

CALL FOR PAPERS – SPECIAL ISSUE

Imagination and organizational lives: Exploring the liminality of the human experience

“[When] we lose our faith in human possibility, our imagination shrinks, we dare not hope, and we leave our neighbours languishing in mental hospitals and substandard housing, in stifling cities and classrooms with a pall of death over them. Social projects get ignited from images of their possibility.”

(Ulanov and Ulanov, 2008, p.8)

In this special issue of the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*, we invite conversations on the significance of **imagination as an essential human need and as an essential human capability**. This need and capability, we argue, enable individuals to shape and understand their experiences in work organizations as well as social communities. More specifically, we welcome scholarly pieces that explore, in a variety of imaginative formats, the depths and complexities of human experience in the context of work and service to the organizations and communities to which we belong.

Pragmatically, imagination is a function of the mind that forms and activates mental images that may or may not be reflective of real-life occurrences (Rozuel, 2012). In other words, imagination allows us to go deeper within as well as beyond our perceived reality, that is, the reality of our senses and our reason (Norris, 1980). Imagination is therefore key to generating spaces and stories that nurture the deep human need for meaning, for connection, and for development (Lederach, 2005; Rozuel, 2014). Imagination also showcases our innate human capability to engage, to enact, and to transform (Ulanov and Ulanov, 2008; Werhane, 1999).

Carl G. Jung (1964, p.82) notes that without imagination, we are left helpless when facing the unexpected, when routine answers fail to apply and when conceptual elaborations fail to address practical problems: “Imagination and intuition are vital to our understanding. And though the usual popular opinion is that they are chiefly valuable to poets and artists [...], they are in fact equally vital in all the higher grades of sciences. Here they play an increasingly important role, which supplements that of the ‘rational’ intellect and its application to a specific problem.”

In this way, the imagination effectively broadens and deepens the realm of the possible, providing we succeed in creating the proper space for its expression, a space of opportunity rather than anxiety (Pateman, 1997, p.4). Imagination at once excites, inspires and frightens. It can also distort or shake us as much as it can create beauty, and sometimes there is no telling which (moral) path it may take (Seabright and Schminke, 2002). Either way, “the imagination brings completion” to our sense of self and to our overall human experience: “Properly understood, the imagination is perhaps our most reliable way of bringing the world of the unconscious into some degree of consciousness” and of tapping into a field of unknown potential (Ulanov and Ulanov,

2008, p.3). As Cornelius Castoriadis (1992, p.4) argues, the “unbridled imagination, defunctionalized imagination [...] provides the conditions for reflective thought to exist”. Furthermore, imagination is the necessary component of a quantum interpretation of organizational systems (Pavlovich, 2020) which invites us to enter spaces that transcend the known and embrace an intuitive model of engagement and co-creation through spiritual resonance (Laszlo, 2020; Sandra and Nandram, 2020).

Imagination defines human possibility more than the qualities of reason and logic and, as such, provides ways to regenerate our ethical engagements and to re-instil much-needed spiritual meaning when organizations and institutions fail to serve humanity. In its 1877 keynote address to the then-Liverpool Institute, British politician and businessman George Goshen encouraged the cultivation of imagination as a central goal for any education system, emphasizing how imagination benefits individuals as well as society-at-large (Goshen, 1878). More than a century later, the belief in the (moral) value of imagination to nurture people and to redefine the organizational (Marques et al., 2014; Moxnes and Moxnes, 2016), socio-economic (Jackson, 1999; Thompson, 2018) and spiritual systems (Hanegraaff, 2020) we live in remains topical.

With these ideas in mind, we define imagination as a flow that moves freely across diverse fields of social communities, inspiring individuals to move as well. When the imagination is present and engaged, boundaries shift and thresholds appear, opening a space for individuals to meet with one another in different ways (Becker, 1994; Fischlin et al., 2013; Street, 2019). The result can be a deeper exploration of meaning that inform creative and unique human experiences (Rozuel, 2014; Bleuer et al., 2018). This liminal “in-between” quality of the imagination makes it a precious, yet under-researched and possibly under-appreciated, resource for the development of soulful, dynamic, nurturing and resilient organizations and organizational members (Hayes et al., 2015; Komporozos-Athanasiou and Fotaki, 2015; Fotaki et al., 2020).

In this purview, we encourage researchers and practitioners to share their imaginative explorations of what it means to be human in the context of organizations: be they workers, managers, leaders, community members, social change agents, organizational tricksters or wounded healers. We seek to engage with the richness and diversity of imagination to help organizations understand complex realities and transcend what may be perceived as limitations.

We especially invite contributions that situate, explore, and/or discuss the following:

- (1) How imagination is experienced and manifested in organizations and social communities.
- (2) How imagination contributes to our understanding of ourselves and of our lives as organizational agents and as social change agents.
- (3) How imagination informs reflections on spiritual aspects of management and leadership.
- (4) How imaginative stories are expressed and manifested in organizations and/or communities, and what role they play in these contexts.

We welcome manuscripts that explore the imagination in a variety of formats, including creative writing, poetry, visual arts, embodied practice, sonic and musical performances, improvisation and more. We encourage submissions that reflect on practice as well as concepts.

Submission process

Full manuscripts (between 6,000 and 9,000 words, references in APA style) prepared in accordance with the [manuscript guidelines of the *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*](#) must be submitted by **June 30th, 2021 (*extended deadline*)**. The full manuscripts will undergo a blind peer-review process. We expect the Special Issue to be published in early 2022.

Further guidance on how to submit your manuscript on the [ScholarOne platform](#) is enclosed.

Please email the guest-editors Dr. Cécile Rozuel (crozuel@ustpaul.ca) and Dr. Lauren Michelle Levesque (llevesque@ustpaul.ca) for any questions regarding the Special Issue.

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