Better to fellate Leicester than bugger the planet?

Organisation Studies

and

Anthropogenic Global Warming

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Thin, sweeping generalisations, dull ranting – but is it wrong?

The paper which follows was submitted in response to a call for papers - Future Imaginings: Organizing in Response to Climate Change - in the journal Organization. The call for papers informed us that ‘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.’ (our emphasis). In our submission we claimed that the mainstream, orthodox forms of organisation studies, both functionalist and critical, are not able, and cannot be able, to ‘actively contribute to responses to climate change’. The submission was, not very surprisingly, rejected outright. What was surprising was the tenor of the reviewers’ comments, which can only be described as intemperate and which are shown below. No reviewer responded adequately to our claim. We here reproduce editor’s and reviewers’ comments:-

‘We have now received feedback from three reviewers and have also taken a close reading of your polemical argument within the special issue editorial team. Given the nature of your manuscript, we were careful to include a reviewer who has a track record of publishing polemical pieces. Unfortunately, the response from all three reviews is very negative. Based on the reviewers’ comments, and our reading of your work, we are therefore sorry to inform you that our editorial decision is that your paper will not be accepted for publication in Organization nor invited for resubmission.

We hope you can take the return ‘rant’ from reviewer 2 on the chin. As reviewer 3 points out, your rhetorical strategy makes this a difficult paper to review and it puts reviewers in an awkward position. This reviewer also could not refrain from engaging in some polemical writing. But the underlying problem of this paper is of course that it is wafer thin in terms of the arguments marshalled within – it contains little but sweeping generalizations as reviewer 1 points out. This reviewer provides a broad summary of their critique: that the paper contains too many sweeping generalisations, straw-persons, and familiar, well-trodden arguments. Given these comments, the overall suggestion is that you do the causes you want to champion a disservice.

We hope that you will able to take these comments in the fiery spirit you elicited.

Reviewer(s)’ Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1
Comments to the Author
Reviewer: 2
Comments to the Author
Never let it be said that I don't enjoy a good rant. I do, definitively. I’m not even an enemy of
the occasional sweeping generalization – I’ve done a fair few myself. Still, this is really not
on.

There really isn’t a single original idea in here, and the few openings towards actual ideas
that emerge are quickly made pointless by the most amazing strawman arguments,
unfounded generalizations and just dull ranting. Organization theory is portrayed in a
manner that makes no sense to me, roundly criticized (which it at time deserves) but in the
most sloppy manner imaginable, and then CMS turned into what can only be called a foil. As
if the paper wasn’t paper-thin already, it cut’n’pastes from Wikipedia and a few half-
understood papers, after which it decides to sing the praises political economy – without
bothering to explain what the authors might mean with this. The paper is peppered with
wannabe scholasticism and turns of phrase the authors throw in mainly to sound clever. And
then it decides that what the paper needs is for the authors to casually fellate CPPE at
Leicester. At this point, I really cannot contain my rage.

This is the manuscript equivalent of that classic playground taunt: "My daddy can beat up
your daddy." It is actually better when it makes no sense, for when it does, the authors utter
lack of understanding of that of which they write shines through. The only thing I can say
about it is that it is a potent argument AGAINST double blind review, as I think the authors
should be named and shamed.

Reviewer: 3
Comments to the Author
Clearly, one is on a hiding to nothing as reviewer of this. So, let me say that while I argue
that this piece should be rejected, I hope too that it is published, and very soon. Preferably
not in Organization, for which I have some affection, nor in the London Daily Mail, whose
logic it deploys, but some middlebrow home. But if all else Organization will do. Then, too, of
course, the authors will not be able to claim their paper was censored for being too
challenging; and I can write a piece which adduces it as evidence of a hegemonic
organizationalism, where any and everything social is reduced/rendered to "organization",
and there is nothing of such seriousness that its adherents will not feel free to grandstand
about trivia (like "CMS" or EGOS conference programmes) on its back.

As well as saying what I mean, my previous paragraph is intended to problematize the
power game that the authors are playing vis-a-vis the reviewer. The authors clearly see their
claim to polemic as giving them licence, in relation to vividness of expression, but also in the
extent to which they feel free to make truth claims only as far as they support their case. So, for example, one might never read this and never know that there is a journal called Organization and Environment, the existence of which, and of work on AGW therein, is an inconvenient truth for this submission. But also, am I as a reviewer too entitled to such licence? If not, then how -why - must I review this piece, and is there a way in which I can without submitting to its author/itarianism?

So, to some detail. Where this piece first reveals that it is a manifestation of the problem one might anticipate that it seeks to critique is its treatment of the relationship between Organization Theory, Org Studies, and CMS. The last of these is, apparently a version of Org Studies (or is it Org Theory) because - "we see management as a mere component in organisation". Well, insofar as this might be plausible, one might ask what social is not therefore "a mere component in organization"?

For me Organization Theory/Studies has orthodox and critical wings. Some of this overlaps with CMS. But basically critical OS/T is a home for wannabe social-theorists who don't want to have to sully their hands with anything so "trade" as management (it is fun, this polemic stuff). I know people "in CMS" who engage with International Business, or Accounting (indeed there are critical journals with these titles). They engage with Marketing, with the history of management, the management of the self, and so on. But, hegemonically, the authors claim that this is all really organization. Well, again, what isn't, in that case.

And then the slide into the critique of CMS. I think that Organization has a bit of a problem in that it permits CMS's ontological status to be whatever its favoured critics fancy it to be, with some random substantiation. Here it is defined by apparently randomly chosen CMS associated events and institutions (again, EGOS?).

But the choice is not at all random. My accusation of author/itarianism is based not least in the deliberate and substantial avoiding of evidence of the work which might address or encompass the authors tightly-drawn and exclusive category of AGW. So, there is the work of Bobby Banerjee. Of David Levy. Of Bettina Wittbenen. Of Chukwumerije Okereke. But maybe none of these are properly Anglo-American enough to be counted?

At the US Academy of Management, there is the Organizations and Natural Environment group, with around 650 members. It has run sessions on climate change and global warming for many years. Albert Mill and Jean Helms Mills in Atlanta organized a still discussed and substantial symposium on Katrina. The CMS group has had John Jermier (founder and editor of the invisibilized Organization and Environment) as a keynote. Very much at the margin of AGW (and, what, therefore less important?), but still connected, the CMS group organized an engagement with people's organizations in San Antonio during the AoM last year who were fighting what they termed the "environmental racism" of the USAF which was directing
the polluting discharge from its flights away from largely white communities, and toward those containing people of color. So it goes.

And indeed, also rather bizarre is the implicit insistence that those interested in AGW in OS must demonstrate it (a) generally through their engagements in OS institutions (b) through the specifics that the authors require, again, eg, by submitting a paper to EGOS. Might they have involvements outside the authors gaze, or is the authors world such that the institutions named are all that there is within it? (In which case, bring it on).

