

Organizing for the Post-growth Economy

Garmann Johnsen, Christian; Nelund, Mette; Olaison, Lena; Sørensen, Bent Meier

Document Version
Final published version

Published in:
Ephemera

Publication date:
2017

License
CC BY-NC-ND

Citation for published version (APA):
Garmann Johnsen, C., Nelund, M., Olaison, L., & Sørensen, B. M. (2017). Organizing for the Post-growth Economy. *Ephemera*, 17(1), 1-21. <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/contribution/17-1editorial.pdf>

[Link to publication in CBS Research Portal](#)

General rights

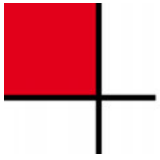
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us (research.lib@cbs.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 05. Nov. 2024





Organizing for the post-growth economy*

Christian Garmann Johnsen, Mette Nelund, Lena Olaison, Bent Meier Sørensen

Introduction

Perpetual economic growth is an underlying assumption of the contemporary organization of capitalist society. The idea of growth is embedded not only in the corpus of economic thought but also in economic institutions (Binswanger, 2013; Gorz, 2012). The demand for continual growth has been subject to criticism within economic theory (Heinberg, 2011; Herrera, 2011; Jackson, 2009) and the environmental natural sciences (Rockström et al., 2009a; Rockström et al., 2009b). Against this backdrop, there have already been attempts to imagine a sustainable economy beyond growth (see, for example, Daly, 1996; Eisenstein, 2011; Gorz, 1999; North, 2010; Paech, 2012; Rockström and Klum, 2012; Seidl, 2010; Schumacher, 1973). The 'degrowth movement', in particular, has been actively engaged in such efforts (Demaria et al., 2013; Kallis et al., 2012; Latouche, 2004, 2009; Martínez-Alier, 2011). The problem of growth is nothing new and many have drawn attention to the negative effects of perpetual growth (Carson, 2000; Georgescu-Roegen, 1971; Giddens, 2011; Meadows et al., 1972). In fact, calls for research that maps the negative effects of perpetual economic growth and explores alternatives to the current way of organizing our society are increasing.

* This Special Issue is the result of an *ephemera* conference on post-growth held at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) in 2014. In crafting the issue, we have been generously supported by CBS' Entrepreneurship Platform and by the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy, CBS. The personal engagement of Ole Bjerg, Ekaterina Chertkovskaya and Nick Butler along with continued support from the VELUX project on Sustainable Entrepreneurship, CBS, and the Life at Home and Sustainable Production Research Initiative, Linnaeus University, have been critical to this issue's publication. Thank you!

We see this *ephemera* special issue as an opportunity to open up for both critical and creative thinking around organizational issues related to growth, economy, sustainability, and ecology. More than twenty years ago, Shrivastava called for a 'fundamental revision of [organization studies] concepts and theories' (1994: 721) in light of the growing environmental problems. We still believe this is a pertinent task. However, it is important to emphasize that criticizing the past and imagining alternative futures are not two disconnected activities that require different theoretical and practical efforts. Rather, we believe that critique and creativity are intertwined – we can find opportunities to think differently in the future through critical engagement with the current situation. What we need is a form of critical and creative thinking that simultaneously allows us to remain critical of what 'is' (the present) and imaginative about what 'might be' (the future) (Deleuze, 2006). In this context, critical and creative thinking should be concerned with imagining the relationship between organization and sustainability in new ways, and with trying to strive beyond common sense. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that academia is not isolated from the problem of growth and that academics are also increasingly required to accelerate their output.

Critiques of capitalism and the search for alternatives to its inherent growth requirement have a long tradition in *ephemera* (e.g. Böhm et al., 2001; Boje et al., 2001; Misoczky, 2006; Beverungen et al., 2013; Bradshaw et al., 2013; Swann and Stoborod, 2014; Chertkovskaya et al., 2016). Climate change and sustainability have also been thematized in *ephemera* (e.g. Jacobs, 2007; Böhm et al., 2012; Bialski et al., 2015) and elsewhere in our critical organization studies community (e.g. Banerjee, 2003; Böhm et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2014; Wittneben et al., 2012). Nevertheless, critiques and explorations of alternatives are still marginal (Wright et al., 2013). In the broader academic context, post-growth and degrowth have been largely ignored in management, organization, and entrepreneurship studies (Reichel and Seeberg, 2011; Roth, 2017). Nevertheless, post-growth and degrowth scholars in organization studies argue that we need to re-politicize and reclaim discourses, theory, and practices around sustainability and social justice. Therefore, we need a new vocabulary that enables us to explore a society beyond growth (Bjerg, 2016; Fournier, 2008; Reichel and Seeberg, 2011; Roth, 2017). Such explorations do not necessarily have to appeal to utopian visions. On the contrary, some have suggested a need to study the emergence of alternative economic organizational forms that do not require perpetual growth (e.g. D'Alisa et al., 2015; Böhm et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2014). This suggestion has also been previously discussed in *ephemera* (Hoedemækers et al., 2012; Bialski et al., 2015; see also the CFPs on 'Repair matters' and 'Latin America struggles: Organization and critical strategy for liberation from below' as well as the forthcoming special issues on 'Alternative

organizing’ and ‘Whither emergence’). This special issue continues this conversation.

This editorial proceeds as follows. To contextualize our contributions, we provide a brief overview of the idea of sustainable development and show how this concept has been adopted in the world of business. In addition, we discuss the concept of sustainable development as a target of critique in organization studies. This short review, together with the contributions in this special issue, make it clear that we have a long way to go before we can speak of a post-growth society. Although the call for alternatives is urgent, we have been struck by how difficult it is to ‘[rethink] ourselves outside economic relations’ (Fournier, 2008: 534) or even to think without placing the economy at the center of attention (see also Roth, 2017). Therefore, in this editorial, we also attempt to rethink the relation between economy and ecology by staging a critical/creative encounter between Rockström (2015) and Agamben (2007). In the final section, we introduce the contributions found in this special issue.

