

Call for Papers for a Special Issue

ATLAS UNPLUGGED: RE-IMAGINING THE PREMISES AND PROSPECTS OF CAPITALISM FOR BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

Submission Deadline: 31 October 2022

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BACKGROUND

Since its publication in 1957, Ayn Rand's dystopian tome, *Atlas Shrugged*, has come to define the characteristics of contemporary capitalism as a libertarian philosophy premised on the valorization of the individual (rational selfishness) and the moralization of greed (ethical egoism). The title of the book refers to Atlas, a Titan in Greek mythology who holds the world on his shoulders and is meant to represent the aggrieved individuals who populate the entrepreneurial and capitalist class and who, according to Rand, support the ever-growing burden of "free riders" and "unproductive parasites" who demonize Atlas even as they add to his burden. The text has served as a bible to modern industrial thinkers who have, for too long, promoted the false assumption that economic activity is the foundation of civilization, and culture is a mere epiphenomenon.

The flaws in this logic, which Bell (1976) described as the cultural contradictions of capitalism, are only beginning to be fully appreciated. Current financial, political and economic crises, most notably the 2020/2021 covid-19 pandemic and its coordination problems, the 2007/2008 global financial crisis, the looming environmental fallout from climate change, and the rise of populism, have created an extraordinarily perilous situation for much of humanity, but with particularly devastating effects for the marginalized, the vulnerable and the poor. While productivity and economic activity have increased substantially, most of the benefits have accrued to the few and inequality has increased, suggesting a crisis of the neoliberal governance system (Fraser, 2017; Zanoni et al., 2017). The model of capitalism described in *Atlas Shrugged* was intended to avoid a dystopian future plagued by excessive government control over business and individual

entrepreneurship yet the current market system has created a dystopia of its own (Chowdhury, 2021a), weakening social and political institutions with calamitous effects (Chowdhury, 2017).

AIMS AND SCOPE

This Special Issue seeks to challenge the core assumptions of contemporary capitalism – individualism, instrumental hyper-rationality and unconstrained accumulation of wealth – all of which are premised on a paradigm of non-cooperation (Chowdhury, 2021a) – and to explore alternatives with better societal impacts. While it has long been recognized that markets are but one of a number of forms of systems of exchange (Biggart and Delbridge, 2004) and comparative analyses have shown the range of forms that capitalism may take (Graeber, 2004; Leung et al., 2014; Orru et al., 1996), the wider range of alternative market systems have rarely impinged on our collective consciousness, in part because these alternatives are seldom addressed in management research or education (Chowdhury, 2021b; de Bakker et al., 2020). Our ‘capitalocentric’ (Gibson-Graham, 1996a) scholarship conceals vast swaths of social and economic activity (Zanoni et al., 2017). Where are the alternatives to the prevailing model of dystopian capitalism? And what place do new forms of organizing and managing play in these?

Various alternatives or “fixes” to capitalism have been advanced in recent years, such as degrowth (Martínez-Alier, 2012), barefoot economics (Max-Neef, 1992), stakeholder capitalism (Freeman et al., 2007), benefit corporations (Marquis, 2020), social entrepreneurship (Montgomery et al., 2011), collective entrepreneurship (Dana and Dana, 2010; Dana, 2015), impact investing (Arjaliès, 2010), inclusive innovation (George et al., 2012), purposeful business (British Academy, 2017; Mayer, 2017) and a greater push for more transparent accounting and financial systems (Brown and Dillard, 2015; Harrington, 2016) that can offer equitable governance practices (Donaldson, 2012). These fixes address elements of the capitalist system but doubts remain over their efficacy in tackling the fundamentals that perpetuate inequalities (de Bakker et al., 2020). Ideas of resistance from grassroots organizations and social movements (Goodwin and Jasper, 1997; Piven and Cloward, 1977), renewed intellectual activism (Morris, 2015) and advancement of black (Muzanenhamo and Chowdhury, 2021; Nkomo, 1992), feminist and queer (Gibson-Graham, 1996a and b) scholarship indicate the urgent need for deeper organizational and societal reforms.

To achieve radical reform, the path-dependent behavior of organizations and institutions must be challenged (Anteby, 2008; Fan and Zietsma, 2017; Mintzberg, 2021; Willmott, 1993). Radical changes in the mobilization of routines (Dionysiou and Tsoukas, 2013), commons as modern resources (Ostrom et al., 1989), political and emotional capabilities (Chowdhury, 2019, Huy, 1999), stakeholder engagement (Chowdhury, 2021b; Frooman and Murrell, 2005; Wicks et al., 1994), compassionate organizing (Dutton et al., 2006; Shepherd and Williams, 2014), and ethical leadership (Brown and Treviño, 2006) are needed to break free from the individualism, instrumentalism and inequality which accompany the prioritization of profit over societal well-being. We need alternative worldviews (Lawson, 2006), diverse languages (Chowdhury, 2017, 2021b), paradigm shifts (Hirsch, Friedman and Koza, 1990), “good” management theories (Ghoshal, 2005) and new organizational forms and practices that foster more cooperative and collective approaches (Barin Cruz et al., 2017).