Whether these omissions merit "reject" are editorial judgements, and, as I say, this piece does substantiate substantially my critique of organizationalism. There may, in the authors’ view, be insufficient organizing around AGW in OS, OT, CMS or whatever. If the complaint was that the EGOS organizers had rejected a stream proposal on AGW, that would be one thing. But to submit an article to Organization about Org Theory and CMS is the response about the imagined slight to mother earth? What’s the politics of that?’

(sic)

We did, of course, feel the need to raise a mild protest and replied thus:

Dear Editorial Team,
Thanks for your comments on our paper and, of course, to the reviewers, who we are sorry to have caused so much irritation. We were aware that our submission was high-risk and are not too surprised at its fate, and, knowing the rules of the game, have no complaints (although we do not feel that the reviews have dealt with the main thrust of our argument). We do, however, feel slightly disappointed with the responses. But first we must express our sadness at the personal nature of the two reviews provided. ... We do not cut and paste from Wikipedia and there is nothing in the paper which justifies this claim, nor are there grounds for insinuating racism. If these represent the criteria upon which the reviewers make their decisions, then God help the refereed journal. We are afraid the reviewers confuse polemic with abuse...

In the call for papers, we were invited to imagine, regarding climate change, what the future might hold. As imaginings must be speculative and not amenable to proof, we assumed that the normal conventions of academic papers would be less rigorous. Thus, we agree with Reviewer 2 that most of what we argue, or ‘assert’ if you prefer, is already in the public channel, which is why it lacks ‘thickness’ - there seems little point in going into depth with what is already established, we are drawing attention to an elephant in the room. However, if all the dots are already known, why are they not joined up as far as AGW is concerned? It is this lack that was the raison d’être of our paper. If reviewer 2 is sanguine on this point, we would have wished that he/she would share their insights with us. Similarly, we would be grateful to learn which papers we have ‘half-understood’.
Reviewer 3 does challenge our claim but in so doing, for us, confirms our view. We are aware that there are relevant specialist interest groups/journals but our point is that AGW should not be a specialist interest. This is why we cited mainstream orthodox and critical groups/journals to highlight our point. Yes, the US Academy of Management – membership in excess of 18,500 - has c.650 members in its Organization and Natural Environment group (about the same as the Management Spirituality & Religion group but only a quarter of the number in the Entrepreneurship group), or approximately 3.5% of the total membership. Is AGW only of 3.5% significance to organisations? We would guess that not even all members of this group are into AGW. And, in any case, we would argue that AGW is not only a problem of the natural environment but also one of the social environment. We would also guess that there is more interest in organisations and the current economic environment than in AGW, even though the economic problem will be solved in one way or another, whereas AGW probably will not. Though not particularly important in view of the reaction to our paper, the ontological status of organisations is a contested issue, perhaps more so in Europe than in the US, which is why we adopt an unspecific and all encompassing sense of organisation, which we would argue must be prior to ‘management’. We are in agreement with Georges Sorel – ‘We must beware of too much strictness in our language because it would then be at odds with the fluid character of reality: the result would be deceptive.’

So, still lacking any guidance in locating an energetic OS contribution to AGW, we retain intact our view that there is a problem as ‘argued’. Accordingly, we are more than happy to be identified with our paper and, if it would give solace to our reviewers, please feel free to ‘name and shame’ us, on condition that you also attach these comments. Though it is relevant to add that, in our own reviewing practice, no matter how poor the paper that we have reviewed might be, we would never suggest such a thing.

Picking up on Reviewer 2’s accusation - better to fellate Leicester than to bugger the Planet!

As our reviewers did not substantively engage with our ‘hypothesis’ – that organisation studies is largely impotent with regard to AGW - we would like to bring it to the attention of a wider audience. As it is a fairly simple exercise in measurement, it should be easily refutable. If not, even if our chosen explanation of why such might be the case does not convince, the proposition should be of interest to organisation studies. How then to explain the vituperative nature of the response? Could it be of relevance to a prevalent attitude of denial to AGW?

We do not intend to defend our paper as written, only to point out that the invitation was to imagine the future, ie, for the paper to be a speculative piece. As reviewers we all experience papers to review which we find ill-constructed, badly argued, unoriginal, etc, and no doubt bemoan having to use our valuable time to précis such papers’ faults. Clearly, we are sometimes dealing with young and inexperienced authors and should be aware of
potential sensitivities to rejection. Also, no matter how misguided a paper might be, we can assume that time and effort went into its preparation and that the author(s) thought that they produced something potentially publishable. We are routinely enjoined to make our reviews helpful to the author and indicate how things could be improved, no matter how execrable an offering may be. It is almost as if the reviewers felt our paper to be a personal attack on them or possibly a quasi-superstitious apprehension, saying what must not be uttered. Anyone seen Voldemort? Interestingly, we were not allowed to see Reviewer 2’s comments in their entirety, (the editor’s response to our comments told us that it had been edited before being sent to us), so one can only imagine the abuse that was not fit to print.

From our point of view, these reviews were doubly unfortunate. On one hand, as noted, they confuse polemic with abuse of us, as authors. The idea of peer (etymologically, equal) review, although masking inequalities of, for example, status and experience, denotes a relationship of trust in a situation in which there is, inevitably, an asymmetry of power. It implies that the writer and the reviewer are of a kind, that there is mutual respect and that each is acting professionally. That is why we have been exercised to try to understand these reviews, which hardly represent such a process. But on the other hand, and more importantly, the reviews do not address the substance of the paper’s argument, that organisation studies has very little to say about AGW. If it is not important, then, obviously, that does not matter, but, if it is important, then our ‘evidence’ surely merited a serious response?

Having now been warned of the disturbing vacuity of our paper, if any colleagues do read the offending piece we would be grateful for any feedback on it. Our point here is not that this is an especially worthy paper, but that it makes an argument that has not had a considered response so far, one that we feel is of particular importance to our field. So we would particularly like our ‘hypothesis’ comprehensively destroying, because if we are correct then ....
The Coming Crisis and Organisation Studies

by

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An earlier draft of this paper was presented at the SCOS conference on ‘Vision’, Lille 2010.
**Update**

In this paper we allude to a brief and admittedly unscientific survey of five ‘organisational’ journals, to assess the evidence for an interest in the field of organisation studies generally in the highly relevant topic of anthropogenic global warming. That was done in December 2011. An update, a year later, shows:

*Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of Management Studies* and *Organization* have published no main articles on AGW/climate change. *Human Relations* has published one.

*Organization Studies* (V 33, No.11) and *ephemera* (V12, No.1/2) have both had a special issue on climate change. The *ephemera* special issue also carried other relevant pieces in addition to the main articles.

This amounts to 15 relevant main articles out of a possible c.243, or just over 6%

We have ignored editorial pieces, reviews, notes etc., and counted only main articles. We have also ignored articles which merely make the now *de rigueur* passing reference to climate change or to a generalised concern with environmental or green issues.

