EDITING A VERB: A DECADE OF THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIPS MANAGEMENT JOURNAL IN MOTION

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Journals are often described as containers: stockpiles of volumes, issues, articles, and pages. Dynamic Relationships Management Journal (DRMJ) has always suggested a different image: a publication outlet that stands for relationships. It connects authors and reviewers, supplements ideas with evidence, advances inherited traditions by posing new questions, and attracts the scholarly community and the wider world it seeks to understand. DRMJ's quality is not stored in any single paper; it is embedded in the connections among papers and their topics.

As incoming editors in 2016, we announced that DRMJ was entering its third chapter. Our goals included emphasizing relevance, rigor, comprehensiveness, and internationalization (Černe & Hernaus, 2016). These were reasonable editorial aims, and we genuinely pursued them. However, a decade later, the more compelling story isn't whether we met these four objectives, but how the relationships surrounding the journal evolved. In changing these relationships, we, in turn, transformed the journal itself.

We inherited a journal named after a noun. Over the past decade, we learned to edit a verb: *relating*.

Before the journal: an idea of organization

DRMJ did not begin with a submission system, an indexing and ranking system, or a publishing strategy. It began as an idea. Slovenian organizational theorists, primarily Filip Lipovec and Rudi Rozman, along with colleagues, argued that the organization is not merely a formal structure or an administrative apparatus but a set of dynamic relationships among members of a social unit (Rozman, 2012). These relationships enable coordinated action; they support the social unit's existence and development, as well as the reasonable achievement of its goals. In this view, coordination is not a technical afterthought. It is the method by which an organization is continuously established and changed (Rozman, 2012).

This intellectual lineage matters. It gave the journal more than a topic; it gave it a way of seeing. Long before networks, relationality, process, temporality, and emergence became prominent across many areas of management scholarship, Slovenian organizational scholars had placed relationships and their dynamics at the center. Rudi Rozman—a founding president of the Slovenian Academy of Management (SAM)—kept that tradition alive, developed it, and gave it an institutional home. The first issue of DRMJ, published in 2012, appropriately opened with his account of Slovenian organization theory and its ties to related theories and sciences.

The journal's name was never ornamental. From its first issue, DRMJ was designed as a platform for exploring both theoretical and practical perspectives on building, evolving, sustaining, and

enhancing relationships within organizations (Rejc Buhovac, 2012). Its core principle was dynamic relationships. Our key challenge was ensuring this core did not become a boundary. A tradition remains vital only when it can forge connections with other traditions, approaches, countries, and eras. Therefore, we broadened the scope beyond Slovenian borders to enable the main insights of Slovenian organizational theory to travel freely and to welcome other perspectives in return.

Between the journal's founding phase and the decade considered here, Jože Koprivšek served as editor-in-chief for four years. His editorship provided DRMJ with continuity while building the less visible infrastructure on which later growth depended: clearer operating guidelines, a more established publication process, broader international communication, and efforts to secure inclusion in major scholarly databases. Near the end of his term, he described the journal as moving from an incubation stage to a more active, visible, systematic, and global phase, with inclusion in Scopus identified as an important next step (Koprivšek, 2015). His stewardship did not end with the editorial handover. He later served another four years as president of SAM, continuing to support the Academy, its publishing activities, and the community around the journal. This continuity across roles is worth emphasizing: institutions develop not only through formal succession but also through people who remain supportive even after their titles change.

The first relationship we tried to change: the one with theory

From the outset of our editorship mandate, we wanted DRMJ to help strengthen the conceptual and methodological foundations of its readers, authors, and the SAM community (Černe & Hernaus, 2016, 2018). This goal was both developmental and challenging. We wanted the journal to be a place where emerging scholars from the region and beyond could learn what a theoretical contribution is, how constructs should be positioned, why levels of analysis matter, and what different methods can and cannot establish. At the same time, we wanted every published article to offer a meaningful insight for theory rather than merely report an interesting association.