Sustainability in the world of business

In 1972, the UN held a Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, which focused on the importance of addressing problems related to climate change and environmental degradation. The same year, the Club of Rome, an international think tank, released a report entitled *The Limits of growth*, which drew attention to environmental problems related to perpetual economic growth, including depletion of natural resources and pollution of the ecosystem. The report stressed that the ‘Earth is finite’ with a limited amount of natural resources, a situation that imposes fundamental constraints on the aggregate of economic growth that the ecosystem can tolerate. Given the speed of economic development that characterized industrial development – and the associated accelerated consumption of natural resources – the authors of the report speculated that we would reach those limits within a span of 100 years. This would result in a ‘sudden and uncontrollable decline in population and industrial capacity’ (Meadows et al., 1972: 23).

Following the increased focus on climate change and environmental degradation, the UN sponsored the publication of a report called *Our common future* in 1987. The report was prepared by the Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), led by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland. The report introduced the concept of sustainable development, defined as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987: 2,4).

Mebratu (1998) emphasizes that the publication of *Our common future* has had a tremendous influence on the geopolitical discourse on sustainability, and that the concept of sustainable development has shaped the way we think about the relationship between economic growth and environmental degradation. As the report makes clear, the intensity of industrial development threatens our planet in numerous ways. For example, the ‘burning of fossil fuels puts into the atmosphere carbon dioxide, which is causing gradual global warming’ (WCED, 1987: 1,7). In effect, the report stresses that we need to think about ‘the global economy and global ecology together in new ways’ (WCED, 1987: 2,15). Although emphasizing the pertinence of climate change and environmental degradation, the report portrays future prospects in optimistic terms. By focusing on sustainable development, the report suggests that it is possible to spark economic growth through a ‘process of change’ while simultaneously preserving the natural ecosystem. In this way, the report tries to link economic growth with environmental sustainability. This focus on reconciling economic growth with the ecological balance has remained imperative in more recent attempts to rethink sustainable development (Rockström et al., 2009a; Rockström et al., 2009b).

In the 1990s, the concept of sustainable development found its way into management and organization thinking (e.g. Gladwin et al., 1995; Shrivastava, 1994). Despite this attention, the concept of sustainable development remained ‘fuzzy, elusive, contestable’ (Gladwin et al., 1995: 876). Although approximately 30 years have passed since the introduction of the ‘sustainable development’ concept, critics still maintain that it suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity. Banjeree (2008) even goes as far as accusing the term of serving as a slogan rather than concept, a slogan that has gradually replaced the slogan of economic growth. In parallel, entrepreneurship, innovation, and creativity have been proposed as ways to not only solve the current economic and environmental crises but also to generate sustainable growth (Rockström and Klum, 2012; Schaper, 2002). In this perspective, entrepreneurship and innovation are portrayed as seeds of new initiatives and ideas that will boost economic development while simultaneously reducing its environmental impact.

The business world has, therefore, not completely ignored the environmental challenges we are facing. However, it has quickly turned environmental challenges into occasions for expanding the realm of economic activity rather than reducing it. Under such rubrics as ‘Competitive advantage on a warming planet’ (Lash and Wellington, 2007), ‘Climate business’ (HBR, 2007), and ‘It pays to be green’ (Orsato, 2006), the mantra that permeates organization, management, and entrepreneurship studies is that environmental degradation should not necessarily prompt us to reduce production and consumption. On the

contrary, the fact that we are entering a period of environmental uncertainty – represented by the threat of reduced biodiversity, climate change, and depletion of natural resources as well as the pollution of air, water, and soil – should encourage commercial actors to develop innovative technologies, creative business solutions, and entrepreneurial initiatives that can improve environmental performance while maintaining competitiveness on the market. These assumptions underpin such concepts as corporate environmentalism, sustainable development, and green entrepreneurship, and they form a paradigm of technological optimism that places its faith in the market's ability to restore the balance of the ecosystem (Böhm et al., 2015). While climate change might entail risks for existing businesses and threaten their access to natural resources, it nevertheless enables actors to seek out business opportunities (Lash and Wellington, 2007). For example, businesses releasing CO₂ might need to deal with increased legislation, but environmental challenges related to the consumption of fossil fuels also represent an opportunity to utilize renewable energy sources. Viewed from this perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that the entrepreneur has once again been offered as a 'savior' (Sørensen, 2008) in the face of our social predicaments. Not only should heroic entrepreneurs save the economy, but they should also save the environment by driving the transition towards a 'green economy' (O'Neill and Gibbs, 2016).

In this account, there is no fundamental conflict between economic values (growth) and green values (environmental sustainability). On the contrary, the entrepreneur can offer 'win-win solutions' (Cohen and Winn, 2007): products, services, and production methods that are simultaneously economically and environmentally expedient. However, the assumption that it is possible to convert environmental challenges into business opportunities has not stood unchallenged. Critical scholars have worked hard to expose the theoretical and practical problems that pertain to the current discourse on sustainable development (Banerjee, 2003; Böhm et al., 2012; Crane, 2000;). Wright et al. (2013) place such concepts as corporate environmentalism, organizational sustainability, sustainable entrepreneurship, and sustainable development into a capitalist imaginary wherein progress, growth, and accumulation shape the horizon. Within this mode of thinking, environmental challenges are conceived as either risks or opportunities (Lash and Wellington, 2007). As a result, Wright et al. suspect that 'some corporations uphold an illusion of compromise between the environment and the market by adapting the meaning of concepts such as "CSR" and "sustainability" to fit existing corporate agendas and expand the capitalist imaginary' (2013: 654). As a consequence of being incorporated into a managerial logic, Banerjee argues that sustainable development has become 'corporatized', as 'development is sustainable only if it is profitable, it is sustainable only if it can be transacted through the market' (2003: 173). Banerjee

thus argues that nothing changes – economic growth is simply given a new name: sustainable development. Along similar lines, Wittneben et al. criticize a strategic, managerial, and instrumental perspective on climate change because it narrowly focuses on ‘firms as isolated units divorced from their prevalent social and political context’ (2012: 1435). While promising to promote a transition towards a green way of life, the corporate discourse on sustainable development ultimately amounts to a ‘business-as-usual (except greener) line and [does] not describe any radical change in world-views’ (Banerjee, 2008: 66-67).

