

# Call for Papers – Special Issue for *Organization*

## Future Imaginings: Organizing in Response To Climate Change

### Guest Editors:

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**Deadline: 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

*Imaginations of the future, like imaginations of the past, are devices for living in the present.*

(March, 1995: 457)

Climate change has become *the* major economic, political, moral and social challenge of our times. With the latest scientific data suggesting dramatic changes in climate, declining biodiversity, and growing resource scarcity (Richardson, et al., 2009), climate change has profound implications for organizations and forms of organizing. However, long-term and systemic changes to our environment are difficult to comprehend, let alone solve. The complexity and scale of the situation suggest that dealing with climate change involves not only considering the science but also imagining what the future might hold. We suggest that the response to climate change is fundamentally affected by the way organizational actors (governments, corporations, scientific communities, lobby groups, the media and religious and community organizations) imagine and communicate a present-day image of future climate changed worlds.

A spectrum of ‘future imaginings’ exist. These vary from optimistic accounts in which climate change is seen as ‘hype’ or even a positive development (Lomborg, 2001; Ridley, 2010), through to far more critical, and indeed apocalyptic or dystopian visions (Hansen, 2009; Hjerpe and Linnér, 2009; Lovelock, 2009; Urry, 2008). These future imaginings matter in that they organize our analyses of present conditions and their possibilities (Jameson, 2009). For example, acting on future dystopian visions in the present could involve changes in current forms of human and economic activity (e.g. galvanising public support for carbon emission reductions, or moving towards a more ‘sustainable’ economy). By contrast, the future could be conceived of as a simple continuation of the present, thus reinforcing and maintaining existing patterns of economic behaviour and consumption. As a result, the political and organizational response to climate change hinges on extrapolations and visions of what a future world under climate change might look like, including the identification of important trends, technologies and actors not yet fully visible.

In this special issue, we invite submissions which explore the different ways in which organizational actors construct the concept of climate change, the role of ‘future imaginings’ within such negotiations, and how these inform current beliefs, actions and behaviours. We are particularly interested in papers that actively respond to this global challenge. The question is not simply to ask how understandings of climate change can make a contribution to organization theory, but also how organization theory can actively contribute to responses to climate change. Possible areas for investigation could include:

- the future imaginings of emissions reduction targets and the political framing such future commitments contribute to. For example, how might institutions and international agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change contribute to future imaginings?

- examination of climate change as an imagined gradual and manageable process and the implications of such minimalist discourse for continued emissions growth.
- examination of the role of future imagery and narratives in shaping political advocacy for climate change action or denial (see e.g. Oreskes and Conway, 2010). What are the organizational implications, opportunities and vulnerabilities of such narratives including those for vulnerable or developing regions and communities?
- utopian and/or dystopian visions of climate-induced social and organisational change and their role in different types of organizations.
- corporate imaginings of ‘sustainable organizations’, ‘sustainable economic growth’ and attempts to avoid or hamper radical actions, foster doubt and climate scepticism.
- the role of technological innovations as climate change panaceas (e.g. geo-engineering, carbon capture and storage, nuclear) and how and why such future imaginings are used?
- how future visions of a carbon-constrained world influence broader areas of organizing (e.g. poverty, national security, food security, gender equity, risk management, disaster relief, migration).
- the imagined future of academic organization, for example what is the future for the academic in a resource depleted climate-shocked world?
- how the discursive nature of imagined climate futures intersects with the ecologic materiality of observed climate changes (Whiteman and Cooper, forthcoming)? How do discursive concepts such as ‘planetary boundaries’ or ‘tipping points’ help social actors understand the potential implications of these material changes (Rockström, et al., 2009)? How can organization studies contribute to these sensemaking processes?
- market based future visions concerning climate change, such as financial markets, taxation and carbon trading, as exemplified in the implications of the Stern review.

**Submission:** Papers must be submitted electronically by 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012 to SAGETrack at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/organization>

Papers should be no more than 8,000 words, excluding references, and will be blind reviewed following the journal’s standard review process. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in *Organization* and on the journal’s website: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsProdDesc.nav?level1=600&currTree=Subjects&catLevel1=&prodId=Journal200981>

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