

Call for Papers: Special Issue on “Regenerative Organizations: Business and Climate Action Beyond Mitigation and Adaptation”

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Guest Editors

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Climate change is being felt globally. Recent record-breaking floods in Chennai, India, the 2013 catastrophic floods in Alberta Canada, and the risk of complete submergence of the low-lying Pacific island of Kiribati are just some of the reminders that climate change is a wicked problem that needs decisive collaborative action and long-term commitment of governments, businesses and citizens alike.

In both developing and developed countries, climate change is severely impacting natural and social ecosystems; affecting water availability, food security, health and the overall wellbeing of communities and the natural ecosystems supporting them. How to take effective action against the consequences of western forms of development and reverse this trend has been a prevailing issue for governments, communities and private sector actors. So far, the climate action discussion has been framed around the need to ensure that climate policies are adequately implemented and that energy and climate targets are integrated into each country’s environmental and economic agendas and not undermined by other development policies. Businesses in general have not been particularly active actors. To date they have mostly focused on minimizing negative externalities and lowering the climate-related risks, with the primary aim of ensuring the survival, competitiveness and reputation of the firm (Wright & Nyberg, in press).

We have only recently started to witness the surge of new business approaches moving beyond mitigation and adaptation, where climate change issues are directly tackled by the firms’ actions. An arguably new breed of business is developing that challenges the assumption that negative externalities need to be minimized (mitigation actions) and that businesses need to adapt their strategies and actions in order to lower the risks posed by the consequences of climatic changes (adaptation actions). The delivery of climate-sensitive solutions is pioneering new ways of doing business whereby ecological systems are situated at the core of the business (Muñoz & Cohen, 2017), and are understood as both an active component through which businesses create value, and the main beneficiary of the firms’ actions. These climate smart organizations, normally neglected by mainstream management, are directly tackling the sources of climate-related problems and effectively reversing the direction of the still conflicting business-environment relationship. We suspect that this more decisive and effective approach to climate action, which goes beyond mitigation and adaptation, is materializing distinctively in different parts of the world. Unfortunately, evidence and explanations of how or why such businesses emerge, organize themselves, strategize, make decisions, and create value is scarce and anecdotal at best.

In this special issue, we seek to publish high-quality innovative research that examines business-led climate action beyond mitigation and adaptation. We are interested in publishing the most innovative papers that step outside traditional management boundaries to examine effective climate action in practice. We encourage papers from macro-, meso- and micro-level perspectives alike, and especially those that cover multiple levels of analysis. We are open to all relevant disciplines including but not limited to management, environmental, and development studies. We are particularly interested, although challenging, in those papers that creatively combine multiple theoretical lenses (Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2016). Climate change problems are inherently systemic and wicked, therefore, it is unlikely that single-method research will provide adequate answers and suggestions (von Wehrden et al. 2017) and the guest editors therefore encourage the academic community to take risks and try innovative methods (robustly). We will ensure a secure and supportive review process and encourage authors to attend (in person or via remote connection) the paper development events listed below. Finally, the guest editors share the sense of urgency of the climate change research community and believe that theoretical contributions, while relevant, are insufficient to deliver the solutions we need today. We therefore encourage action-oriented research and findings with clear and concrete practical implications for business and organizations.

Potential submissions might consider (but are not limited to) the following questions:

- How do organizations enable or foster resilience of social and/or ecological systems?
- Are there any distinct mechanisms in climate-oriented sustainable venturing?
- What climate information is needed to help businesses move beyond mitigation and adaptation to create entirely new ways of doing business?
- What other disciplines and practices can contribute to informing new ways of doing climate-smart business?
- What kind of climate-action business models are more effective for the delivery of business solutions beyond mitigation and adaptation?
- What kind of new ownership, governance and control mechanisms are required beyond mitigation and adaptation?
- What can we learn from new organizational hybrid forms and ways of doing business, as the ones being articulated by e.g. B Corporations, community interest companies and L3Cs.
- How do (can) regenerative organizations build bridges and/or synchronize their activities with the (natural) rhythm of broader social and ecological systems?
- How do alternative investment or financial innovation, such as climate bonds, revolving funds, community shares, and crowdfunding, are currently supporting (or can potentially support) climate action beyond mitigation and adaptation?
- In a similar vein, how do alternatives forms of currency, such as bitcoin and local currencies, are currently supporting (or can potentially support) climate action beyond mitigation and adaptation?
- Who are the change agents and leaders that foster climate smart business solutions? And how do they create the change needed?
- What are the examples of best practice for climate-smart solutions? How can these solutions be scaled up to create the required transformational change?

In line with our aims of providing a multi-disciplinary platform for discussion around regenerative organizations, business and climate action, the editorial team will provide dedicated space to a number of opening commentaries by leading academics, activists and thought leaders from a range a disciplines, including climate science, natural sciences, anthropology, among others.

Professor Piers Forster, lead author for the IPCC Fourth and Fifth Assessment Report (Physical Science Basis Working Group), will open our round of commentaries.

For prospective authors interested in submitting papers to the special issue, the editorial team will host a developmental workshop, along a thematic doctoral consortium, at the Encuentro +B summit (i.e. regional B Corps meeting) to take place on the 29-30th of November in São Paulo, Brazil.

As part of the review process, the guest editors will invite the authors selected for the special issue to attend a developmental workshop and thematic symposium to take place at the Corporate Responsibility Research Conference hosted by the Sustainability Research Institute at the University of Leeds in September 2018.

We would also like to encourage early career researchers to submit summaries of their PhD dissertations. With the support of the International Development Research Centre in Canada, the best dissertation will be awarded a prize of US\$1,000 and will be considered for publication in the special issue.

Submission procedure

Submission guidelines for the O&E at: <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/organization-environment/journal200856#submission-guidelines>

Questions and informal enquiries should be directed to:

- Pablo Munoz (p.munoz@leeds.ac.uk)
- Sally Russell (S.Russell@leeds.ac.uk)

Milestones and deadlines

São Paulo Workshop for prospective authors (optional): 29-30 November, 2017

Submission of full papers: 30 May, 2018

Invitation to Leeds workshop: 30 July, 2018

Leeds Corporate Responsibility Research Conference: 10-12 September, 2018

Resubmission of papers: 15 December, 2018

Expected editorial decisions: March, 2019

References

- Muñoz, P., & Cohen, B. (2017). Towards a social-ecological understanding of sustainable venturing. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 7, 1–8.
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- Wright & Nyberg (in press). An Inconvenient Truth: How Organizations Translate Climate Change into Business as Usual. *Academy of Management Journal*.