Within the ongoing discussions about climate change and organizational activities, we find two poles. On one end of the scale, we find those who maintain that although economic activities might have traditionally caused environmental predicaments, there is no ‘inherent trade-off between environmental and economic goods’ (York and Venkataraman, 2010: 449). Capitalism has an inherent capacity for resolving environmental problems because it constantly invents itself and, thereby, changes the basis for competition. At the other end of the scale are those who find a fundamental incompatibility between ‘capitalism and environment sustainability’ (Böhm et al., 2012: 1626). Böhm et al. draw on the Marxist tradition in order to ‘undermine the basic supposition that nature can be sustainably managed as an unlimited resource, in order to support constant economic growth’ (2012: 1630). While considerable critique has been launched at the discourse on sustainable development, scholars have increasingly stressed the need to explore alternatives (Painter-Morland and ten Bos, 2016). Confronted with the social challenges caused by climate change and environmental degradation, Wright et al. maintain that our failure to deal with these problems forces ‘us to make sense of the world differently’ (2013: 654), thereby opening up a space for imaginative thinking that departs from our usual way of conceptualizing organization.

Alternative thinking has been developed by investigating eco-cultures that reconsider the relationship between society and nature (Böhm et al., 2015); evoking counter-stories that enact imaginative responses to environmental problems (Gayá and Phillips, 2016); allowing for new imaginary that goes beyond a capitalist horizon (Wright et al., 2013); creating alternative visions that rearticulate the distinction between nature and environment (Banerjee, 2003: 170); interrogating the ‘eco’ shared by ecology and economy (Bjerg, 2016); experimenting with alternative conceptions of growth (Clarke et al., 2014); enacting the concept of ‘degrowth’ (D’Alisa et al., 2014); and investigating non-profit organizations (Hinton and Maclurcan, 2017). Attempts have also been made to rethink the role of entrepreneurship in a post-growth society. For example, Parker (2014) recently picked up on Hjorth and Steyaert’s reconceptualization of entrepreneurship as a form of ‘social creativity’ that

involves ‘changes in our daily lives’ (2004: 3). Parker notes that this view disconnects entrepreneurship from purely economic phenomena and contains the potential to bring about ‘social transformation’ (2014: 368). In this regard, entrepreneurship is understood as ‘unstable and contested: a set of potentially transformative practices of invention for communities as well as for individuals’ (Parker, 2014: 368).

The sacred economy

The above exposition suggests that sustainability and capitalism cannot be effortlessly reconciled unless a ‘savior’ (Sørensen, 2008), such as the sustainable entrepreneur, is miraculously added to the compound. This seems to be true for those who view the ecological challenges as a new business opportunity (e.g. York and Venkataraman, 2010) and for advocates of sustainable development (e.g. Rockström and Klum, 2012). Such ideological beliefs have legitimized the creation of new markets, such as carbon markets, that crystallize what is often referred to as ‘climate capitalism’ (Böhm et al., 2012; Valenzuela and Böhm as well as Leonardi, this issue). Moreover, the current post-crisis discourse apparently remains confident in the emergence of a socially responsible economic actor who will contribute to the construction of a moral economy (Arvidsson, 2013).

The theological connotations in this regard are evident insofar as the primary function of a savior is to redeem us from guilt. When applied to this problematic, the question of sustainability and business seems to be caught in a quagmire of guilt. Have post-Marxists finally found the long-sought-after structural flaw of capitalism – that is, its original sin? Contrary to what Marx famously predicted, capitalism has not collapsed as a result of its internal contradictions, which lie in the fact that goods are fruits of social production, but the value of their production is privately appropriated. Rather, capitalism destroys itself through its environmental contradictions. Nature never received any payment for the natural resources that are sold on the market. In other words, capitalism appropriates natural resources that it has not produced. Capitalism – including us, the welfare capitalists – in its current form depends on the depletion of resources and the destruction of the environment in order to operate. However, the activities that support our current lifestyles are not priced accordingly. Therefore, we consume what is not ‘ours’ – we consume what is owned by nature.

The status of the economy as a given, frequently informs analyses of current sustainable social practices. The model below, launched by one of the most prominent researchers within the field of sustainability, Johan Rockström, is

intended to offer an alternative to conventional conceptions of the relationships among nature, society, and business. It is commonly assumed that ‘the only solution to the problems of capitalism is more capitalism’ (Nyberg et al., 2013: 450). This perspective assumes that nature and society are subsumed under capitalism. In effect, this view fails to acknowledge that alternative measurements beyond economic models can influence and change society on a policy level, and affect humans in their daily lives. The problem is that the prevalent picture of sustainability, nature, and society that we encounter today is framed within an economic matrix. As Clarke et al. (2014: 235) stress, this implies that the only forms of growth that are recognized are those with an economic character. Other forms of growth are ignored.