We seek studies of alternatives that operate within organizations, improving social justice and compassionate organizing, respecting employees as whole beings with lives outside of work. We seek studies of innovative firms that intend not only to reduce their negative externalities, but also to have positive externalities for society. We are interested in activist and grassroots organizations and collective efforts of local people that try to make changes in practices across a number of organizations and contexts. We also encourage contributors to explore cooperatives (Bretos & Errasti, 2017), grassroots innovators (Halme et al., 2012; Ingram et al., 2010) and collective organizations that work to create governance or impact investment systems that make the market work for societal benefit (Aragón-Correa et al., 2020). We are interested in those who work to disrupt existing systems (Daskalaki and Kokkinidis, 2017; Graeber, 2015) and what holds such systems in place (Zietsma et al., 2018).

These aspirations bring a few themes into focus for this Special Issue.

First, we seek scholarship that critically analyzes and learns from the dysfunctions of capitalism and which explores and explains the persistence of inequalities, individualism, instrumentalism and non-cooperative spaces (Chowdhury, 2021a), as well as management research's past failings in challenging these (Delbridge, 2013). We are interested in understanding:

- What management theory tells us about the capacity of capitalism to reinvent itself and why alternatives have consistently failed to produce the level of transformation required to disrupt the established political economic system?
- What are the micro-foundations of the existing system? Why do we (as society) perpetuate the non-cooperative paradigm?
- How can the path-dependent behaviour of individualism and its uncooperative socio-structure be changed? What are the antecedents of such change?
- How do ideologies play a role in underpinning the individualistic, instrumental, non-cooperative paradigm of capitalism? What are the key societal actors involved in this maintenance work?
- What are the characteristics of management theory and research and how have these contributed to the current crises?

Second, we are interested in advancing our understanding of how capitalism might be reimagined (Suddaby, Ganzin and Minkus, 2017) to enhance, and not harm, societal well-being. We are particularly interested in understanding:

- What is the potential of cooperative organizing?
- What are the micro-foundations of cooperative and more democratic models of governance and exchange that can improve macro-level policy making?
- What more collective alternatives exist and what is required for them to thrive?
- What are the roles of different actors and organizations in promoting alternative models of capitalism and how can these be sustained to produce fundamental transformation?

Third, we believe that insights from management theory can help advance ways in which these alternatives might be implemented and sustained. Potential areas to explore include:

- What are the foundational logics that can be adopted by businesses, governments and social movements to develop a truly democratic society?

- What are the micro-foundations of disruptive innovation that can promote transparent institutions?
- How can transparent cooperative relationships be formalized as a governance tool in organizations (e.g., firms, NGOs, transnational and government institutions)?
- How can anarchist thought/framework become part of basic/direct democracy to regulate corporate behaviour and transform corporate governance systems?
- What are the collective goals and agendas that need to be set for a cooperative market structure? How can such structures become democratic? What, if any, is the role of government policy?
- Can the collaborative socio-structure be a catalyst for fighting political and environmental crises, emergencies or even disasters? How can actors change organizational routines and capabilities to attain this?

This list of questions and issues is illustrative rather than exhaustive. We welcome diverse methods, including qualitative, field experiment, survey, historical and laboratory methods as well as conceptual work on different types of organizations and their possibilities, including firms, governments, NGOs, grassroots and anarchist organizations with varied ideologies and purposes in order to advance research with a positive impact on society (Wickert et al., 2021).

Ultimately, our aim is to find more solid conceptualization and empirical examination of behaviours and spaces which can generate new and alternative theories and narratives which, at the same time, are pivotal for social changes. We are looking for papers which show deep thinking, a genuine approach of caring, and the courage to overcome the conservatism and inertia of existing theories. While we are not bound to any particular theories, various theoretical domains may be helpful: for example, concepts from development studies, sociology of markets, alternative psychology literature or radical philosophies. We are also open to theoretical avenues such as critical (race) theory, critical management studies, social movement theory, postcolonial theory, social contract theory, unorthodox institutional and agency theories, entrepreneurship theories (especially work that extends conventional social entrepreneurship), marginalized stakeholder theory (which goes beyond bottom-of-the-pyramid and conventional CSR), and any other theories that can enrich our understanding of new way of shaping a cooperative paradigm.

SUBMISSION PROCESS AND DEADLINES

- Submission deadline: 31st October, 2022
- Expected publication: Early 2025
- Submissions should be prepared using the JMS Manuscript Preparation Guidelines (<http://www.socadms.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/JMS-ManuscriptPreparationGuidelines.pdf>)
- Manuscripts should be submitted using the JMS ScholarOne system (<https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jmstudies>)
- Articles will be reviewed according to the JMS double-blind review process.
- We welcome informal enquiries relating to the Special Issue, proposed topics, and potential fit with the Special Issue objectives. Please direct any questions on the Special Issue to the Guest Editors:
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SPECIAL ISSUE EVENTS

Pre-submission: Interested authors will be invited to submit a 500-word extended abstract to an online special issue workshop, to be held on 24th May, 2022 (afternoon GMT). This workshop will take place over approximately two hours. In the first one-hour session, we will introduce the special issue and explain what we are looking for in terms of submissions. In the second hour, groups of authors will attend one hour breakout sessions with a facilitator to discuss their proposed papers and the fit with the special issue as well as receive feedback from other authors. The digital format will ensure that attendance is possible for as many authors from around the world as possible. Attendance is not a precondition for submission. Further details will be announced in due time.

Post-submission: The guest editors will organize a special issue in-person revision workshop in Spring 2023 (exact dates, times, and place TBA). Authors who receive a “revise and resubmit” (R&R) decision on their manuscript will be invited to attend this workshop. Participation in the workshop does not guarantee acceptance of the paper in the Special Issue and attendance is not a prerequisite for publication.

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