Our concern is to identify the level of interest within the field of organisation studies, (as represented by our sample), in human-caused climate change. Some of the articles which acknowledge climate change are imprecise with regard to causation, that is, whether predominantly human or natural. This suggests that the degree of interest in human-caused climate change may be over-estimated in the above sample.

December 2012
Abstract

This paper is intended to be both provocative and polemical. In advocating the adoption of the precautionary principle, we nonetheless acknowledge that there is, as yet, very little evidence that Organisation Studies, as a field of study, is willing and/or able to respond effectively to the threat of Anthropogenic Global Warming. Yet this is viewed as an urgent necessity. It is argued that, although organisations and organisation are profoundly implicated in both the problem of, and potential solutions to, global warming, neither mainstream organisation theory nor its alter ego, critical management studies, appear to be able to make a significant contribution, but that the emergent approach based on Political Economy offers a greater possibility of addressing the salient issues.

Keywords

global warming; organisation studies; critique; political economy

A full-blown and planet-wide schizophrenia ... now rules: even as all sorts of ecological measures are being taken, even as a strategy for the proper use of the world, for an ideal interaction with the world, is being deployed, there is a simultaneous proliferation of enterprises of destruction, a total unleashing of the performance principle. And the very same forces often contribute to both trends. (Baudrillard 1993:119)

We live in interesting times. The world as we know it may be coming to an end, though equally, it may not. If it is coming to an end, it may be that we humans have precipitated this end, though equally, it may be nothing to do with our activities. If we are driving ourselves to destruction, it may be we can do something to reverse the trend and save humanity. Equally, it may be that it is already too late and we are doomed. Some might object to our equalising some or all of these probabilities. ‘Science’ is quite certain that we are heading for some ecosystemic disaster, though when, how big, and caused by what, are questions still very much in dispute. Obviously, there is dissent from this prediction, some of that dissent also informed by ‘science’. Still, the balance of argument undoubtedly favours the view that there is trouble ahead. For our purposes here, this threat can be distilled into what may be called ‘climate change as a consequence of Anthropogenic Global Warming’ (AGW). Let us assume that the threat of AGW is real, and that we have not yet reached the ‘point of no return’. The question then is, when will this tipping point occur? In truth, no-one knows when it will occur and, indeed, we are unlikely to be aware of it when it does occur. One popular candidate date is sometime in 2017. It will not, though, have a midnight-New-Year’s-Eve-like quality, when we can count down the final seconds to the end of the old epoch (though http://onehundredmonths.org is usefully providing a ticking doomsday clock for those who, following Kelvin, subscribe to the view that what you cannot measure, you cannot know). Almost certainly, we will not be sure that we have passed the tipping point until a long time – possibly years or even decades – after it has passed. Perhaps, though, 2017 is overly pessimistic – some suggest that we have as long as the present century in which to react, (or, on current evidence, carry on as we are, in the Micawber-ish hope that ‘something
will turn up). This uncertainty in proximity does not materially affect our argument. While the more distant date might make taking avoiding action less immediately painful, it might also distract attention from the fact that, even in the most optimistic scenario, time in which to act is frighteningly short.

There is, of course, no reason to assume that any of the knowledge claims about the future is, in any sense, objective. On the contrary, we can assume that all such knowledge claims are subject to the influences of, for example, Foucauldian discourse, Derridaen techno-mediatic power, the Lyotardian differend, the pursuit of desires irrespective of, and contrary to, interests, as elucidated by Deleuze and Guattari – why would knowledge claims about the end of the world be any different to claims in more settled times, or, indeed, about any other topic? Nonetheless, while such influences need to be acknowledged, they do not necessarily invalidate the claims that are being made. In any case, given the ubiquity of such claims, and the catastrophic consequences should they turn out to be accurate, surely it would be appropriate to adopt ‘the precautionary principle’ with regard to the future: if we take the warnings seriously and they turn out to be right, then we may have been able to do something to mitigate the effects; if we take them seriously and they turn out to be wrong, we may still have ameliorated the condition of the planet, and are unlikely to have made matters any worse. And, in spite of the ‘scientific’ uncertainties, it does appear that politicians and business, the ‘movers and shakers’ of our world, are starting to take the case for environmentally dysfunctional human activity ‘seriously’, insofar as they are encouraging/requiring the consumer-citizen to modify his/her behaviour. However, it is clear that installing low-energy light-bulbs, turning down the central heating one degree and driving five fewer miles per week, is not going to solve the problem of AGW. The interventions of individuals will never be enough. The situation has not occurred purely as the effect of the actions of individuals qua individuals – the impact of the actions of ‘collectivities’, such as organisations, must be far greater. So, what is needed is an acknowledgement of collective responsibility, and, therefore, an acknowledgement of the need for collective responses, at every imaginable level of recursion, from the local to the global. Although we, as individuals, must do what we can, we must also be able legitimately to demand that our organisations, too, should become as ecologically responsible as possible. Organisations (heuristically reified) cannot be exempted from responsibility to contribute solutions proportionate to their contribution to the problem. Organisations are going to have to ‘act’.

This presents an interesting challenge for the field of Organisation Studies (OS). If it is the case that human action is threatening the stability of our environment, and much of this effect is attributable to the activities of organisations, organisation theorists have also had a role to play in these activities, through the unending supply of exploitative techniques designed to help achieve the idealised goals of capitalism re-presented in its organisations. The thrust of orthodox, functionalist, Western, Organisation Theory (OT) has been to find ways of producing more from less in the context of an overall economic expansion, or ‘growth’, also understood at many levels of recursion. It can be suggested that it is precisely this pursuit of ever-increasing economic activity, irrespective of (unintended?) environmental
consequences, that has led to the current problem. But, while organisation theorists may well have been significant, if unwitting, actors in creating the current problem, we would suggest that they are, at present, ill-equipped to evaluate the current state of play. But the apparent unpreparedness of OT to contribute to solutions rather than to problems, in the context of reorganising organisation, itself constitutes an obstacle to achieving effective action. However, to quote Baudrillard again,

We are certainly further and further removed from the solution, but nearer and nearer to the problem. (Baudrillard 2005:34)

In this paper we argue that OT, although a contributor to the problem of Global Warming, will not prove to be part of the answer to it. Indeed, OT is much more likely to perform the role of providing a spurious ‘scientific’ legitimacy to corporate practices which combat AGW, but do so mainly at the level of the signifier. We argue further that approaches critical of OT will also be largely ineffectual, given that they tend to be parasitic on OT and to lack a relevant political agenda. We do, however, see the nascent interest of some elements of OS in Political Economy as offering some contribution to combating AGW, but only by developing into a paradigm distinct from OT. As Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos so neatly put it:

Escape is not opposed to or against the regimes of control in which it emerges; escape betrays the regime of control by carefully evacuating its terrain... (2008: 75)

A short comment here about our use of terms: for the sake of brevity, OS is used to connote the field of Organisation Studies in general; OT, as indicated above, is used to connote mainstream, orthodox, Organisation Theory, while CMS is used as an umbrella term to connote the work of those who are critical of OT. The justification for these usages is explored later in the paper.