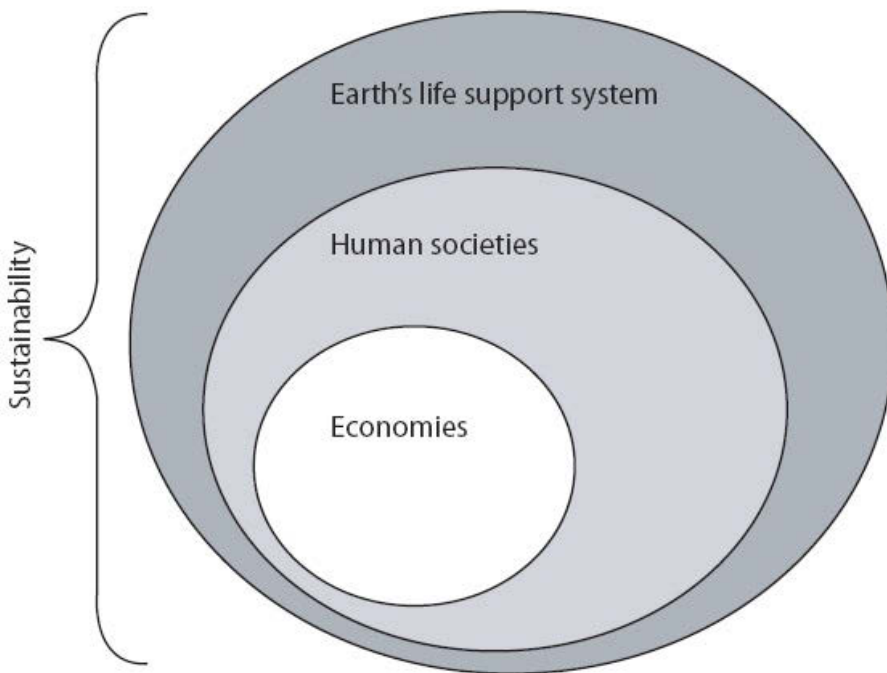


Figure 1: Sustainable Development Paradigm for the Anthropocene (Rockström, 2015).

Against this backdrop, Rockström tries to reverse this picture by situating ‘economies’ within a larger framework that is termed ‘Earth’s life support system’. Here, the economies are simply a subsystem of a larger system. The model suggests that sustainability should concern not only the economies but also Earth’s life-support system and human societies. However, despite the fact that this model subsumes the economies under the natural ecosystem of the

Earth, it still tries to contain the economies within a framework that operates on the basis of a hierarchy. While ostensibly removing the economy from an all-dominant position, the model continues to place the system that manages household expenditures in the central field. As such, the economies remain the center of attention and occupy a privileged place. Moreover, in the most peripheral circle of the model, we find 'Earth's life support system', a name that implies a hierarchy. The Latin root of the word 'support' signify carrying something from underneath. Since the early fifteenth century, the word has also meant to bear expenses issuing from another part. Clearly, the ontological structure or telos of the Earth is not to 'support' human life, at least not in any other sense than it will 'support' the oceans in taking over human life's habitat in the centuries to come. It remains true that human life has relied on drawing on the Earth as a pool of resources.

These observations regarding Rockström's model highlight an important point pertaining to heterodox economic theory. The fact that the economies (the management of resources) retain a central position while society and life-supporting systems remain marginal, hints at what Agamben (2007) identifies as the separation of the sacred and the profane within our secularized world (see also Sørensen et al., 2012: 272). In this regard, 'the sacred' refers to that which is removed from the use of men, while 'the profane' signifies that which is made available for use. Sacrality, then, requires the introduction of a strict division between the profane (everyday activities) and the sacred (elevated to the divine sphere). In Latin, sacer simply means that which is set apart. In this way, the economic systems that measure and manage our daily activities are sacred because they are not available for use by the common man. They therefore attain an elevated status.

In his attempt to ground the science of economics, Pikkety is unimpressed with the status of the field and claims that his fellow economists are generally caught in a 'childish passion for mathematics' and have a tendency to engage in 'highly ideological speculation' (2014: 32). In this respect, economics mirrors the default parody of the scholastic monks. However, contrary to the highly learned scholars of scholasticism (hence its name), economists' 'claim[s] to greater scientific legitimacy' than the rest of the social sciences are uttered despite the fact that, according to Pikkety, 'they know almost nothing about anything' (2014: 32). Such passionate tabula rasa come to appear as perfect messengers for the gospel of current economics. Even today, they police a law of consumption, which is plainly the law of desiring anything. Here, 'in the vernacular of the Church of Economic Growth planet-wide congregation', Bauman complains, progress means to 'consume more' (2012: 55). Moreover, Bauman argues that in our current society, 'all roads to redemption, salvation, divine and secular grace, and

happiness immediate and eternal alike, lead through shops' (2012: 55). In line with this argumentation, Reichel (this issue: 96) suggests that 'in the firm of the growth economy, philosophy is replaced by consumerism'.

Notably, nature has also become sacred in managerial and economic thought. The climate problem is commonly referred to as a 'negative externality' in economics. As such, it is viewed as a cost suffered by a third party that is not automatically registered by natural markets and, therefore, not included in firms' financial calculations (Stern, 2006). In turn, climate change has been called a 'market failure' (Stern, 2006: viii) that must be corrected by forcing markets to take the cost of exploiting natural resources into account, which has led to the emergence of carbon markets (see Böhm et al., 2012; Leonardi, this issue). This market failure may be deemed a 'negative production externality', referring to a situation in which production by a specific company reduces the well-being of other actors without compensating them. Some national legislation is trying to force firms to internalize these externalities by incorporating some costs of, for instance, pollution into their financial reports. However, this only confirms that economics have succeeded in sacrificing the environment. As untouchable and sacred, the environment can now only be approached as an 'internalized externality', or what Agamben (1998) terms an 'included exclusion'. This is how Agamben's central but controversial example of the Muselmann, who is excluded from the camps, becomes the necessary foundation for the totalitarian regime itself. While the camp refuses to integrate this excluded form of bare life, it comes to rely on the Muselmann to enforce its policy.

