

Call for Submissions

Business Ethics Quarterly Special Issue on:

Organizational Ethics of Life and Death

[N]ow that I've seen what I have seen, I know that I belong here whether I want it or not. This business is everybody's business.

Albert Camus, *The Plague* (1947)

I have such a feeling of solidarity with everything alive that it does not seem to me important to know where the individual ends or begins.

Albert Einstein, *Letter of October 1944 to Mrs. Born*,
in J. Berger *Photocopies: Encounters* (1997: 72)

Guest Editors

Mar Pérezts, Emlyon Business School; OCE Research Centre
Marianna Fotaki, Warwick Business School
Yuliya Shymko, Audencia Business School
Gazi Islam, Grenoble Ecole de Management; IREGE

Overview

A fundamental question of organizational ethics revolves around how life and death are collectively organized (Elias, 1985; Agamben, 1998). Life and death do not just “happen”; they have specific, socially embedded modes of realization and depend on social processes of justification. The social organization of life and death poses ethical questions of whether, when, and how (business) organizations take part in and shape matters of living and dying (Banerjee, 2006, 2008; Le Theule, Lambert, & Morales, 2020; Punch, 2000; Reedy & Learmonth, 2011).

Usually taken for granted and rarely interrogated, questions of life and death have suddenly become topics of near-universal discussion in the light of global disruptions caused by social, economic and political upheavals, including the climate crisis, the rise of authoritarianism, economic recession, famine, and ongoing and new wars. These give rise to life-threatening processes of forced migration and refugee crises, public health threats (COVID-19, access to vaccines and other forms of care), and have significant environmental ramifications (global warming, mass extinction, toxic and nuclear pollution). Consequently, as organizational ethics scholars, we must examine how our ideas operate within complex social and natural worlds, for what ends, and which support they render to different forms of being and of living.

The impact of dominant organizational paradigms varies across social groups and non-human forms of life, leading to new inequalities and amplifying pre-existing ones across geographical and political differences (Biehl, 2005; Bauman, 2014; Fotaki & Prasad, 2015). Many inequalities around life and death precede the current crises and are exacerbated by them, including the COVID pandemic (Oxfam, 2022; Shymko, Quental, & Navarro Mena 2022). Inequalities reverberate along fault lines of gender, race, class, location, and ethnic or national identity (Branicki, 2020; Jagannathan & Rai, 2022; Levin, et al., 2021). Some carry the burden of facing life-or-death confrontations directly in their organizations, enduring such confrontations on a daily basis. They occur at individual and professional levels but also collectively, as policy makers and citizens make decisions that shape who lives and who is left to die (Candrian, 2014; Mechanic, 1989), bringing out Malthusian ghosts that many had thought vanquished.

Business Ethics Quarterly 32:3 (July 2022), pp. 510–515. DOI:10.1017/beq.2022.16
Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Society for Business Ethics.
© The Author(s), 2022.

Understanding the organization of life and death requires radically reconsidering the ethical foundations of organizing and its relations with principles of care (Fotaki, Islam, & Antoni 2020; Antoni, Reinecke, & Fotaki, 2020), collective solidarity (Vachhani & Pullen, 2019; Mandalaki & Pérezts, 2021; Shymko, Quental, & Navarro Mena, 2022), accountability and relationality (Painter-Morland, 2006, 2007; Fotaki, 2019a).

If the current moment is a “dress rehearsal” for a century of an ongoing crisis, we must begin to explore new imaginaries in the present moment. Organizational ethics scholars can seize the opportunity to examine the ethical implications of such reorganization, avoiding the temptation of “looking away” (Courpasson, 2016) and succumbing to the fatalist “fantasy of inevitability” (Levine, 2001). In taking on grand challenges (Carroll, 2000) imagination is crucial (Fotaki, Altman, & Koenig, 2020; Komporozos-Athanasidou & Fotaki, 2015; Roux-Rosier et al., 2018). Where imagination appears, it is often precisely in the context of global crisis (e.g., Levy & Spicer, 2013; Wright et al., 2013) and in unexpected places (Quental & Shymko, 2021), where prefiguring new forms of organizing is literally a matter of life and death. We might fruitfully explore these at the intersection of ethics and moral imagination (Werhane, 1998, 2008) with questions about the values underpinning moral imagination for the post-pandemic world. However, to achieve this, we must better understand how organization binds our lives together in assemblies of embodied, social beings that are both agentic and vulnerable (Butler, 2012, 2015). Fostering an ethics of care seems fundamental in counter-balancing abstract, and disembodied notions of morality to re-connect organizational ethics with the needs for a livable (work)life. Organizational processes and tools, including ways of measuring and quantifying life processes, threats and activities (cf, Islam, 2022; Pérezts, Andersson, & Lindebaum, 2021), are infused with underlying ethical stakes that ultimately shape our understanding of issues around life and death.

Scope

The purpose of this special issue is to explore the organizational ethics of life and death, to imagine modes and forms of organizing that shape our relatedness, i.e., how we share the world we live in with others, both human and non-human (Allen, 2020). In line with the disciplinary and thematic scope of the *Business Ethics Quarterly*, we invite scholars from a variety of perspectives to consider the roles of (business) organizations and organizing in the ethics of life and death, as it plays out in light of growing inequalities and recent global phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Lives Matter, refugee crises, the rise of authoritarianism, global political conflicts, wars, and climate change. Such roles can include engaging in the ethics of care and politics of inclusivity, redefining “essential” or “front line” work, managing relationships between bodily health and work, or ethically relating to non-human forms of life. Considering such roles can help organizational scholars reimagine organizations and/in/for/with society by stressing the ethical dimensions of organizing *for* life. By shedding light on the ethics of life and death implicit within all human efforts at organizing, we hope to foster scholarship on how ethics may be understood as “co-extensive with life in its full development” (Henry, 2012: 96; Pérezts, Fay, & Picard, 2015).