**AGW, organisations and the field of Organisation Studies**

The major contributors to AGW are the industrialised countries with their excessive use of fossil fuel. One of the most obvious responses to the growing acceptance of the existence of AGW has been to initiate a 'blame-game'. Part of this has focussed on who are the major villains - developing countries, shipping, air travel, and travel more generally, domestic consumers, and so on, have been commonly cited as culprits, but, for our purposes here, we would suggest that it is appropriate to emphasise that all such candidates are comprised by organisations. OT has generally not concerned itself with the most basic levels of organisation in society, such as domestic units, but has been more focused on higher level forms, especially economic organisations. Traditionally, OT has seen its role as providing managers with ways of achieving ever-increasing efficiencies. While what this means and how it may be recognised is imprecise, it is uncontroversial to say that, for the outputs of OT to be acceptable to managers, they must offer a promise of more for less. This constitutes part of the compact between capital, government, knowledge production and labour, in pursuit of abstracted economic growth: capital seeking accumulation, government seeking an enlarged
national pie, knowledge production increasingly serving business and labour preferring consumption to emancipation. Political Economy, with the ‘political’ excised, reigns as ‘economics-as-science’ and, therefore, presents itself as value neutral. Economics – supposedly the efficient allocation of scarce resources - has become, effectively, the science of more for less, and, as such, provides the spiritual, if unacknowledged, home of OT.

It must, of course, be considered whether organisations are influenced in their practices by OT and opinion is divided on this. Indeed, some would argue that rather than OT shaping organisational practice, it merely gives existing practice the legitimating gloss of science. What can be said is that the field of OT, as a guide to getting more for less, forms a significant part of the education of those who will run organisations in the future, whether through business/management degrees, obligatory add-ons to other (related or not) specialisms such as medicine, vocational programmes, in-house training, popular television, and so on. The enthusiasm of the business world for exercising political influence on education in order to ensure that the outputs should embody the skills, and the conceptual orientation, which it believes it requires should also be noted.

One of the key obsessions in contemporary society is performance and its improvement. This is clear in all kinds of organisation, including, of course, in economic organisations. Indeed, performativity has become a central motif in governance of the state. It is an explicit conviction of all the main political parties that more can be extracted from government functions for less. Large numbers, of spurious validity, are brandished, free from demonstration, to give an unchallengeable ‘truth’ to their assertions. Performance is also an obsession in OT and thus it is in perfect congruence with the socio-political-cultural-economic zeitgeist. The matrix in which this zeitgeist is embedded is capitalism, and its fellow traveller is managerialism. Following Burnham’s (1945) *The Managerial Revolution*, it has been popular to distinguish between the interests of capital and those of managers. The extreme view, and Burnham's own, sees power in the hands of a managerial elite with an interest prior to ownership, whether private or state. A weaker form sees a disconnect between the rational pursuit of the interests of ownership and the daily concerns and actions of managers, a view typical of much contemporary OT. This has led to disregard of the demand that managers must act in the interests of ownership to an extent acceptable to owners, otherwise they can, and will, be fired - managers rely on owners for their employment. To focus on managers rather than on ownership is to forget that the raison d’être of management is to serve ownership, even if that is not the raison d'être of managers. This understanding of management applies equally to private and public ownership and, with the continued privatisation of the public sphere over the past three decades, a world where organisation is dominated by the priority of private profit has become ever more pervasive.

The apparent unassailability of capitalism, and the unacceptability of subjecting it to question or criticism, is increasingly, and unequivocally, asserted in these troubled times:

*We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new*
realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.

This quote, attributed to the White House aide Karl Rove, (Suskind 2004), relates to the America of George W. Bush, but is, perhaps, equally appropriate as a description of contemporary capitalism and the relationship of OT to it.

Given that the fundamental raison d'être of capitalism is to make money from money, and that capitalist organisations exist to do this, the trumpeting of other supposed purposes which effectively mask the true purpose of capital accumulation can be parenthesised, even ignored. The mission of OT has been to facilitate this purpose, indeed OT would not be tolerated if its prescriptions led to the erosion of capital. Even if OT has no influence on organisational practice, its findings are always congruent with the interests of capital. What we might call the 'official approach' to AGW is predicated on the solution being within capitalism - in other words, it is an a priori assumption that capitalism itself is not part of the problem of AGW, but is quintessential to the 'solution' and, moreover, that capitalism must be able to benefit from whatever is proposed should be done to ameliorate AGW's effects.

The anatomy of the field of Organisation Studies

We intend here to characterise the field of OS as comprised of just two broad approaches, a mainstream orthodoxy, which is dominant, and approaches that are, at various levels, critical of the mainstream. The largely Functionalist orthodoxy, which we call here OT, typically focuses on solving the problems of managers, as defined by managers, within an overall objective of improving capitalist organisational efficiency, ultimately measured in terms of profit. However, it has long been argued by some that such concerns are inappropriate and inadequate for OS. For example:

Organisation theory is ... an alienating force, concerned with the wrong issues and the wrong problems, ... an essentially conservative enterprise which underpins the present system of ideological domination within contemporary society. (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:312)

The approaches of this smaller group of dissenters from the orthodoxy, who favour other goals or explanations, are generally characterised as Critical Organisation Theory. Within this group there is a wide range of interests and opinions about what the focus of OT should be. At one end of the spectrum there is mild disapproval of capitalist excess, seen as capable of being remedied by an adequate dose of control or self-control – this can be characterised as part of the 'fundamentalist wing' of the interest in Corporate Social Responsibility, focused on giving capitalism a 'human face'; at the other end of the spectrum are those who express a thoroughgoing, root and branch, fear and loathing of capitalism and all its works. For the sake of convenience, we label this entire 'critical tendency' Critical Management Studies (CMS), on the grounds that the unfortunately titled CMS has become the public and acceptable face of critique. According to Wikipedia (1), CMS was begat by Alvesson and Willmott in 1992 and, while the official Critical Management website does speak of interest in both management and organization studies, the emphasis on management (which we would see as
a mere component in organisation) in the title adopted by this group, coupled with the idea that it is a relatively recent phenomenon, has a rather narrowing effect on the subject and somewhat ignores the previous century or so of the critique of organisation - the awareness of the perils and dysfunctions of capitalism are coeval with capitalism itself, and the willingness of science to legitimate both capitalism and management practice is similarly ancient.

Capitalist organisations have always had their critics within the field of OS. Prior to about 1980 these criticisms were expressed in terms that were predominantly counter-ideological, often from a Marxist-inspired position. After 1980 this approach weakened in the face of a growing, and multi-paradigmatic, epistemological revolution, informing a new kind of critique which soon came to prominence. However, this new approach has not significantly threatened organisational practice, and early expectations that exposing the un-scientific, and therefore ideologically biased, nature of mainstream OT would inevitably lead to emancipatory practice have not been realised. The impotence of this critique has come to be manifested in apparently endless, and increasingly micro-level, analyses, drifting further and further away from any possibility of influence. Much of this critique, implicitly or explicitly, accepts capitalism as a given, and thus not itself warranting analysis.