With this in mind, we can formulate the relation between the environment and economics in the following way: the environment is the homo sacer of economics. For Agamben (2007), the political task confronting us today consists of bringing back into use what has been isolated through exclusion. In other words, we must profane the sacred. To do so, we must return to use that which has been sacrificed by economics – the environment. Such an operation requires the invention of a 'new use', as we cannot continue to exploit the environment as a dead resource that is included in our production but excluded from our community. Even the very concept of 'the environment' encompasses this tension. The reduction of 'nature' to the 'environment' signals that the former has no intrinsic value but is only a resource ready to be exploited by capitalism (Banerjee, 2003). Post-growth appears to be a possible opportunity to return both the economy and nature to a new use. Such use should render inoperative the sacred powers that are currently being transposed into discussions about ecology and economy. Profanation may indeed find a form akin to Fournier's (2008) 're-ordering' of our value systems in order to approach the issue of growth, post-growth, and degrowth, as it:

... is not just a quantitative question of doing less of the same, it is also and, more fundamentally, about a paradigmatic re-ordering of values, in particular the (re)affirmation of social and ecological values and a (re)politicisation of the economy. It aims to take us out of the economy, of the domain of the calculable and economic rationality, and ask fundamental questions about the nature of wealth, its distribution, its use, and misuse. Thus degrowth is not just a quantitative question of producing and consuming less, but a tool proposed for initiating a more radical break with dominant economic thinking. (*ibid.*: 532)

The contributions in our special issue attempt to respond to this call for re-ordering. They comprise a collection of scholars engaged in critical and creative thinking around organizing for a post-growth economy. Valenzuela and Böhm, Leonardi, Reichel, Bjerg, and Chertkovskaya et al. critique underlying assumptions, as well as attempts to reclaim the vocabulary and practices of sustainable development. Hanlon analyses the historical development of neoliberalism and the corporation in order to understand (and potentially transform) contemporary management and capitalism. In addition, this issue also seeks to distil alternative organizational forms, as explored by Roman-Alcalá, and Hinton and Maclurcan. The book reviews by Chertkovskaya, Paulsson, Skoglund, and Munro also discuss the issue of enacting alternatives to our current economic organization.

The contributions

In the first contribution, Francisco Valenzuela and Steffen Böhm aim to reclaim and re-politicize the sustainability and post-growth agenda through a critique and assessment of the circular economy ideal. In their analysis, they focus on one of the remaining problems for the 'eco-business': achieving zero waste. The authors use Apple's 'design-for-recycling' to illustrate how the problem of waste has been turned into a fetishized commodity and, thereby, transformed into an argument for, rather than against, consumption. To make their argument, the authors develop a philosophical conceptual framework that augments Marxist and Lacanian readings. Valenzuela and Böhm conclude that sustainability as more consumption is a contradiction in terms, and that organizing for the post-growth economy requires re-politicization of sustainability, both as discourse and practice.

In the second article, Emanuele Leonardi continues the re-politicization of the post-growth agenda by drawing our attention to the consequences of establishing carbon markets in order to address the problem of climate change caused by economic activities. Instead of assessing the financial results of carbon markets, Leonardi situates those markets within a broader political and historical context. He explores the historical events that led up to the introduction of carbon

markets and he explains the development of capitalism, which allowed this historical event to take place. This enables Leonardi to explore the conditions that make it possible to propose carbon markets as a solution to climate change. As Leonardi shows, carbon markets must be understood against the backdrop of the broader trend in contemporary capitalism to ‘financialize’ commodities. However, within this development resides a dogma that only the establishment of markets can redeem the environmental problems generated by capitalism. Hence, Leonardi shows that the commodities that are exchanged on carbon markets are disconnected from the actual ecological problems these markets are intended to address. For this reason, Leonardi argues that carbon markets are based on an ideology that serves to conceal the inherent conflict between capitalism and environmental sustainability.

In the third article, André Reichel guides the reader through a systematic introduction to Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory. This happens by way of Spencer-Brown’s work on the laws of form and his ‘indicational notation’ as it applies to organizational problems in general. Through a system of distinctions (like the one that separates a piece of paper into two areas) and indications (as when one of the areas is marked), Reichel shows how apparently highly formal operations are able to conjure up entire universes. Indeed, as such operations continue, they also gather space and time into their command. Fundamentally, they are autopoietic systems that recreate themselves through self-observation. As one such system, the economy may have its basic flaw in its bias towards its own system of reference – it always talks about communication in terms of economics and, hence, scarcity. Eventually, an individual in a firm in a growth economy can only be observed through that individual’s consumptive relationship with the firm. In this regard, as the above reading of Agamben’s use of profanation signals, philosophy might have been a more reflexive resource able to contextualize this consumption. As it stands, the system’s self-description remains bent on strictly economic signifiers. However, it is against this ‘biased’ backdrop that Reichel provides an alternative vocabulary fit for contextualizing the future’s firm in much more varied and far-reaching contexts involving dialogue, polyphony, and non-contingent values. This is systems theory as a critique as well as an affirmation, especially as an affirmation of a future economy bent not on scarcity but on abundance.

In the last article, Antonio Roman-Alcalá provides an elaborate, sustained empirical example of how a post-growth economy might look when seen from the point of view of food production. In particular, he focuses on the perspective of peasantries and related movements, such as the transnational food sovereignty network La Via Campesina. The latter represents at least 200 million people, and its notion of food sovereignty challenges the current disempowerment of local

producers and communities. Although peasantries produce ‘to markets’, they have a long tradition of living within non-growth economies and even struggling to maintain that stance. Roman-Alcalá argues that a new regime that simultaneously involves and challenges governments, market actors, and civil society is needed. This regime could balance reformism and radicalism instead of pitting them against each other. This move must include a broader view on exchange than just the economic one, thereby opening up for ‘moral economies’ and markets ‘nested’ in normative frameworks. In this regard, Roman-Alcalá points to the need to rethink democratic inclusion and the need to transform sovereignty into a notion that goes beyond power ‘over’ or ‘against’, and moves towards ‘relational sovereignty’. This will by no means be an easy task, and the bottom-up processes of food sovereignty movements is just one of several paths that need to be explored.