Editorials became one vehicle for this work. Across the decade, they did more than introduce the papers in an issue. We discussed multilevel thinking, methodological plurality, configurational approaches, data use, and the framing of theoretical contributions (Černe & Hernaus, 2018, 2021). For example, the AC/DC positioning grid was presented as a practical toolkit for a recurring problem: potentially valuable research often struggled to articulate clearly how it contributed to or diverged from an existing conversation (Černe, 2021). Other editorials opened space for qualitative, quantitative, mixed, and configurational methods, while insisting that methodological variety must be matched by methodological care (Černe & Hernaus, 2018).

This was never an attempt to make every paper look the same. Quite the opposite. We believe that strong foundations enable greater variety. Conceptual clarity makes disagreement possible. Methodological competence makes different forms of evidence comparable. Rigor, properly understood, does not narrow a community; it gives the community a shared language through which diverse ideas can meet.

Not every editorial decision was easy, and not every developmental review led to publication. A journal must sometimes say 'no' to make its 'yes' meaningful. Over time, submissions grew rapidly and then stabilized at roughly 200 manuscripts per year. With an acceptance rate below ten percent, DRMJ became far more selective than it had been at the beginning of our term. These numbers are not trophies. They are evidence of trust and responsibility. Every submission represents someone's time, ambition, and hope. Selectivity has value only when decisions are fair, reviews remain useful, and standards align with the journal's purpose.

From a regional journal to a journal of a region, and beyond

Internationalization is frequently mistaken for the elimination of local context. In our experience, it's actually the opposite. DRMJ became more globally oriented by strengthening its ties to its regional roots.

An important thread began at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting in Boston in 2012. What started there as conversations about how the

Academy of Management might connect more meaningfully with scholars from the Western Balkans gradually evolved into a network of people, academies, conferences, doctoral activities, workshops, and collaborations. The pace accelerated. Colleagues from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and elsewhere began meeting not only across borders but also across career stages and research traditions. New national academies were also founded with support and guidance from the AOM and SAM (e.g., the Croatian Academy of Management, the Montenegrin Academy of Management, and the Bosnia & Herzegovina Academy of Management). Even more encouraging, these efforts institutionalized regional collaboration and set the stage for new relationships.

In particular, the evolving relationship with the Academy of Management provided access to a global scholarly community that can otherwise feel distant. It brought senior international scholars into regional conversations; created spaces for doctoral students and early-career researchers to present and refine unfinished work; supported research-methods workshops and developmental feedback; and made collaboration across the region more routine. It also enabled the region to speak back. Integration should not mean that knowledge flows in one direction, from an imagined center to a periphery. The Western Balkans offer distinctive institutional histories, organizational forms, tensions, and transitions from which management scholarship worldwide can learn.

For DRMJ, these ties broadened the author pool, strengthened the reviewer community, generated special issues and conference-linked submissions, and increased the journal's visibility. Being recognized among the AOM's regional journals was therefore more than a line on a list. It signaled that a journal rooted in a small scholarly community could join a much larger conversation without losing its identity.

Inclusion in Scopus marked another important milestone. Indexing cannot create quality, but it can make quality visible. It helped authors find the journal, gave institutions a clearer basis for recognizing work published in it, and confirmed that the systems and standards developed around DRMJ had matured. The subsequent rise in submissions revealed both the benefit and the paradox of visibility: greater recognition brings more opportunity, but also more editorial work and more difficult choices.

What ten years did—and did not—change

DRMJ today is not the one we inherited in 2016. Its reach is broader, its selection process more competitive, and its positioning in international databases and networks stronger. This trajectory was already evident at the journal's tenth anniversary, when we reflected on DRMJ's development from its inception and its expanding scholarly role (Černe & Hernaus, 2021). DRMJ's articles now cover a broader range of organizational and management phenomena and draw on a richer methodological repertoire. The community surrounding the journal is more connected across the Western Balkans and more visible internationally.

However, the journal's central question remains unchanged: what happens among people, groups, organizations, institutions, ideas, and moments in time, and how can those relationships be understood and managed? This question has stood the test of time and has become even more urgent. Contemporary work is shaped by artificial intelligence (AI), hybrid arrangements, platform infrastructures, geopolitical fragmentation, demographic change, and ecological pressure. Each of these phenomena is relational. AI changes the relationship between human judgment and machine output. Hybrid work shifts the balance among autonomy, coordination, presence, and belonging. Sustainability changes the relationship between organizational action and future generations. Dynamic relationships are no longer a minor aspect in modern management; instead, they are becoming its core condition.

