Call for Papers for a Special Issue of Critical Perspectives on International Business.

On Transnational Corporations, Socio-Economic Change and Recurrent Crisis.

This call for papers is for academic writing that considers the connections between the policies and practices of transnational corporations (TNCs), other large organizations (including financial institutions), and international economic crisis.

The causes of the current crisis are often ascribed to specific practices of specialized financial institutions and their creation of exotic and poorly understood new financial products; but is this an adequate explanation? Since well before the 2008 banking crisis, large corporations across the world have been undergoing fundamental transformation in order to increase profitability. At least since the investigations that followed the Enron and WorldCom collapses, it has been widely acknowledged that such practices as the manipulation of asset values by shifting them off the balance sheet, the avoidance of corporation taxes by realizing profits offshore, and the misrepresentation of revenues through creative accounting are widespread amongst companies internationally. Indeed, the changing organization of TNCs and other large corporations is part of a general process of capitalist reorganization which is both driven by – and creates the possibility for – ‘financialization’.

The strategies of corporate management are increasingly derived from the same drive to short-term value realization as practiced by finance capitalists. The time is long gone when the automatic response of an incumbent corporate executive team to a private equity fund’s attentions is to treat it as a threat, and against their own and their company’s best interests. At a minimum, the managements of large corporations tend to conform in some degree to the procedures and practices pioneered by private finance capital. However, there is a need to explore more deeply the nature of the linkages between finance capital and TNC strategies, and particularly, the mutuality inherent in these relationships. A better understanding is required of the ways in which large corporations are actually implicated, and not simply complicit, in broader processes of socio-economic change that have led to the current global economic crisis.

While the structures and management strategies of large corporations have undergone rapid and radical transformation (Clegg, 2011; Reed, 2011), the causes and consequences of these changes are seldom studied systematically. Many organization theorists and economists, for example, continue to think in terms of corporate change being related to simple exchanges between the organization and its environment, between the corporation and its markets. Academic comment has largely addressed narrow and technical issues. Where key issues have been explored, such as the need for corporate governance reform (McNulty et al, 2005), and the extent to which strategy formation is driven by financial considerations rather than product markets (Froud et al,
2006), these discussions have typically not been connected with each other or updated in the context of recent developments.

This special issue invites papers which explore the connections between corporate restructuring and financialization, and which propose explanations of these developments. How are TNCs complicit in, or otherwise involved with, the instabilities of contemporary capitalism? How far have the motives and actions of executives in control of corporations been similar to or connected with changes in banking policies and practices, the emergence of hedge funds and private equity groups and their profit-making schemes? How far have government policies – especially those concerned with corporate deregulation and changes in taxation - contributed to or limited such trends? How far have these changes be linked to the changed balance of power between finance and industrial capitalists and the changing composition of elites in both developed and emerging economies?

We are particularly interested in papers that address:

- The issue of financialization and the degree to which ownership and organization has been affected by new layers and systems of control – to what degree are TNCs influenced to operate as financial instruments rather than more directly as sources of production?
- The effects of a changing composition of corporate finance; the relative importance of equity and bonds, the introduction of a range of ‘mezzanine’ forms of finance, changes in accounting procedures and the context of financial reporting.
- The effects of the changing nature of banking strategy and services - the availability of syndicated banking relations, of ‘originate and distribute’ models, of offshore banking and the possibility of routing intra-company financial transactions through tax havens and so forth.
- The role of hedge funds and private equity finance in relation to TNCs – as owners, purchasers of debt, minority (‘active’) investors, as ever-present organizations that may seek control at some future point (perhaps in cooperation with some existing key corporate personnel).
- International variations and normalization in the management and organizational structuring practices of TNCs
- Rhetoric versus reality in the role of corporate governance in representing ‘the best interests’ of the corporation over the long term.
- The role of government policies in relation to either or both financial institutions and TNCs including especially taxation regimes.
- The relative rewards of corporate managers and shareholders (and the shifting balance of power between these). The significance of the emergence of a market for corporate control.
- Shifts in the relative wealth and influence of national and international elites.
We hope that exploring these subjects will bring to the fore the different ways in which TNCs are more than simply passive recipients of environmental influences to which they must then react in order to survive. They are, rather, part of the causal complexity of modern capitalism. As such, we also welcome papers that critically explore different concepts relevant to such a point of view – neoliberalism, globalization, inter/transnational elites, and so forth. Papers that bring new and critical uses of social, organizational and economic theory to bear on these issues will be particularly welcome. Our aim is to assemble a range of papers that provide an invaluable resource for locating the TNCs as a constituent within contemporary international socio-economic change.

Submission procedures:

Submissions should follow the author guidelines for Critical Perspective on International Business which can be found at http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=cpoib.

Submission deadline is January 31 2012, with initial reviewing to be completed by March 31 2012, revisions due by May 15 2012, final decisions by the end of June 2012, and anticipated publication in the second half of 2012.

Please note that for this Special Issue only, submissions should be sent in the first instance to the Special Issue co-editor Stephen Ackroyd by email at s.ackroyd@lancaster.ac.uk. Any questions regarding the special issue can be sent to Stephen Ackroyd, and/or Jonathan Murphy at murphyj3@cf.ac.uk.

Special Issue Co-editor Biographies

Stephen Ackroyd is emeritus professor of organizational analysis at Lancaster University Management School, honorary professor at Cardiff Business School and, currently, visiting professor of organization studies at University of South Australia at Adelaide. In the course of his career Stephen has researched public sector organizations, professional occupations (especially medicine, the law and management consultancy), as well as conducting a longitudinal study of the organizational forms and strategies of the largest British companies and writing about their place in the British economy. He has served on the editorial boards of some of the leading British and European management and organizational journals including Organization Studies, Journal of Management Studies and Work, Employment and Society. His recent books include: The Organisation of Business (Oxford, 2002); Realist Perspectives on Management and Organisation (with S. Fleetwood, Routledge, 2004); The Oxford Handbook of Work and Organisations. (Oxford, 2006 with R. Batt and others) and Redirections in the Study of Expert Labour (with D. Muzio and J-P Chanlat, Palgrave, 2008).
Jonathan Murphy is senior lecturer in international management at Cardiff University. Prior to embarking on an academic career, Jonathan served in a variety of senior roles in the Canadian non-profit and public sector, and has acted as a consultant on democratic governance for the past twenty years, working extensively in Africa and Asia for clients including the United Nations, the World Bank, and the European Union. Jonathan has been an active participant in the development of the field of critical management studies, and is currently an Associate Editor of Critical Perspectives on International Business. His research interests include the emergence of global social classes, critical development management, corporate social responsibility, and transnational inequality. Jonathan is author of The World Bank and Global Managerialism (Routledge, 2007) and (with Richard Daft and Hugh Willmott) Organization Theory and Design (Cengage, 2010).

References:


