

Advances in Organization Studies



Robert Perey

Ecological Imaginaries Reframing Organisation

Series Editor: Stewart R. Clegg



CBS
PRESS

Ecological Imaginaries Reframing Organisation

Robert Perey

1. Edition 2016

© CBS Press 2016

Series Editor: Stewart R. Clegg

CBS Press Chief Editor: Kristian Kreiner

Cover: SL grafik (slgrafik.dk)

Cover Illustration: Yvon Lindschouw

Typeset: SL grafik

Printed in Poland by Totem

Printed book ISBN: 978-87-630-0358-2

ISSN: 1566-1075

Ebook ISBN:978-87-630-0361-2

CBS Press

info@samfundslitteratur.dk

cbspress.dk

Distribution:

North America

International Specialized Book Services

Tel: +1 800 944 6190, fax: -1 503 280 8832

Email: isbs@isbs.com, www.isbs.com

Rest of the World

Gazelle Book Services

Tel: +44 (0) 1524 68765, fax: +44 (0) 1524 63232

Email: sales@gazellebooks.co.uk, www.gazellebookservices.co.uk

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording, taping or information storage or retrieval systems – without permission in writing from CBS Press at www.cbspress.dk.

Advances in Organization Studies

Series Editor

Stewart R. Clegg

Professor, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

The series *Advances in Organization Studies* is a channel for cutting edge theoretical and empirical works of high quality that contributes to the field of organizational studies. The series welcomes thought-provoking ideas, new perspectives and neglected topics from researchers within a wide range of disciplines and geographical locations.

www.organizationstudies.org

Acknowledgements

This book has had a long gestation and its undertaking involved many friends, colleagues and trips into the Bush (Watson 2014). It is both a culmination of reflecting on my concern about our relationship(s) with nature and a foundation for further research on new opportunities that emerged during my investigation.

My conscious relationship with nature started well before my early school years. Even though I was born and grew up in the heart of a city, I was fortunate that urban planning at that time allowed corridors of bushland to extend deeply into high density residential areas. Our house bordered native bushland and I can still remember the wildflowers, the profusion of frogs covering the ground at the onset of winter rains, and the ability to get lost in these corridors of bush as we explored the nooks and crannies of this landscape.

All this bushland is now gone, replaced by bricks, concrete, asphalt and plants appealing to European sensibilities. This transformation did not take long, ten perhaps fifteen years after my family moved into this house on the edge of the bush, and during its progress I remember numerous occasions when I noted the symbolic changes to this landscape: the annual decrease in frogs and then their absence, the less dramatic but equally final demise of the native plants, and the beautification of a nearby swamp into a manageable and far less dangerous inner city park featuring a lake. What also changed, with this transformation of the bush into a civilised urban landscape, was the nature of the relationships between neighbours. People became more self-centred and less concerned about the well-being of others; the quality of neighbourliness changed.

These early years are the foundation for the research informing this book, shaping my concerns that our modern lifestyles are destroying the source of our well-being: our relationship with nature, or in Australian vernacular, the Bush.

Over this formative period, and particularly for the duration of this research project, my family and friends have probably had to endure the hardest of times as I cloistered myself away on many occasions, often emerging briefly to question them on a problem I was struggling with and then again withdrawing after they had offered their considered views. I am glad they all took this in their stride and for the most part with good humour.

I have also had good fortune in the help and shepherding I have received from many people in the progress of my research. I would specifically like to acknowledge, Bobby Banerjee, David Bubna-Litic, Thomas Clarke, Carolyn Egri, Stephen Fox, Stuart Hill, Marcus Hodgson, Donna Houston, Lesley Kuhn, John Jermier, Kate Kearins, Nick Mansfield, David Paul, Andre Reichel, Carl Rhodes, Will Rifkin, Mark Starik,

Deborah Steketee, and Robert Woog, for wise counsel and, on many occasions, their willingness to participate in proposals I submitted to various conferences.

In particular I would like to thank Dexter Dunphy for his critical insights on organisational engagement with the concept and practices of sustainability. His extensive experience in organisational change and development, and his family and personal advocacy for changing environmental behaviours across society and organisations, helped me navigate my way through my investigations.

Another important influence on my thinking came from Charles Birch, whose career in genetics and biology helped set in place the foundations for the new science of ecology. He helped me understand the interdependencies that define ecological systems and more importantly, for me at least, his strong advocacy that all life has intrinsic value influenced the direction taken in my findings and the development of the conceptual model: metabolic organisation.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous effort of Suzanne Benn, who went well beyond the normal bounds of help and assistance given to colleagues who ask for some feedback. Her keen editorial eye helped clarify many of my points and arguments, and this was done with many revisions and drafts. She helped not simply with crafting the evolution of ideas in this book but also by introducing me to many of the people I have already mentioned and many others who have assisted me along the way.

Robert Perey

Table of Contents

List of Figures	11
List of Tables	12
List of Abbreviations	13
Introduction	15
Socio-political Inertia to Redress Human Ecological Transgression.....	16
Research Approach and Book Structure	19
Outline of the chapters	20
CHAPTER ONE	25
A Human Ecology?	
The Anthropocene	25
Organisational/Institutional Responses to Ecological Crisis.....	27
The Sustainability Problematic and the Social Imaginary	29
Organisation of nature	31
The moral order of nature	32
Sustainability and Environmental Discourses – Making Sense of the Sustainability Problematic	34
Discourses of environmentalism	34
The growing application of ‘sustainability’ – useful or problematic?.....	38
Organisation and sustainability.....	41
Environmental discourse and ecological imaginaries.....	43
CHAPTER TWO	45
The Imprint of Sustainability Discourses in and on Organisations	
Organisation and Sustainability.....	46
The ecological and social responsibilities of organisations.....	47