Making space for sustainability: design versus practice

Conveners: Suzanne Benn (University of Sydney Technology, Australia) email: suzanne.benn@uts.edu.au; Krista Bondy (University of Bath, UK), email: kb310@management.bath.ac.uk; Tommy Jensen (Stockholm University, Sweden) email: tje@fek.su.se and Johan Sandström (Luleå University of Technology, Sweden) email: johan.sandstrom@ltu.se

Given many fundamental environmental and social problems, there is a strong need to design spaces, both social and physical, in which more sustainable practices can develop and flourish. However, strategists are continuously haunted by the empirical fact that the inhabitants of designed spaces do not always follow the intentions of that space’s design in practice. In fact there is a growing body of work suggesting that spaces designed for sustainability are used in order to perpetuate unsustainable practices.

In this session, we welcome contributions from a variety of perspectives and contexts that address the seeming tension between designing space for sustainability and its practice. In particular, we are interested in contributions that help to compare top-down design of sustainability spaces and a more bottom-up use of such spaces, or conversely, spaces that were not originally designed for sustainability and are being used to develop more sustainable practices. Below we have listed some tentative ideas related to this overall topic:

• **Internal spaces:** how is sustainability included in the design and practice of governance protocols; management systems such as control or rewards systems; functions and sectors such as teaching within Universities, stakeholder engagement within NGOs, or policy development within government?

• **Institutional spaces:** how and why are sustainability designs/practices translated into different contexts and how are they represented within organisations? How does the blurring of boundaries between government, civil society and business influence forms of sustainability regulation such as formal, voluntary and co-regulation?

• **Shared spaces:** in times of fragmentation of movements, individualization, economization, globalization etc., how are spaces for collective learning and social movements that might support sustainability created, upheld and terminated? What are regarded as safe spaces for learning and organising?

• **Edge spaces:** how do boundary objects help create or destroy spaces for sustainability? What influence do they have on reinforcing established routines or creative knowledge development? How does sustainability challenge existing ideas of boundaries such as local/global and how does it operate in such spaces?

• **In-between spaces:** how do organising groups for sustainability link? How do these networks function and learn? How might this learning be translated and represented within organisations? How maneuverable, transferable, generalizable or translatable are these ideas and their outcomes such as codes, practices, processes etc.?

• **Virtual spaces:** how do actors design/practice sustainability within virtual spaces? Are there differences to how sustainability is designed and practiced in physical spaces?

• **Creative spaces:** how/why might sustainability act as inspiration for, or destroy, innovation in the design/redesign of spaces?
• **Power in spaces**: how is power framed within the sustainability debate and in what ways does this shape sustainability design/practice within selected spaces?
• **Challenging spaces**: epistemological - how do we know that we are studying such spaces? Ethical - what are the ethical dilemmas in manipulating spaces for sustainability?

Suzanne Benn is Professor of Sustainable Enterprise at UTS Business School, Sydney. She researches in the area of organisational change and learning for sustainability and corporate social responsibility, particularly as they relate to how learning occurs across networks. She is the author of four books and numerous articles in journals such as Journal of Business Ethics and Academy of Management Learning and Education.

Johan Sandström is Professor of Business Administration at Luleå University of Technology, Sweden. His research interest is in the role and responsibilities of corporations, particularly in relation to ethics and sustainable development. His writings have been published in journals such as Organization, Organization Studies, Journal of Business Ethics and Scandinavian Journal of Management.

Krista Bondy is an Associate Professor in Corporate Social Responsibility & Environmental Management at the University of Bath, UK. She is also Deputy Director of the Centre for Business, Organisations and Society. Her research falls within organizational behaviour, focusing on sustainability, business ethics, organizational resilience, and power dynamics. Recent work can be found in British Journal of Management, Journal of Business Ethics and Corporate Governance: An International Review.

Tommy Jensen is Professor in management and organization theory at the School of Business, Stockholm University. His research focus is on the intersection between private and public spheres and the social and environmental dilemmas that this intersection gives rise to. He is book review editor for Scandinavian Journal of Management. Tommy has published in journals such as Organization, Tamara, Organization Studies, Journal of Global Responsibility, Journal of Business Ethics, Scandinavian Journal of Management.