Critique is inevitably parasitic (literally, 'eating alongside') upon that which it criticises and thrives as its host thrives (Miller 1977). However, the relationship is mutually beneficial. The infinite adaptability of capitalism allows it to absorb criticism and turn it to its use, legitimated by an obliging mainstream OT and providing further inspiration for critique (see also Boltanski and Chiapello 2007) - one might point to the example of the entry into functionalist theory of Foucauldian concepts. The parasitic relationship of critique to its 'host', however, has other significant consequences: in the era of ideological critique, mainstream OT embraced a pluralistic model of the labour process, while, in contrast, critique embodied a conflict theory approach; by the end of the last millennium, unitarism had become the orthodoxy, epitomised in Human Resource Management, while critique opted for pluralism. In other words, as the orthodoxy moves back towards more monological positions, critical approaches follow. Perhaps a point will be reached where there is no substantive criticism of the orthodoxy, and debate becomes no more than arguments about minor differences (but see Grey 2007). This tendency has been exacerbated by an almost sentimental aversion amongst the critical to acknowledging the incommensurability of knowledge paradigms, thus diverting efforts to the (we would argue, fruitless) pursuit of a unified knowledge of organisations.

However, there is evidence of the emergence of a new critical paradigm which does not take its lead from capitalism. This approach, informed by Political Economy, (with the 'political' reinstated) sees capitalism as not only the problem, but a problem analysis of which should be prior to any analysis of organisational process and practice. We would thus characterise OS, in the face of the threat of global warming, as comprising the traditional facilitating functionalist major paradigm, a parasitic but impotent supposedly critical paradigm, and an emergent negatory, explicitly capitalist-critical, political economic paradigm.
**AGW and the future of OT**

In the past, in times of crisis, such as war, knowledge production has given its attention to the problems of resolving that crisis (see, for example, Edgerton 2011). Thus, in the case of OT, during the First World War the Myers group, addressing production issues, overturned the prevailing wisdom that longer working hours equalled more output and demonstrated, empirically, that both productivity and production could be optimised if the working day was limited to 8 hours (incidentally giving some legitimacy to the ‘rightness’ of the 8 hour day for all workers - this was a significant emancipatory gain for those who worked, reducing, to some extent, the then all-consuming character of work, but which has, interestingly, not been improved upon in the last 100 years). During the Second World War Scientific Management became important in job design and Management Science was applied to, for example, optimising logistics. Operations Research contributed directly to the success of the Berlin Airlift in 1948-9, helping to save many lives. None of these approaches can be seen as being critical of the prevailing ideologies of the protagonists of the time - absolute monarchy, democratic capitalism, left-wing dictatorship, right-wing dictatorship, theocratic imperium, all sides in war are served by ‘science’ of sorts. There was no conflict of interest here because capitalism is not troubled by war, it provides, on all sides, money-making opportunities, before, during and after the event. Anything that helped the war effort, on any side, potentially helped Capital. However, we now face a threat which is not just national or regional, but one that affects the entire planet and that has the potential to create greater suffering than all wars so far. Can we then expect OT to put itself on a ‘war-footing’ and help efforts to tackle the ‘enemy’? The answer would appear to be ‘no’.

OT, as a predominantly empirical approach, takes its lead from what capitalist organisations already do and seeks to ‘improve’ it, within terms that are congruent with its pre-existing commitment to capitalism. Examples of OT bringing into being something not already predicated in existing practice are as rare as hens' teeth. The difficulty for OT in facing the threat of AGW in any meaningful way is, within its discourse, the inadmissibility of solutions to problems that do not benefit capitalism - indeed, which see capitalism as itself potentially part of the problem (even if it eventually turned out that capitalism is not part of the problem, the threat is surely sufficiently serious that that should not be assumed a priori). However, there will still be plenty of work for OT, since the currently dominant view of the ‘solution’ to AGW entails enhanced opportunities for ‘increasing’ organisational efficiency, the emergence of new products and processes, the measuring and policing of limits - all profit-making opportunities in the context of continued growth.

The self-imposed ideological constraints that characterise OT mean that, in so far as AGW is considered to be a relevant concern for the field of organisation and management studies, the possible responses available are extremely limited. Thus, for example, it has been suggested that the tipping point in AGW is to be avoided by the discovery and development of new sources of non-carbon-based fuel, the more efficient use of existing carbon-based fuel, the capture and containment of excess carbon, all in the context of increased growth and all of which provide opportunities for the creation of private profit. In other words, business as usual, both literally and metaphorically. The task for OT will be to facilitate the achievement
of these ends. Given its compromised position, OT finds it difficult to address AGW other than at one remove. That is, it can only deal with AGW in so far as it is a problem defined for it by business. This sad state of affairs is evidenced by the lack of interest in OT journals. A survey by Goodall (2008) found that, in the top 30 management and business journals (rated by impact factor and citations), between 1970 and 2006, there were 9 articles on global warming, out of a total of 31,000, and 44 if the search was extended to the top 50 journals. A recent survey of Administrative Science Quarterly and Journal of Management Studies showed no improvement since then. Nor does there seem to be evidence of interest at conferences - for example, one of the main OS conferences, EGOS, has no Standing Working Group on AGW and its relevance for organisations, and has no cognate stream at the colloquium for 2012. This situation strongly suggests that OT will continue to be irrelevant with respect to AGW. More significantly, it can be expected to contribute to any worsening of the situation by giving the desires of business the legitimacy of ‘science’: business will provide the rhetoric and OT will produce the relevant supportive ‘facts’.

It is instructive to note that the silence surrounding the role of capitalism in AGW is not confined to OT, naturally enough. In an otherwise illuminating account of the ‘real’ story of AGW by one of its main protagonists and a co-Nobel laureate, the late Stephen H. Schneider, Science as a Contact Sport, (sub-titled ‘Inside the Battle to save Earth’s Climate’), (2009), there is an almost total absence of any reference to capitalism. Indeed, there is no mention at all of capitalism in relation to the causes of AGW (though see 2009: 83), but loan guarantees to venture capitalists with promising ideas are advocated (2009:270-272) - using public money to underwrite private risk in the hope of useful technologies emerging.

**AGW and CMS**

Although the interpretation of the problem of AGW, and its solution, offered by capitalism is widely promulgated, and eagerly grasped by those who would like to deny the seriousness of the situation, there are many dissenters who remain unconvinced. To represent such dissent, surely it might be reasonable to expect some interest from CMS? But an extension of the above survey into journals that are seen as more receptive to a critical perspective, as identified by the Critical Management website, such as *Organization*, *Organization Studies*, *Human Relations* and *ephemera*, shows no greater interest, as yet, than is represented in the more orthodox OT journals (2). And, at the last two most recent CMS conferences (2009, 2011) there has been no stream on AGW and just one on ‘environmental challenge’ (3).

