rely more on remote teaching and online delivery of both courses and internships and practicums.

The emergence of global virtual teams (GVTs) in both the workplace and academia has been on the rise for at least the last decade - and the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic will likely lead to further reliance on GVTs as a suitable tool to overcome the impossibility of full co-location in all types of organisations and academic institutions. Defined as “temporary, culturally diverse, geographically dispersed, and electronically communicating work group[s]” (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999, p. 792), GVTs allow for the achievement of a common purpose by relying on information and communication technologies (ICTs) which permit interactions through interdependent tasks (Lipnack and Stamps, 1997).

In fact, the development and ubiquity of ICTs have significantly changed work structures and dynamics within organisations during the decades, leading to an increasing use of GVTs (Webster and Wong, 2008; Jiménez et al., 2017). The current COVID-19 global pandemic is likely to further accelerate this process to benefit from the advantages of remote collaboration. Thus, GVTs allow circumventing geographic and time boundaries, reducing not only travelling time and costs, but also immigration, and ex-pat relocation issues. Furthermore, due to the diversity of backgrounds, diversity of the resources available to the team usually increases, too (van Knippenberg et al., 2004), improving the ability to solve problems (Taras et al., 2019). Online communication can also reduce conflict and social fragmentation in an intercultural context (Stahl et al., 2010), and the team members' greater autonomy can lead to enhanced motivation and job satisfaction in the workplace (Nurmi and Hinds, 2016). In this context, the role of leadership in GVTs is a key area of focus for both organisations and educational institutions (e.g., Sauer, 2011; Zander et al., 2012; Zander et al., 2013).

However, GVTs also imply challenges in terms of coordination costs and time-zone differences (Sutanto et al., 2011), communication problems, social categorisations, biases and lower levels of trust (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Klitmøller et al., 2015). Taken together with the increased stress resulting from the uncertainty that the COVID-19 pandemic is triggering, working in GVTs seems far from being simple, and it is not something most employees can usually quickly adapt to.

Overall, the necessity to work and collaborate remotely, already important in the last decades, is becoming critical to overcome the current situation, leading to a 'master GVT, or perish' world. In contrast, and despite some efforts in universities and business schools to include GVT training in their curricula to learn how to deal with these challenges (Taras et al., 2013), the majority of employees tend to be not fully accustomed to this.

X-Culture is a large-scale international experiential learning project that involves over 5,000 MBA and undergraduate business students from over 120 universities from 40 countries on six continents every semester. Additionally, up to 1,000 non-student professionals take part in the project every semester. Over 70,000 people, who worked in more than 10,000 GVTs, have participated in the project since its original inception in 2010.

The students are placed in global virtual teams of about six, each student coming from a different country. Working with people from around the globe and dealing with cultural differences, time-zone dispersions, and global communication challenges, the teams complete a consulting project for a multinational company.

Over the past 10 years, X-Culture has amassed a large database that contains extensive records on the performance and dynamics in these teams. The X-Culture database contains over 2,000 variables that describe the participants' demographics, culture, attitudes and perceptions, personality, individual and team performance, as well as communication, leadership, conflicts, and decision-making in the teams. The data are longitudinal (up to 12 weekly waves of survey over the course of the project), multi-level (individual, team, university, country data), multi-source (self-reports, peer evaluations, external expert evaluations, administrative records), and multi-method (qualitative and quantitative).

The data collection and research efforts have been reviewed and approved by the research ethics committees and institutional review boards (IRBs) at various institutions around the world.

The data are uniquely suited for studying GVTs, group work, and cross-cultural interactions. In addition, the data are appropriate to examine a wide range of other issues related to international business, experiential and online education, as well as human behaviour in groups and organisations in a variety of contexts and situations.

Over 700 businesses have participated in X-Culture over the last 10 years, and many of them use the data for research purposes. However, X-Culture is open to collaboration with external researchers, too. The data can be requested to address previously unexplored research questions, and contingent upon IRB approval, new data could be collected to test new research ideas.

For this Special Section of EJIM, we invite both conceptual and empirical papers that examine issues related to global virtual teams (GVTs), cross-cultural collaboration, experiential learning methods in business education, and other international management issues using the X-Culture database.

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Subject Coverage

Suitable topics include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Advantages and disadvantages of GVTs vis à vis traditional collocated teams
- Determinants and characteristics of successful GVTs
- Differences in GVTs composition and performance across industries
- Leadership and team-dynamics in GVTs
- Improving inter-personal communication, team cohesion, and trust among GVT members
- The impact of cross-cultural differences among GVT members on team performance
- Language-related issues in GVTs
- Information and communication technologies and GVTs
- The multifaceted role of distance (e.g., geographical, institutional, psychic, cultural) in GVTs
- Training employees and students how to effectively work in a GVT
- The relationship between the use of GVTs and firm performance
- GVTs and employee satisfaction
- Reducing shirking and cheating in GVTs
- Trends in the use of GVT around the world – who makes use of them, who does not, and why?
- The role of GVTs in global business strategy
- The role of global mindset in data collection in a post-COVID world
- Business education, in particular, methods related to experiential learning and online learning

Notes for Prospective Authors

Submitted papers should not have been previously published nor be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere. (N.B. Conference papers may only be submitted if the paper has been completely re-written and if appropriate written permissions have been obtained from any copyright holders of the original paper).

All papers are refereed through a peer review process.

All papers *must* be submitted online. To submit a paper, please read our [Submitting articles](#) page.

Important Dates

Manuscripts due by*: 15 November, 2022 *(earlier submissions will be featured in earlier issues special sections)

Notification to authors: Less than two months from initial submission (decisions will be taken on a submission-by-submission basis as and when each manuscript is submitted; the Guest Editor will not wait until the final deadline has passed to begin the review process)

Final versions due by: Less than six months from initial submission