



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

Any answers - Any alternatives? Organization beyond the ‘crisis’

Issue Editors: Valerie Fournier, Daniel King, Chris Land and Patrick Reedy

It came as no surprise to leftist academics that capitalism had yet again fallen into crisis. Indeed, the cyclical, disaster prone nature of capitalism is almost a point of dogma for those of us influenced by Marx in our analyses of business and economics. But short of gasping out a triumphant ‘told you so’ whilst fearfully glancing at student enrolments to see if our own employment is threatened, what can critical scholars working in the social sciences offer as an alternative to unsustainable, crisis prone capitalism?

In many respects ‘critique’ within the social sciences generally is a largely negative affair and even more so when we focus specifically on questions of management and organization. If management rationalises work organization to make it more efficient, we bemoan the dehumanisation of labour under Fordist and Taylorist production systems. If management seek ways to humanise the workplace through teamwork and culture, we point to the intensification of work and the extension of exploitation into the sphere of identity. If management respond to critiques of instrumentality by adopting ethical policies, we reply by demonstrating the impossibility of ‘business ethics’. If management develops a platform for sustainable development, we reply with jeers of ‘greenwash’. If management seek to feed the soul at work, we respond with ‘recuperation’ and enhanced exploitation (again). Perhaps understandably, from time to time these exhausted managers (and our students) pipe up with the question – ‘Ok, so what would you do?’

This special issue will address exactly this question. Building upon work like Parker, Fournier and Reedy’s (2007) Dictionary of Alternatives, Jones and O’Doherty’s (2005) Manifestos for the Business School of Tomorrow, and the articles in *ephemera* volumes 8(2), 5(2) and 4(2) on alternatives, the issue will bring together a broad range of papers to outline the contours of a possible positive moment of critique within organization studies. We would also encourage contributions that connect these more circumscribed discussions of organization to wider debates on reconstituting alternatives to capitalism and the state in social theory, for example Hardt and Negri’s (2009) recent attempts to articulate a constitution of a common to replace capitalist social and economic production, or Zizek’s (2009: 120) call for ‘a new “ordering”’. Zizek’s call seems particularly pertinent here as, in an era when capitalism itself seems to thrive upon a form of global disorder, perhaps the most radical gesture is not one of negative critique, deconstruction, deterritorialization or destruction, but an affirmation of another form of ordering and organization.

Theoretically, then, this issue responds to the call for a ‘critical performativity’ (Spicer et al, 2009), a ‘repositioning’ (Böhm, 2006), or the articulation of alternative, non-managerial forms of organization (Parker, 2002) in organization studies. The aim is to push the discipline in the direction of an ethical and epistemological space where positive critique and the articulation of alternatives is again possible. Within this space, the special issue will place an emphasis on what we as researchers, educators, activists, community organisers and citizens can practically do to create positive changes in the organizational worlds we inhabit. It will thus partly function as a tool kit, or resource, for organizing otherwise.

Of course, much has been written about alternative forms of organization in disciplines other than management and organization studies, and we also welcome productive engagements with work from human geography, literary criticism, urban studies, social movement studies, philosophy, social theory, radical group psychology and other areas of academic research where alternatives to capitalist and bureaucratic forms of organization have been explored with particular attention to their political aspects. We also welcome contributions from activists and organizers working in the field and dealing with the daily realities and practicalities of organizing otherwise.

The issue will be organized into three sections: articles, reviews and notes.

For the **Articles** section we invite theoretical and empirical papers dealing with topics including, but certainly not restricted to:

- The perils and potential of performativity: can a critical analysis of organization concern itself with performativity and prescription?
- What is ‘alternative’ anyway? Is the concept of an ‘alternative’ organization particularly productive and what might it enable us to do in our studies of organization?
- Everyday alternatives: How are many aspects of our lives organized through forms other than mainstream capitalist or bureaucratic processes, even if we don’t normally think about them in terms of politics and organization?
- Utopia and dystopia: Has the post-modern scepticism about planning and utopia rendered the concept irretrievably dystopian, or is there still a space for utopian thinking in a progressive politics and analyses of organization?
- Alternative modes of representation: How are organizations shaped by our mediated understandings of them and how can film, fiction, theatre, music and the visual arts challenge and reshape our (re)production of organization.
- Alternative modes of organizing: Articles exploring how alternative organizations organize themselves and the challenges and possibilities this opens up.
- Institutionalising alternatives: How are alternative forms of organization re-normalised through institutional forces and what kinds of changes to the institutional and discursive environment might be necessary to enable the emergence and growth of genuine alternative forms of organization?

For the **Reviews** section we invite contributions that will review:

- Individual books.
- Review articles of particular disciplines' treatments of 'alternatives', for example: how literary theory has addressed utopia and organization; how history has interpreted past attempts to constitute alternative social, economic and organizational orders; how geography has conceptualized alternative spatialities; or how sociologists have understood the organization of social movements.
- We would be particularly keen to also commission a review article addressing how management studies has dealt with the existence of alternative forms of organization during its short history. Such a review could consider, for example, why so little attention is given to Rosabeth Moss Kanter's early work on communes when compared to her later, guru status writing?

Reviews need not be short book reviews and may even exceed the conventional 8000 word journal article format where the scope of the topic, or depth of analysis warrants this.

For the **Notes** section, we would like to invite papers that are closer to reportage and commentary than formal academic essays. Topics could include:

- 'Notes from the field' based on practical work in, or academic research on, different forms of organization, such as workers cooperatives, occupied factories, anarchist social centres, social movements, street gangs, open-source software networks, or alternatively economic and trading systems.
- Reflections on the current organization of the academy, including alternative models for organizing higher education and research.
- Interviews with activists, community organizers, social entrepreneurs and others who are directly involved in constituting alternative forms of organization.
- Attempts at 'alternative', whilst still rigorous, forms of writing and representing organization. For example, writing utopian fiction critically.

Deadline for submissions: 24 September 2010

The deadline for submission of complete papers is Friday 24th September, 2010.

To discuss ideas for an article, review or note, please contact Chris Land – cland@essex.ac.uk

references

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