Burrell and Morgan (1979) posit a then nascent antithesis to OT which they label anti-organisation theory – an inchoate, but 'Radical Humanist', opposition to the pre-epistemological assumptions of OT. They define it as a ‘perspective [that] constitutes an anti-organisation theory in that its propositions stand in fundamental opposition to those of functionalist organisation theory’ (1979:311) and characterise those working in anti-organisation theory as
concerned to demonstrate that alternatives are available. Alternative realities
alternative cultures, alternative technologies, alternatives to work – these lie at the
centre of their attention. (1979:317)

Relevant to our concerns here, they also note that

(p)roblems characteristic of, for example, the ecological crisis figure prominently in
the analysis of the ills of modern society, to the overthrow of which the radical
humanist is deeply committed. (1979:318)

We should remind ourselves that this was written over 30 years ago; although popular
awareness of AGW may be more recent, the idea that we are ravaging our planet is nothing
new (see also Schneider 2009:1).

CMS is largely in agreement with the precepts of anti-organisation theory about critique and
about interest in alternatives. The Critical Management website informs us that:

CMS is a largely left-wing and theoretically informed approach in the management
and organization studies that aims to produce knowledge that would challenge the
prevailing conventional understanding of management, managers, businesses and
organizations. Hence, it is intended to provide a platform for debating radical
alternatives whilst interrogating the established relations of power, control,
domination and ideology in the organizations as well as the relations among
businesses, society and people. (http://www.criticalmanagement.org/)

However, in practice, the revolutionary intent of anti-organisation theory seems to be absent.
Indeed, in early, and influential, articulations of a project for CMS, Alvesson and Willmott
(1992, 1996) advocate the pursuit of micro-emancipatory interventions in existing
identifiable manifestations of domination:

The idea of microemancipation is to search for such loopholes in managerial and
organizational control that arise from the contradictory character of power techniques
and their ideological reproduction.(1992:446)

But the goals pursued by CMS have had much more to do with understanding conditions of
subjection than with how to change them - generally, CMS has been notable for its aversion
to prescription. This issue is also acknowledged on the Critical Management website,
specifically drawing attention to a comment by Spicer, Alvesson and Kärreman (2009) that
‘there have been suggestions to make CMS critically performative.’ Spicer et al argue that
CMS should commit itself to active and pragmatic intervention in debates about
management, and should ’encourage progressive forms of management’ (2009:537).
However, this appears, in the end, to be nothing more than ‘micro-emancipation plus’:

Organizations can be seen as rich fields for micro-emancipation. These are
manoeuvres that do not necessarily involve significant changes in the short run.
Rather, they gradually reduce the constraints that people in organizations face and
also give them more latitude for initiative and self-determination. (Spicer et al 2009: 553)

While micro-emancipatory efforts are, no doubt, welcomed by those thus relieved of their experienced oppression, this does not equate to a general easing of the dominant macro-level repression within which it is contained: micro-emancipations do not aggregate to create an emancipated society. Remedying a component when the entire edifice is corrupt may serve only to mask and prolong repression. Unfortunately, long experience of the impact of critique suggests that that aspect of CMS which takes as its problematic the amelioration of relatively minor instances of repression may even be contributing to the continued success of capitalism, by pointing out needless potential trouble-spots.

There is a further, poignant, irony to be discerned in the productions of CMS. There is often prolific reference to analytical frameworks drawn from the work of social theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari (eg, 1984, 1988), Guattari (eg 2000), Hardt and Negri (eg 2000, 2006). This work is profoundly anti-capitalist and interventionist, and it could be argued that its use in this manner implies a much more radical agenda. This work also, specifically, resonates deeply with the possibilities of responding to the threat of AGW. Yet, increasingly, it seems that such source material is used selectively and constrained to the role of analytical tool. Of course, such sources cannot be manipulated into utility for capitalist organisations, but, we would suggest, that is precisely its value. Thus, for example, in The Three Ecologies, Guattari, seeking to 'counter the pervasive atmosphere of dullness and passivity' (2000: 69), argues:

There is at least a risk that there will be no more human history unless humanity undertakes a radical reconsideration of itself. We must ward off, by every means possible, the entropic rise of a dominant subjectivity. Rather than remaining subject, in perpetuity, to the seductive efficiency of economic competition, we must reappropriate Universes of value, so that processes of singularization can rediscover their consistency. (2000: 68)

**AGW and the future of CMS**

The ‘anti’ of anti-organisation theory derives from the Greek for ‘against’ and denotes a judgement already made, whereas the ‘critical’ of CMS comes from the Latin (and, previous to that, the Greek) to judge, and its early use referred to judgement as to the critical point in a disease, the point at which things get better or worse. One might indeed see CMS in terms of judging the state of criticality of contemporary organisations. However, judgements can be favourable or unfavourable but do not, in themselves, entail prescription. As long as CMS remains parasitic on that which it criticises, and thus, wittingly or unwittingly, has its agenda set by capitalism, it will remain impotent (see also Carter and Jackson 1998).

With the advent of AGW we can expect organisations to increase their levels of control. Over the past three decades managers, in spite of the rhetoric of releasing the hidden potential of
workers, have accumulated more and more power over labour and this trend will surely continue. AGW offers previously unrecognised areas where control can be increased. AGW may become the ultimate rationalisation of management action, irrespective of its relevance to, and the efficacy of, particular actions. Who can resist claims of ‘saving the planet’? In the way that business values and business managers have colonised the social world generally, the manager has acquired the role of the ‘white knight’, or ‘knight errant’. Need a low performing school sorting out? a health service ‘rescuing’? an economy fixing? Send for a manager! The almost total penetration of capitalist business logic into our everyday life has produced an apparently irresistible totalising force, and has redefined our understanding of civil society. Surely then AGW is an ideal problem for managers, an opportunity to extend their sphere of influence? And so it is turning out.

As micromanagement has increased vis à vis workers, so companies have sought to extend this logic externally. For example, consumers are now punished if they wish to pay their bills in other than the supplier’s preferred manner and it is not uncommon for cash to be refused as a method of payment. The current intention to phase out cheques is another example, even though, in the UK alone, there are currently some 500 million cheque transactions per year. The rationale for these initiatives is that they reduce costs for business or, put another way, make them more profitable. However, gloss this with the imperative of helping to combat AGW and it becomes much less resistible. This is, of course, currently an emerging incentive proffered by companies who are pushing paperless billing. As management becomes more pervasive, less escapable, more repressive, the opportunity for CMS to analyse this will increase commensurately. Indeed, the more CMS focuses on the misdemeanours of capitalism, rather than upon its major offences, the more use it becomes to capital. It would not be unreasonable to expect that CMS will become an important part of the system of checks and balances so important to democratic government and so important in maintaining the status quo.

