



Call for Papers for an *ephemera* Special Issue on:

## **The atmosphere business**

Issue Editors: Steffen Böhm, Anna-Maria Murtola and Sverre Spoelstra

In December 2009 the United Nations Climate Change Summit tried to come up with a solution to one of the world's most urgent problems by reaching for a deal that would go beyond the Kyoto Protocol and its first commitment period of 2012 – and it failed. Or was it a failure? Some would argue that the apparent failure of Copenhagen can be seen as a welcomed breathing space for considering whether the underlying mechanisms with which climate change is supposed to be prevented actually work. What the main decision makers in Copenhagen never questioned is whether the various strategies of commodification of carbon emissions and thus the creation of an 'atmosphere business' are the best approach to climate change mitigation.

The atmosphere business is a fast growing global industry, encompassing banks and other financial institutions, multinational corporations, carbon traders, small start-up companies and the other usual suspects that can be found when a new profit-making opportunity emerges. One might want to ask: Do we really want to put our faith into a system that has just produced the most spectacular financial and economic collapse of recent history? But part of the atmosphere business are also global NGOs, social movements and other civil society actors as well as many governments and their agencies that support or contest the legitimacy of these new strategies of accumulation.

In this special issue of *ephemera* we want to put this newly emerging hegemony of the atmosphere business under critical scrutiny, questioning its underlying ideologies and assumptions, and showing its contradictions and antagonisms. This requires a critical assessment of the political economy of carbon trading and carbon markets, but also a detailed understanding of how these newly created markets are actually designed and how they are supposed to work, what actors are involved and how they function together to create the atmosphere business.

There have been many critical engagements with carbon markets so far; see, for example, Böhm and Dabhi (2009), Gilbertson and Reyes (2009) and Lohmann (2006). But this critique needs to continue; it needs to be continuously updated, reflecting the fast changing nature of the atmosphere business. For example, what was very much apparent in Copenhagen is how it is now argued that the 'Gold Standard' and other industry initiatives have set quality standards that would adequately respond to the critiques of carbon trading. But do these projects work any better than other carbon trading and offsetting projects so heavily criticised today?

Apart from the critical evaluation of various market-based solutions to the challenge, such as carbon trading and offsetting, there is also a need to discuss the role of NGOs, social movements and other civil society actors in the battle for climate change mitigation. For whom was Copenhagen a success and for whom a failure? How do we see the strategic battle lines positioned in the post-Copenhagen world? Equally, what are the political and economic alternatives that are being put forward? That is, if not carbon markets, then what?

Beyond the immediacy of the strategic analysis of the summit in Copenhagen, however, we also invite contributions that engage with the wider historical lines of the development of 'green capitalism'. Climate change is arguably just one of the environmental challenges capitalism is currently facing, and has faced over the centuries since its inception. If we want to develop a critical analysis of the atmosphere business, we also need a broader historical evaluation of the relationship between capital, labour and nature, which might also include a critical questioning of totalising assumptions about capitalism as one threatening 'system'.

### **Deadline for submissions: 15 May 2010**

All contributions should be submitted to the special issue editors via email to [steffen@essex.ac.uk](mailto:steffen@essex.ac.uk), [a.murtola@mngt.keele.ac.uk](mailto:a.murtola@mngt.keele.ac.uk), or [sverre.spoelstra@fek.lu.se](mailto:sverre.spoelstra@fek.lu.se).

Please note that three categories of contributions are invited: articles, notes and reviews. Information can be found at: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/call.htm>. We are particularly calling for empirical case studies of how carbon markets actually work on the ground. We also welcome theoretical engagements with the issues outlined in this call. As an online journal, we are particularly keen to include multimedia contributions, such as videos and photos. Articles will undergo a double blind review process. Notes and reviews of books, films, conferences and other events will be reviewed by the editors. All submissions should follow ephemera's submission guidelines, available at: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/submit.htm>.

### **About the editors**

**Steffen Böhm** is Reader in Management at the University of Essex. His research focuses on the critique of the political economy of organization and management. He is co-founder of *ephemera*, and co-founder and co-editor of the new open publishing press MayFlyBooks ([www.mayflybooks.org](http://www.mayflybooks.org)), and co-founder and co-editor of *Interface: a journal for and about social movements* ([www.interfacejournal.net](http://www.interfacejournal.net)). He has also published *Repositioning Organization Theory* (Palgrave, 2005), *Against Automobility* (Blackwell, 2005) and *Upsetting the Offset* (Mayfly, 2009)

**Anna-Maria Murtola** is Lecturer at Keele University. Her research explores relationships between business and society, the market and its others, and concerns in particular contemporary critiques of commodification and exploration of the social, political, ecological and psychological implications of consumption today. Anna-Maria is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

**Sverre Spoelstra** is Associate Professor at the Department of Business Administration, Lund University. His research interests include corporate sustainability, leadership, theology and organization, and the branding of higher education. Sverre is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

### **references**

- Böhm, S. and S. Dabhi (eds.) (2009) *Upsetting the Offset: The Political Economy of Carbon Markets*. London: MayFly.
- Gilbertson, T. and Reyes, O. (2009) *Carbon Trading: How it works and why it fails*. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.
- Lohmann, L. (ed.) (2006) *Carbon Trading A Critical Conversation on Climate Change, Privatisation and Power*. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.