In our note section, Jennifer Hinton and Donnie Maclurcan take their point of departure in what they describe as dualism within political discussions addressing the social and environmental challenges generated by capitalism. As they note, these discussions tend to revolve around two alternatives: either social and environmental problems should be solved by traditional market-based agents, or they should be managed by governmental agencies. However, Hinton and Maclurcan point to a third alternative: not-for-profit enterprises. In contrast to traditional for-profit enterprises that allocate their surpluses to private shareholders, not-for-profit enterprises are required to reinvest all generated profits for purposes related to their stated social missions. Although acknowledging the potential challenges that a not-for-profit enterprise faces, Hinton and Maclurcan show that these enterprises offer a way to address the social and environmental challenges generated by capitalism. It is, as Hinton and Maclurcan note, ‘only when profit is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, that an economy can truly address social and ecological needs’ [this issue: 155].

In the second note, Ole Bjerg shows how contemporary discussions concerning ecology use the famous photo of Earth taken by the Apollo 17 crew on their expedition to the moon in 1972. This picture, according to Bjerg, bears many implicit connotations that tend to inform contemporary discussions about ecology and economy, such as the fact that we have one planet that we all share. Bjerg argues that although it might be evident that the world is one from the perspective of the moon, this view fails to grasp the world in which we actually live. Thus, he points to the fact that no one looks at the world from the outside. Rather, we live in a world in which there are, for example, national borders. To subvert the abstract conception of the world represented by the picture of the Earth taken from the moon, Bjerg suggests that we should turn our perspective

towards money, as a reformation of money may hold the key to solving many of the political and environmental problems that we face.

The roundtable 'The dark side of management: Gerard Hanlon in dialogue with *ephemera*' is constructed on the basis of two separate Q&A panels held with Hanlon and celebrates the publication of his book *The dark side of management: A secret history of management theory*. The roundtable begins with an introduction of the book by Gerard Hanlon in which he reflects on what the book tries to accomplish and discusses its main arguments. As Hanlon shows, contemporary management must be understood against the backdrop of wider historical, political, and economic developments that he traces back to the emergence of neoliberalism and the rise of industrial corporations in America. Hanlon makes it clear that management must be conceived of as a political project that has fundamentally changed the way we think about ourselves. The roundtable then offers a discussion with Henlon about the main arguments of the book.

The anthology *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* is discussed in our second roundtable. At the ENTITLE Conference 2016 in Stockholm, Alexander Paulsson facilitated a discussion among Giorgos Kallis, Stefania Barca, Ekaterina Chertkovskaya, and Giacomo D'Alisa. In line with Valenzuela and Böhm's argument, the starting point for the discussion was that neoliberalism has 'hijacked' and depoliticized our vocabulary. The aim of the book is to re-radicalize our vocabulary to advance the degrowth movement. The authors emphasize that degrowth means something different than less growth or negative growth. Degrowth is a critique of the ideology of growth as well as a 'hypothesis' of something different. Another aspect that distinguishes degrowth from advocates of sustainable development is that degrowthers *want* to limit growth and view doing so as a social demand, which is a more radical notion than the argument that we *must* to limit growth due to limits on Earth's resources. Given this reversal of the problem of limits, the degrowth movement maintains not only that we already have more than we need but also that we have enough for everyone. The question is not how to produce more, but how to share and distribute what we already have in new and fair ways.

We have four book reviews in this special issue. In the first one, Ekaterina Chertkovskaya reviews and discusses the book *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era*. The book, which is a collective effort by the degrowth movement, consists of short entries by more than 50 authors. Each entry addresses a debate or key term in the degrowth field. Chertkovskaya suggests that although the project is ambitious and timely, the degrowth movement could benefit from connecting to critical schools of thought, as many questions have yet to be critiqued and analyzed. For example, how can work be reclaimed in a degrowth society? What

will consumption look like? What role will digitalization play? It is important to note that degrowth is not only about critique but also about proposing alternatives – a large part of the book explores such initiatives.

Alexander Paulsson reviews *Enough is enough: Building a sustainable economy in a world of finite resources* by Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill. Paulsson explains that the authors further develop the model of steady-state-economies as an alternative to the pro-growth economy. The steady-state-economy model shares many similarities with degrowth. The main difference, Paulsson writes, is that while a steady-state-economy model proposes 'less of the same' and views the limits of nature as the driving force for a transition, degrowth argues for 'something different' and view the limits to our culture as the driving force. The authors build their argument on Daly (1996), but argue that policies and transition strategies are lacking – a gap that the book attempts to address. The authors identify consumption as one of the main practices that can be influenced to facilitate the transition to a steady-state-economy, but Paulsson questions their analysis and argues that it is unclear *who* the authors think should change their consumption, and Paulsson further argue that the relation between growth capitalism and steady-state-economy.

In the third review, Annika Skoglund discusses *The handbook of entrepreneurship and sustainable development*. The starting point for this anthology is that conventional entrepreneurship has contributed to our dependency on the unsustainable sourcing of materials and the current, unsustainable economy. Instead of disregarding entrepreneurship, however, the authors use conceptual explorations as well as empirical illustrations to investigate alternative forms of entrepreneurship that might support a transition towards a more sustainable society. They do so while providing a rich set of ideas on how entrepreneurship might operate under the condition of sustainable development. Skoglund argues that the anthology fails to problematize and critically discuss the merger of different values (e.g. social and environmental) with entrepreneurship.

In the final review, Iain Munro reviews Naomi Klein's book *This changes everything: Capitalism vs. the climate*. In this book, Klein summarizes the past 20 years of debate on climate change, and shows how corporations and nation states have been actively involved in cover-ups and utilized stalling techniques in relation to environmental degradation and its consequences. Klein argues that we need a 'Marshall plan for the Earth' and offers a 'conceptual toolbox' for understanding the situation and possible next steps. Munro concludes that this is one of the most important books on climate change thus far. His only concern is the book's emphasis on sacrifice in relation to the needed transition. Munro

argues that a more fruitful approach might be to look at positive practices of downscaling and alternative models for sustainable organization.

references

- Agamben, G. (1998) *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, G. (2007) *Profanations*. New York: Zone Books.
- Arvidsson, A. (2013) 'The potential of consumer publics', *ephemera*, 13(2): 367-391.
- Banerjee, S.B. (2003) 'Who sustains whose development? Sustainable development and the reinvention of nature', *Organization Studies*, 24(1): 143-180.
- Banerjee, S.B. (2008) 'Corporate social responsibility: The good, the bad and the ugly', *Critical Sociology*, 34(1): 51-79
- Bauman, Z. (2012) 'Times of interregnum', *Ethics & Global Politics*, 5(1): 49-56.
- Beverungen, A., A-M. Murtola and G. Schwartz (eds.) (2013) 'The communism of capital?', *ephemera*, 13(3): 483-495
- Binswanger, H.C. (2013) *Die Wachstumsspirale: Geld, Energie und Imagination in der Dynamik des Marktprozesses*. Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag.
- Bialski, P., H. Derwanz, B. Otto, H. Vollmer (2015) "'Saving" the city: Collective low-budget organizing and urban practice', *ephemera*, 15(1): 1-318.
- Bjerg, O. (2016) *Parallax of growth: The Philosophy of Ecology and Economy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Boje, D., S. Böhm, C. Casey, S. Clegg, A. Contu, B. Costea, S. Gherardi, C. Jones, D. Knights, M. Reed, A. Spicer, H. Willmott (2001) 'Radicalising organisation studies and the meaning of critique', *ephemera*, 1(3): 303-313
- Bradshaw, A., S. Dunne and N. Campbell (eds.) (2013) 'The politics of consumption', *ephemera*, 13(2): 203-216.
- Böhm, S., C. Jones and C. Land (eds.) (2001) 'Castles made of sand', *ephemera*, 1(1): 10.
- Böhm, S., AM. Murtola and S. Spoelstra (eds.) (2012) 'The atmosphere business', *ephemera*, 12(1/2): 1-11.
- Böhm, S., M.C. Misoczky, and S. Moog (2012) 'Greening capitalism? A Marxist critique of carbon markets', *Organization Studies*, 33(11): 1617-1638.

- Böhm, S., Z.P. Bharucha and J. Pretty (2015) *Ecocultures: Blueprints for sustainable communities*. New York: Routledge.
- Carson, R. (2000) *Silent spring*. London: Penguin.
- Clarke, J., R. Holt, and R. Blundel (2014) 'Re-imagining the growth process: (Co)-evolving metaphorical representations of entrepreneurial growth', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, 26(3-4): 234-256.
- Crane, A. (2000) 'Corporate greening as amoralization', *Organization Studies*, 21(4): 673-696
- Chertkovskaya, K. R. Limki, B. Loacker (eds.) (2016) 'Consumption of work and the work of consumption', *ephemera*, 16(3): 1-175
- Cohen, B. and M.I. Winn (2007) 'Market imperfections, opportunity and sustainable entrepreneurship', *Journal of Business Venturing*, 22(1): 29-49.
- D'Alisa, G., F. Demaria and G. Kallis (2015) *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era*. London: Routledge.
- Daly, H. (1996) *Beyond growth: The economics of sustainable development*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Demaria, F., F. Schneider, F. Sekulova and J. Martinez-Alier (2013) 'What is degrowth? From an activist slogan to a social movement', *Environmental Values*, 22(2): 191-215.
- Deleuze, G. (2006) *Foucault*. London & New York: Continuum.
- Eisenstein, C. (2011) *Sacred economics: Money, gift, & society in the age of transition*. Berkeley, Calif.: Evolver Editions.
- Fournier, V. (2008) 'Escaping from the economy: The politics of degrowth', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 28(11/12): 528-545.
- Gayá, P. and M. Phillips (2016) 'Imagining a sustainable future: Eschatology, Bateson's ecology of mind and arts-based practice', *Organization*, 23(6): 803-824.
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1971) *The entropy law and the economic process*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Giddens, A. (2011) *The politics of climate change, 2nd edition*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Gladwin, T.N., J.J. Kennelly, and T.-S. Krause (1995) 'Shifting paradigms for sustainable development: Implications for management theory and research', *Academy of Management Review*, 20(4): 874-907.

- Gorz, A. (1999) *Reclaiming work: Beyond the wage-based society*. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Gorz, A. (2012) *Capitalism, socialism, ecology*. New York: Verso.
- Harvard Business Review (HBR) (2007) 'Climate business / Business climate', October issue.
- Heinberg, R. (2011) *The end of growth: Adapting to our new economic reality*. Forest Row: Clairview.
- Herrera, R. (2011) 'A critique of mainstream growth theory: Ways out of the neoclassical science (-fiction) and toward marxism', in P. Zarembka and R. Desai (eds.) *Revitalizing marxist theory for today's capitalism (research in political economy, Vol 27)*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Hinton, J. and D. Maclurcan (2017) *How on Earth: Flourishing in a not-for-profit world*. Ashland, OR: Post Growth Publishing.
- Hjorth, D. and C. Steyaert (2004) *Narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship: A second movements in entrepreneurship*. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Hoedemækers, C., B. Loader and M. Pedersen (eds.) (2012) 'The commons and their im/possibilities' *ephemera*, 12(4): 378-491.
- Jacobs, D. (ed.) (2007) 'Local solidarity', *ephemera*, 7(3): 395-498.
- Jackson, T. (2009) *Prosperity without growth: Economics for a finite planet*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kallis, G., C. Kerschner and J. Martínez-Alier (2012) 'The economics of degrowth', *Ecological Economics*, 84: 172-180.
- Lash, J. and F. Wellington (2007) 'Competitive advantage on a warming planet', *Harvard Business Review*, 85(3): 94-102.
- Latouche, S. (2004) 'Degrowth economics: Why less should be much more', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November.
[<http://mondediplo.com/2004/11/14latouche>]
- Latouche, S. (2009) *Farewell to growth*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.
- Martínez-Alier, J. (2011) 'Socially sustainable economic de-growth', *Development and Change*, 40(6): 1099-1119.
- Meadows, D.H., D.H. Meadows, J. Randers, and W.W. Behrens III (1972) *The limits to growth: A report to the Club of Rome*. New York: Universe Books.
- Mebratu, D. (1998) 'Sustainability and sustainable development: Historical and conceptual review', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 18(6): 493-520.