A particular feature of CMS has been long introspection on such threats of incorporation, on what CMS is and what it is for. Lefebvre’s comment, in the context of an earlier critical moment, about the Girondins, that ‘caught in the spell of their own eloquence, they forgot to pass beyond words’ (1962: 210), seems relevant here. This essentially autopoietic activity allows considerable busy-ness, but distracts attention from the need for useful outputs. We might well expect this sense of despair to increase as AGW unfolds and CMS reflects further on its own apparent impotence. One of the issues taxing CMS is its close relationship with Business and Management Schools, and what ought to be its attitude to them (see, for example, Rowlinson and Hassard (2011) on these issues). Some in CMS have mused on the potential for CMS to emulate the profession of medicine and pursue the elimination of the very reason for its existence (see, eg, Parker 2005). Others see a future where the relationship between CMS and OT is symbiotic, rather than parasitic (see, eg, Grey 2007).

There seems to be no sense of urgency in CMS, no sense that, where-ever it chooses to focus its concerns, there is anything less than an infinity of time available for bringing about desired change. It would seem likely that, in time, CMS might become more interested in
addressing the threat of AGW, seeing that as part of its remit, if only because it is already being used to justify increasing control - but can we wait?

**AGW and Political Economy**

Earlier we temporarily adopted CMS as the umbrella term for opposition to OT and here we want to refine our usage. There have always been dissenters who do not come within our above characterisation of CMS. Some of these have actively distanced themselves from the CMS organisation, while others have lurked uneasily within it. One feature of this dissent has been an overt commitment to what was articulated above as the radical humanist project. This group does not see the micro-tuning of contemporary conditions as the way forward and it is to this approach that we look for a response to AGW in the study of organisations.

In one of the many memorable phrases in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari assert that there is no danger of capitalism going mad, it is already mad (1984:373). There is an echo of this in the quotation from Baudrillard at the opening of this paper. As noted, the works of the post-structuralists have been a major feature of the new epistemological critique, but less prominent are the ends to which such an awareness should lead (see, for example, Deleuze and Guattari 1984:344). Clearly, without some immediately applicable miracle of technology, the current official response to AGW identified by Baudrillard cannot succeed, and we must assume that such a miracle will not be forthcoming. The preconscious investments of the ruling elite and the false-consciousness of their fellow travellers prevent any recognition that the system itself is to blame and cannot deliver what they desire it to do. The idea that democratic capitalism is the ultimate state of human development, the end of history, the transcendence of ideology, the scientific realisation of the natural order, the truly rational society, has simultaneously masked its historical-specific nature and precluded rational, in the sense of open to debate and refutation, enquiry as to alternatives. While we might all agree that the efficient allocation of scarce resources is a good thing, without illuminating what is entailed by ‘efficient’, and within which criteria, we cannot understand the particular goodness of any outcome. As a simple example, the enormous payments made to senior figures in business are justified in terms of their possession of peculiar skills which can only be made use of in the presence of large amounts of money. This ‘truth’ is averred by the people themselves or their supporters and has certainly not been demonstrated empirically. We should not forget the ‘excessive anality of wealth’. In a sane society we would be giving these people psychological help, not feeding their compulsion. The love of money for its own sake is ‘a somewhat disgusting morbidity, one of those semi-criminal, semi-pathological propensities which one hands over with a shudder to the specialists in mental disease.’ That an economist wrote this is something of a surprise, but then that it was Keynes is perhaps a little less surprising (Keynes [1930] 1963:369). The idea that society should be organised to satisfy such grotesque desires indicates how far we are from being able to take such threats as AGW seriously. It is relevant that the current ‘solution’ to the Greek debt crisis being formulated by the money markets would, according to one commentator, effectively ‘outlaw Keynesian economics’ (Traynor 2012). It is just this kind of (politically motivated) attempt to deny the political (ideological) underpinnings of the conduct of economics, and to protect the image of economics as unchallengeable science preeminent in the governance of global
affairs, that is, we would suggest, emasculating constructive debate about how to face the threat of AGW. This is why the reappearance of political economy as a framework for analysis is to be welcomed.

The resurgence of interest in Political Economy in the study of organisations has been noted by a number of commentators (see, for example, Jackson and Carter 2009, Rowlinson and Hassard 2011) and there are some notable coalitions of researchers, such as, in the UK, The Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy at the University of Leicester, and like-minded groupings at Queen Mary College London, and the University of Essex - see also on-line resources such as the journal ephemera and the publisher Mayfly. Maier (1987) argues that political economy has two advantages as a frame for analysis: firstly, it starts from the assumption that economic ideas and behaviour are beliefs and actions that are 'contingent and problematic' and, therefore must be themselves analysed and explained within particular political and social contexts (1987:6); additionally, as well as explaining political behaviour in terms of economics, it can be applied to analyse economic choices in terms of political 'forces' - for example, the means by which political 'resources' are mobilised in order to bring about desired economic policies (1987:3). Thus, political economy reverses the current 'wisdom' of defining the political in terms of what is economically rational by interrogating economic choices in terms of the informing political interests. An organisation theory which focussed on, firstly, rejecting all a priori assumptions and, secondly, on making central to its considerations both micro- and macro-politics does offer possibilities for a meaningful contribution to combating AGW. By, minimally, acknowledging the role of capitalism in AGW the scope of possibilities can be dramatically widened.

It is difficult to identify a single aspect of capitalism that does not have potential relevance to facing the threat of AGW - even its most fundamental tenets need to be interrogated. For example, the routine assertion of the superiority of private over public ownership is a feature of all main political parties and is relatively unchallenged by political commentators. However, this has never been subject to, say, a controlled experiment, and, although presented as 'truth', remains just uninformed personal belief. From an OS perspective, there is no reason why a private organisation should perform any better than a public one, if it operated under the same constraints. If the constraints are not the same, then no claim for the natural superiority of one of them can be entertained. Historically, public sector constraints have been very different to those experienced by the private sector, and this is, precisely, an issue of politics, not one of economics. There is a belief, explicit or implicit, amongst critics of the public sector that its managers lack the vision, inspiration, motivation, etc, of those in the private sector and that its employees are idle, featherbedded and venal. The incomprehension of the ruling elite of the resistance, albeit half-hearted, to reductions in public sector pension prospects was predicated, not on what would be reasonable and just in a rich, civilised society, but on the conviction that current provision was excessive, and better than that in the private sector. However, both history and science show attitudes to public ownership to be an issue of ideology, not fact. This vilification of public ownership, which has received little critical attention in OT, has particular significance for AGW. One feature of contemporary government is its claimed inability to control even things it itself claims to
find excessive in privately owned companies, such as bankers' bonuses, because they are privately owned. Thus, on this reading, as more government functions are privatised, the less the government will be able to control. In the context of AGW this is potentially disastrous.

On 23 February 2012 the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, made a speech in which he condemned criticism of business activities and morality as no more than rank snobbery:

In recent months we've heard some dangerous rhetoric creep into our national debate: that wealth creation is somehow anti-social, that business people are somehow out for themselves. I think we have to fight this mood with everything that we've got, not just because it is wrong for our economy - because we need the jobs and the investment that business brings - but because it is also wrong for our society. (http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/business-in-the-community/, emphasis added)

But we simply cannot afford to parenthesise the role of business, and of capitalism, in society in general, and in AGW in particular. It is urgently necessary to analyse the role of the political in the economic, and it is this that we would expect an organisation theory based on Political Economy to provide.

