Special Issue Call for Papers
Organizing Sustainably: Actors, Institutions, and Practices

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Under the umbrella term 'sustainability', organization scholars are trying to address the disproportional exploitation of human and natural resources that goes hand in hand with current capitalist economic systems. Such exploitation endangers life on our planet and is inherently unsustainable for societies (Polanyi, 2001). It is a mantra of contemporary management that there is a 'business case' for sustainability, and many businesses have embraced the rhetoric of the 'triple bottom line' in the face of growing pressure from governments and communities to account for their social, environmental and economic performance (Wright & Nyberg, 2015). Whatever the benevolent ambitions of these approaches, with the emergence of new forms of labour exploitation such as non-standard work in fissured workplaces (Weil, 2014), in highly unregulated platform-mediated work (Cappelli & Keller, 2013), or even in cases of modern slavery (Crane, 2013), they can be said to have failed (Adler, 2015). Likewise, the destruction of land and habitat and the pollution of the atmosphere continues in the absence of effective environmental legislation (Schüßler, Rüling & Wittneben, 2014). And economic prosperity, apart from short-term gains for a few, is a fairy tale for large parts of the global population. These inequities and the urgency with which they need to be addressed have both been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Nonetheless, alternative models for organizing sustainably are possible and exist (Ostrom, 2017) – to date, typically in niches (e.g. ethical fashion, fair phones) or on a local or smaller scale (e.g. food or financial cooperatives, "no waste" and repair shops) or in pockets of municipal public procurement of utilities (e.g. public transport) and the circular economy (for an overview see Barin Cruz, Alves & Delbridge, 2017). While multiple jurisdictions around the world are enabling stakeholder-serving (Hörisch, Freeman & Schaltegger, 2014), rather than simply stockholder-serving, organizational forms such as B-Corps (Gehman & Grimes, 2017) and community interest companies (Nicholls, 2010), these remain marginal and fragile, and traditional stakeholder capitalism models in European jurisdictions are eroding as shareholder models spread (Meyer & Höllerer, 2010). Thus, these alternative organizational models are often themselves not sustainable in the light of dominant market forces (Marti & Scherer, 2016). The challenge of making temporary and/or emergency responses to such challenges more sustainable is a crucial step in developing impactful institutions for change.

The objective of this special issue is to go beyond established ways of thinking about sustainability and towards understanding how new forms of organizing – such as more participatory and distributed models (Ferraro, Etzion & Gehman, 2015) – can contribute to the sustainable usage of environmental, social, and economic resources in ways that avoid their degradation and exhaustion through models that will themselves be enduring. This includes

addressing the questions of why unsustainable forms of organizations persist, how established organizations can be restructured sustainably, and what makes alternative forms of organization (un)sustainable.

We invite submissions related to a broad set of topics, including (but not limited to):

- *The practices and politics of the sustainable organization*. Contributions would potentially address a variety of organizational issues including corporate corruption, corporate social responsibility and responsible innovation, and examine the trade-offs and lines of contestation between sustainable and unsustainable organizing practices at different levels of analysis (e.g. Helfen, Schüßler & Sydow, 2018). Questions might include: How do different intra- and extra-organizational actors interpret sustainability (e.g. Levy & Spicer, 2013)? What role do meta-organizations, ideational brokers and other types of second-order organizational vehicles play in advancing or blocking the cause of sustainability in the realm of multi-stakeholder negotiations and transnational regulation (e.g. Reinecke, Manning & van Hagen, 2012)? How do social movements prefigure sustainable practices (e.g. Gahan & Pekarek, 2013; Bertels, Hoffman & DeJordy, 2014), and how do sustainability challenges and their framing shape social activism (e.g. Lefsrud, Graves & Phillips, 2019)? And how do these interactions play out across the boundaries of organizational fields and compare across country-specific institutional settings?