- Misoczky, M.C. (ed.) (2006) 'Vozes da dissidência e a organização das lutas e resistências: Uma edição especial sobre a América Latina / Voices of dissent and the organization of struggles and resistances: A special issue on Latin America', *ephemera*, 6(3): 224-239.
- North, P. (2010) *Local money: How to make it happen in your community*. Totnes: Transition Books.
- Nyberg, D., A. Spicer, and C. Wright (2013) 'Incorporating citizens: Corporate political engagement with climate change in Australia', *Organization*, 20(3): 433-453.
- O'Neill, K. and D. Gibbs (2016) 'Rethinking green entrepreneurship: Fluid narratives of the green economy', *Environment and Planning A*, 48(9): 1727-1749.
- Orsato, R.J. (2006) 'Competitive environmental strategies: When does it pay to be green?', *California Management Review*, 48(2): 127-143.
- Paech, N. (2012) *Befreiung vom Überfluss: auf dem Weg in die Postwachstumsökonomie*. München: oekom verlag.
- Painter-Morland, M. and R. ten Bos (2016) 'Should environmental concern pay off? A Heideggerian perspective', *Organization Studies*, 37(4): 547-564.
- Parker, M. (2014) 'Horizons of possibility' in M. Parker, G. Cheney, V. Fournier and C. Land (eds.) *The routledge companion to alternative organization*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Parker M., G. Cheney, V. Fournier and C. Land (eds.) (2014) *The Routledge companion to alternative organization*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Piketty, T. (2014) *Capital in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Reichel, A. and Seeberg (2011) 'The ecological allowance of enterprise: An absolute measure of corporate environmental performance, its implications for strategy, and a small case', *Journal of Environmental Sustainability*, 1: 81-93.
- Roth, S. (2017) 'Marginal economy: Growth strategies for post-growth societies', *Journal of Economic Issues*, in press.
- Rockström, J. (2015) 'Bounding the planetary future: Why we need a great transition'. *Great Transition Initiative*.
[<http://www.greattransition.org/publication/bounding-the-planetary-future-why-we-need-a-great-transition>]
- Rockström, J. and M. Klum (2012) *The human quest: Prospering within planetary boundaries*. Stockholm: Langenskiölds.

- Rockström, J., W. Steffen, K. Noone, Å. Persson, F.S. Chapin, III, E. Lambin, T.M. Lenton, M. Scheffer, C. Folke, H. Schellnhuber, B. Nykvist, C.A. de Wit, T. Hughes, S. van der Leeuw, H. Rodhe, S. Sörlin, P.K. Snyder, R. Costanza, U. Svedin, M. Falkenmark, L. Karlberg, R.W. Corell, V.J. Fabry, J. Hansen, B. Walker, D. Liverman, K. Richardson, P. Crutzen, and J.A. Foley (2009a) 'A safe operating space for humanity', *Nature*, 461(7263), 472-475.
- Rockström, J., W. Steffen, K. Noone, Å. Persson, F.S. Chapin, III, E. Lambin, T.M. Lenton, M. Scheffer, C. Folke, H. Schellnhuber, B. Nykvist, C.A. de Wit, T. Hughes, S. van der Leeuw, H. Rodhe, S. Sörlin, P.K. Snyder, R. Costanza, U. Svedin, M. Falkenmark, L. Karlberg, R.W. Corell, V.J. Fabry, J. Hansen, B. Walker, D. Liverman, K. Richardson, P. Crutzen, and J.A. Foley (2009b) 'Planetary boundaries: Exploring the safe operating space for humanity', *Ecology and Society*, 14(2): 3.
- Schaper, M. (2002) 'Introduction: The essence of ecopreneurship', *Greener Management International*, (38): 26-30.
- Shrivastava, P. (1994) 'Castrated environment: Greening organizational studies', *Organization Studies*, 15(5): 705-721.
- Schumacher, E.F. (1973) *Small is beautiful: A study of economics as if people mattered*. London: Vintage.
- Seidl, I. (2010) *Postwachstumsgesellschaft: neue Konzepte für die Zukunft*. Marburg: Metropolis.
- Sørensen, B.M. (2008) "'Behold, I am making all things new": The entrepreneur as savior in the age of creativity', *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 24(2): 85-93.
- Sørensen, B.M., S. Spoelstra, H. Höpfl and S. Critchley (2012) 'Theology and organization', *Organization*, 19(3): 267-279.
- Stern, N. (2006) 'Stern review: The economics of climate change'. [http://mudancasclimaticas.cptec.inpe.br/~rmlima/pdfs/destaques/sternreview_report_complete.pdf]
- Swann, T. and K. Stoborod (eds.) (2014) 'Management, business, anarchism', *ephemera*, 14(4): 591-1079.
- World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) *Our common future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wittneben, B., C. Okereke, S.B. Banerjee and D. Levy (2012) 'Climate change and the emergence of new organizational landscapes', *Organization Studies*, 33(11): 1431-1450.
- Wright, C., D. Nyberg, C. De Cock and G. Whiteman (2013) 'Future imaginings: Organizing in response to climate change', *Organization*, 20(5): 647-658.

York, J.G. and S. Venkataraman (2010) 'The entrepreneur-environment nexus: Uncertainty, innovation, and allocation', *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(5): 449-463..

the editors

Christian Garmann Johnsen is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

Email: cgj.mpp@cbs.dk

Mette Nelund is PhD Fellow at the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy at Copenhagen Business School (CBS) with a MSc in Business Administration and Philosophy from CBS. She has a longstanding career as a producer of feature films and as organizational consultant in the Danish film industry. Her research interests include organizing sustainable work.

Email: mn.mpp@cbs.dk

Lena Olaison is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

Email: lo.mpp@cbs.dk

Bent Meier Sørensen is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

Email: bem.mpp@cbs.dk