We see a few unresolved issues. First, the tension between rigor and relevance remains, and no journal can fully resolve it. Second, disparities in scholarly resources across countries and institutions persist. Third, we struggled to develop authors while maintaining a highly selective publication process. Finally, not all peer review relationships were visible, reciprocal, or easy. These issues are not failures to hide in a farewell editorial. They are the work that continues.

A handover, not an ending

Editorship is a peculiar form of stewardship. Editors steer journals for a time in the saddle, but they do not own them. They add their five cents by building on the work of their founders and predecessors and by passing the baton to those who will reinterpret it further. The most responsible handover, therefore, is not the transfer of a finished product; instead, what counts is a living set of relationships: social capital established with authors who trust the process, the pool of reviewers who generously contribute intellectual labor, interested readers who expect to be challenged, SAM and its intellectual tradition, the wider Western Balkan community, and international partners, including the Academy of Management.

We are delighted to announce that young, ambitious, and highly competent incoming editors will now take the helm. They should not merely repeat our decade. They should question it and move forward. A journal devoted to dynamic relationships would contradict itself by resisting new relationships, new methods, new voices, and new editorial judgment. We hope the next team will preserve the foundations while moving the furniture and, when needed, opening entirely new rooms. We remain at their disposal as senior editors.

That living set of relationships was sustained by colleagues whose work deserves more than a collective footnote. Our associate editors—Ana Aleksić Mirić, Saša Batistič, and Jože Koprivšek—shared editorial judgment, disciplinary expertise, reviewer networks, and the difficult work of helping manuscripts become clearer and stronger. Darija Aleksić helped tremendously in setting up the initial stages of our editorial timeline, turning an intended new direction into an actual publication process even as routines were still being built. Amadeja Lamovšek has been our technical editor supreme: the person who repeatedly transformed decisions, files, online postings, deadlines, and last-minute complications into finished issues that simply appeared to readers as they should. Around them, 21 editorial board members from ten countries have provided ongoing support—reviewing, advising, promoting the journal, connecting it with new authors and communities, and lending their names and reputations to its development. Much of this labor has been quiet, but none of it has been incidental.

To our reviewers, authors, readers, conference organizers, SAM colleagues, and institutional supporters: thank you. Journals are often credited to the names on their mastheads. In reality, they are collective accomplishments built on thousands of largely invisible acts: reading carefully, reviewing constructively, revising again, recommending a reviewer, organizing a workshop, sharing an issue, and encouraging a doctoral student to submit.

Ten years ago, we wrote that DRMJ was turning a page. Today, it is tempting to use the same metaphor. But pages turn in only one direction, while relationships loop, deepen, loosen, break, renew, and surprise. A page is moved by the hand; a relationship also moves the people within it. So we will end not with the noun we inherited, but with the verb the journal taught us to edit.

Relating was the work of the decade. It meant relating a distinct Slovenian organizational theory to broader scholarly conversations without diluting its origins. Or at least trying to. It meant relating conceptual ambition to methodological discipline, rigor to development, and international visibility to regional responsibility. It meant relating SAM to the Academy of Management, the International Federation of Scholarly Associations of Management (IFSAM), the Western Balkans to a global community, and established scholars to those still finding their scholarly voice. It also meant learning that an editor's most consequential work often happens between the visible outputs: between a manuscript and its stronger version, between a reviewer's criticism and an author's response, between a promising idea and the standards that allow it to travel.

The grammar of that verb now changes. For ten years, we have said, "We relate." Looking back, we can say: "We related ideas, people, institutions, and generations." Looking forward, the more important tense belongs to the new editors: "They will relate the journal to questions, methods, and communities that we cannot yet anticipate. They will conjugate the verb differently, and they should."

The editors change. The relationships keep moving. The verb remains: relating.

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