- *Alternative forms of organizing and societal grand challenges*. Contributions are encouraged which reflect upon the wider societal context of organization, for example, organizing to address the societal challenges of social inequality, creating the circular economy, and delivering healthy ageing, to name a few. Studies may centre on alternative forms of collaborative organizing such as mutuals, cooperatives (e.g. Barin Cruz, Aguilar Delgado, Leca & Gond, 2016), and locally-owned companies, as well as on identifying sustainable approaches among the plethora of digitally mediated forms of organizing in the 'sharing' economy. In addition, more cross-boundary, multi-sectoral forms of organizing, and those involving citizen engagement, may be considered (e.g. Ansari, Wijen & Gray, 2013). Questions might include: How do external factors such as resources, technological developments or the public discourse impact upon alternative forms of organizing (e.g. Daskalaki, Fotaki & Sotiropoulou, 2018)? What organizational patterns and forms may be discerned regarding practices, cultures and leadership in sustainable organizations? What makes alternative forms of organizing vulnerable and what prevents them from realizing their disruptive potential? What factors lead to conflict and what factors lead to collaboration in cross-boundary, multi-actor organizing and citizen engagement?

- *Work and employment in the sustainable organization*. Exploration of the labour dimensions of sustainable organizations is often neglected in the current discourse on sustainability (Pfeffer, 2010). As long as businesses merely seek to manage 'human resources' to generate profits for shareholders, aspirations for more sustainable forms of work will remain unmet (Osterman, 2018). Rather, working sustainably implies scope for voice in organizations (Wilkinson, Gollan, Kalfa, et al., 2018) and industrial citizenship beyond single organizations (Lohmeyer, Schüßler & Helfen, 2018) in order to reinstate workers as resourceful and inherently valuable human beings. We invite contributions that illuminate how work and workers (and their representatives) shape and are shaped by questions of organizational sustainability and what this means for future world(s) of work (Delbridge & Sallaz, 2015). Questions here could include:

What are the implications for employee health, well-being and identity, work-life balance and social and economic security of unsustainable organizational practices? And how does work in and for organizations need to change to contribute to sustainability? To what extent are these challenges amplified by newer developments such as the rapidly-expanding 'gig economy', insecure contracting, and the automation of tasks (Healy, Nicholson & Pekarek, 2017)? And how can modes of employee and workers' voice be restored and reformed to allow for a stronger participation and co-determination of workers in a 'just transition' to the sustainable organization, such as with the help of digital technologies?

- *Conventions, ideas and logics surrounding the sustainable organization.* We encourage contributions that critically engage with the ideological bases of dominant and alternative forms of organizing and the consequences of these. Questions might include: How do different organizational and institutional logics shape symbolic and substantive organizational efforts to organize sustainably (e.g. Kok, De Bakker & Groenewegen, 2017)? Why are alternative forms of organizing and underlying institutional logics, such as a 'zero growth' economy or circular economies difficult to create, sustain and diffuse? How can long-standing research on interorganizational collaboration and partnerships inform these new organizational models? How do actors organize for maintaining or, alternatively, disrupting institutional arrangements fostering sustainability (e.g. Cartel, Boxenbaum & Aggeri, 2019; Zietsma, Ruebottom & Slade Shantz, 2018)? How, if at all, is the clash of divergent worldviews and values in bringing about change towards sustainability dealt with and how might divergent views be reconciled and realigned?

Overall, we seek contributions from a wide range of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. Specifically, our intention is to bridge diverse but established areas for sustainability research such as corporate social responsibility, diversity management, employment relations, employee health and wellbeing, environmentalism and business ethics with wider organizational scholarship on social movements, non-governmental and third sector organizations, public policy and local community organizing and, more broadly, research on the post-corporate economic organization and economic and social transformation. We hereby aim to provide opportunities for new connections across proximate disciplines, including management studies, (comparative) political economy, business ethics, social movement theory, economic sociology, the sociology of work and industrial relations, while retaining a clear focus on organizations and practices of organizing. We explicitly encourage submissions from less well-represented regions, where organizational alternatives are often to be found, as well as internationally comparative work. We are also keen to receive work that bridges or challenges existing theoretical approaches as well as different empirical fields, for example, by highlighting the interrelationships and tensions among different sustainability goals. Finally, we are particularly eager to receive papers that propose concrete options for how society could and should be transformed in the light of the crises that currently confront us, thereby exploring new modes of scholarship, styles of theorizing (Delbridge & Fiss, 2013) and theoretical directions.

Submitting your paper
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journal's policies and procedures; they expect authors to follow the journal's submission guidelines (http://journals.sagepub.com/home/oss). You can submit your manuscript for this Special Issue **between 15th and 30th of November 2020**.

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