**AGW and the future of Political Economy**

If, by some, perhaps divine, intervention, OT suddenly, and collectively, believed in AGW with a tipping point in the fairly near future, it would still be unable to come up with any meaningful contribution to its avoidance. To do this would be to abandon, at an instant, the entire informing logic of the past century or so. If one were seeking parallels for such a dramatic change, one would have to look to such things as the Reformation, the French Revolution, the collapse of regimes such as Japan and Germany in 1945 and of the Soviet sphere of influence in the 1990s. In such cases we see the overturning of dominant understandings which, shortly before, appeared unassailable. Using Kuhnian paradigms as a trope, such revolutions in thinking typically require, not a Damascan conversion of the old thinkers, but their replacement with a new generation who think the ‘new’ way (Kuhn 1970:152). However, whereas in politics, where overnight regime changes can bring with them overnight changes in thinking, when the context is of knowledge production alone, such revolutions are not instantaneous, and typically take years. But we do not have years. In knowledge revolutions, thinkers in the normal paradigm find difficulties in accepting extra-paradigmatic understandings because they present a challenge to their ‘knowing’ of the world. In effect, the ‘old guard’ are being told that they are wrong and no longer qualified to speak. Not only is this a psychological threat, but it is also a threat to careers, to power and influence. Even if we could parenthesise the ego-threat, mainstream OT, having been a loyal servant of capitalism, would need a new ‘master’, or to find a way to be its own 'master'. If the answer to organization’s problems is not increasing efficiency, then what could it be? (We are assuming here that the light which has, miraculously, shone on OT has not similarly shone on the owners of capital and their groupies.) We see no reason why Baudrillard’s ‘schizophrenia’ should not continue unabated. As long as the understanding of efficiency
prevalent in OT is given to it by capital - more profit from less investment where ‘less’ is always growing - then AGW remains an irrelevance, at least until it begins to bite.

In the post-tipping point world it is generally agreed that the availability of basic resources such as food and water and usable agricultural land will decline. Hunger and poverty will increase, as will migratory pressure from, for example, low lying coastal areas, expanding deserts, and so on. Resources will be monopolised, at first by the rich countries and then by the rich. For this monopolisation of resources to work effectively, increased repression will be necessary. As part of the traditional, and ongoing, antipathy of government to the ‘masses’ of the governed, and that of capital to labour, an increasingly reactionary climate has been growing since the 1980s. As Padopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos note, there is a ‘combination of post-Fordist strategies for the accumulation of capital with a transformation of social regulation which releases the government from its protectionist responsibilities for society and redistributes risk into the realm of the ordinary’ (2008: 114). Examples might include the, often technically illegal, suppression of union power, erosion of working conditions, restrictions on protest, the rationing of health care, the end of free higher education, and so on, and on. The rationale given for increasing levels of control is, often, the presence of external threats, such as the global economy, the global market place, world terrorism, hostile regimes, etc. AGW clearly presents similar opportunities for the repressive urge.

What about the prospects for an approach to thinking about the future of organisation based on political economy? As noted above, this approach reverses, analytically, the currently dominant direction of rationality: instead of accounting for politics according to the rationality of economics, economic choices need to be analysed in terms of political forces (and there are manifestations of a popular adoption of such an approach in the protests attending various economic and climate change summits, and in the Occupy movement). It must be hoped that the politics of AGW are to prevent the reaching of the tipping point. Assuming that this could be done - although this is, of course, not certain - the action required is fairly clear, if not easy to achieve: emissions have to be reduced to a sustainable level. The quickest way to achieve this would be to stop all unnecessary carbon usage (whatever that means), but, unfortunately, this seems to be the most difficult thing to achieve. Anything that threatens growth, or the ability of investments to produce an acceptable return, is, at present, inadmissible to the discussion. Because these are economic considerations they, conventionally, escape, or are protected from, political analysis. One particular example of this freedom is the case of carbon emissions trading, a tool beloved of governments, energy companies and financial institutions, because it claims efficacy at the same time as increasing money-making opportunities - compare this with the compelling evidence, and the argument that the carbon trading markets are a ‘scam’, in Böhm and Dahbi 2009. Böhm and Dahbi also suggest, for example, that evidence implies that judgements have already been made about some countries and corporations being ‘more sustainable’ than others, and that the interests of those countries and corporations are being prioritised over those of the 'less sustainable' (2009:10). Such examples demand to be analysed in terms that, from the start, examine the political beliefs underpinning the economic practice. The discursive restrictions on such
political analysis are not recognised by an approach based on political economy, and this, we would argue, is precisely what the study of organisation needs.

**Thinking the unthinkable?**

Speaking with the cultural authority of a scientist, McGuire (2012) pulls no punches:

> Unless there is a dramatic and completely unexpected turnaround in the way in which the human race manages itself and the planet, then future prospects for our civilisation look increasingly grim. (2012: 270, emphasis added)

The world is facing a crisis of epic proportions. Organisations are deeply implicated in the causes of the crisis, but facing it, even ameliorating its effects, are also matters of organisation. If OS is to contribute to what is, prima facie, directly in its sphere of interest, then, on current form, it is an approach based on Political Economy that offers the most utility. Issues that are anathema to capitalism must become the meat and drink of such an approach to understanding organisation. We must start by questioning anything and everything that is not essential to life, beginning with the most frivolous and going as far as is necessary towards the merely desired: for example, the freedom of capital, luxury goods, cheap flights, food miles, disposability, consumer goods ..... We must interrogate practices whose only rationale is their contribution to profit: the denigration of public ownership, excessive working, systematic encouragement of consumption, corporate 'bling', private transport, the closure of local facilities, opposition to free public transport ... Of course, all such questioning implies pain for the capitalist, but is that sufficient reason to allow AGW free reign? There is a long history of businesses failing and owners losing money when their products are no longer wanted or allowed - this used to be called the working of the market. We should not worry about these losers in the effort to combat AGW. After all, when labour is no longer required, it is disposed of without regret, although, while all capital creates is money, what labour creates is wealth. If we are not prepared to interrogate issues such as these, then we are not serious about facing up to AGW.

**Footnotes**

(1) While we would not advocate Wikipedia as an authoritative source, it is certainly a formative one, because it is often the first port of call for those who wish to learn about a topic.

(2) In a very imperfect survey, a keyword search of the six journals mentioned here, using 'global warming' and 'climate change', for 2010 and 2011, revealed ten articles - that is, about 2% of the total - that were of some relevance, and a number of passing references, plus one call for papers (Organization Studies), an issue that has yet to appear.

(3) Indeed, when an early version of this paper was presented at a conference in 2010 - not a CMS conference, but one that would be seen as part of the 'critical tendency' - it was one of only two papers at that conference addressing the topic of AGW.
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