Examples of questions

We welcome both conceptual and empirical work, including but not limited to policy, organizational and individual levels:

- What do global disruptions—and the diverse reactions to them—tell us about our ways of living together?
- How can the ethics of life and death best draw upon various ethical approaches, such as ethics of relationality, ethics of care, feminist, critical and embodied ethics?
- From a normative perspective, what justifications are used to defend ethical questions around life and death? (e.g., Who/what is left to die? Who/what is left exposed? Who/what remains forgotten (including human populations and non-human entities)?)

- How to overcome the normative shortcomings of approaches that privilege certain stakeholders while leaving others unrecognized (Derry, 2012; Painter, Pérezts, & Deslandes, 2021)?
- How do organizational processes of biopower (Fleming, 2014; Foucault, 2008) and death (i.e., necropolitics [Mbembe, 2019, 2020]), necro and gore capitalism (Banerjee, 2006, 2008; Valencia, 2018) challenge organizational ethics today, including within the conceptual frames legally sanctioned rules of dominant institutions (Maitland, 2002; Pérezts, 2021)?
- What can we learn from studying “spaces of death” such as border zones or refugee camps (Bauman, 2014; Biehl, 2005; Fotaki 2019b; Human Rights Watch, 2020; Estevez, 2021)? How can we use these spatial manifestations of dying and living divides to reimagine organizational ethics of life and death?
- What are the politics of recognizing the dangers to life posed by specific forms of work (e.g., frontline work, Hughes, 2019)?
- What are the ethical implications for governance of life and death, including issues of surveillance, curtailment of individual and collective rights, and privacy?
- How do the ethics of organizing biological or “bare” life relate to socialized, political visions of life? What are the ethical stakes of distinctions between biological and social life (*zoe* versus *bios*, nature versus culture, needs versus interests), and should such distinctions be maintained or surpassed?
- During global crises, what are the ethical duties of companies to protect life in- and outside of the communities within which they operate? How should we evaluate the ethics of profit making in situations of life and death (e.g., access to medical treatment, markets in armaments, food security)?
- Can temporal and historical perspectives on past epidemics or other deep social crises help us reimagine more ethical forms of work and organization that affect life and death differently (Islam, 2020)?
- How can the logic of relationality and the shared predicament of the fragility of human life (Fotaki, 2019b) inform organizational ethics? How can organizational ethics integrate the fragility and inter-dependence of human and non-human bodies into its theorizing?
- How do organizational ethics researchers integrate the mission of knowledge creation with sensitivity to the precarious lives and well-being of the most vulnerable? How can ethics research best respect the value of life in the context of unequal class, race, gender and geopolitical access to vital resources?

The special issue is inspired by, but not limited to the aforementioned topics. Scholars are invited to address informal queries to the Guest Editors to assess the fit with the special issue of their proposed contribution.

Submission Process

Manuscripts must be prepared in compliance with the journal’s instructions for contributors: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/business-ethics-quarterly/information/instructions-for-authors-submission-guidelines>. Submissions that do not conform to these instructions, in terms of manuscript style and referencing, will not be reviewed.

Manuscripts should be submitted after April 1, 2023 and no later than May 31, 2023, using BEQ’s online submission system: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/beq>. When submitting be sure to choose the option that indicates that the submission is for this special issue.

All papers will be initially reviewed for suitability by the guest editor team. Selected submissions will undergo a double-blind review by external referees following the journal's standard editorial process. By submitting a paper for consideration, authors consent to be called upon as reviewers. Authors also agree, in the event that a submission after review receives an invitation to revise and resubmit, to resubmit within three months of that invitation.

Presubmission Virtual Workshop

A few months before the special issue submission window opens, the guest editors will organize a virtual workshop (via appropriate web conferencing software) designed to provide developmental guidance to prospective submissions. Participation in this workshop is not a precondition for submission to, nor does it guarantee acceptance in, the special issue. The workshop will be organized in one virtual plenary followed by virtual paper development roundtables that bring together paper authors with senior scholars for in-depth feedback and advice. The workshop will be virtual to promote sustainability and equality of opportunity to participate.

To be considered for the workshop, please send a proposal or extended abstract (up to 3,000 words, references included) to ethicsoflifeanddeath@gmail.com by October 31, 2022.

Key Dates

Presubmission virtual workshop application deadline: October 31, 2022

Decisions/Invitations to participate in virtual workshop: November 15, 2022

Presubmission virtual workshop convenes on: Monday, December 12, 2022

BEQ special issue submission window: April 1–May 31, 2023

Publication: late 2024 (est.)

More Information

For further information on the special issue, contact guest editors at ethicsoflifeanddeath@gmail.com.

References

- Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Allen, I. K. 2020. Thinking with a feminist political ecology of air-and-breathing-bodies. *Body & Society*, 26(2): 79–105.
- Antoni, A., Reinecke J., & Fotaki, M. 2020. Caring or not caring for coworkers? An empirical exploration of the dilemma of care allocation in the workplace. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 30(4): 447–85.
- Banerjee, S. B. 2006. Live and let die: Colonial sovereignties and the death worlds of necrocapitalism. *Borderlands*, 5(1).
- Banerjee, S. B. 2008. Necrocapitalism. *Organization Studies*, 29(12): 1541–63.
- Bauman, Z. 2014. *Wasted lives*. London: Polity.
- Biehl, J. 2005. *Vita: Life in a zone of social abandonment*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Branicki, L. 2020. COVID-19, ethics of care and feminist crisis management. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(5): 872–83.
- Butler, J. 2012. Precarious life, vulnerability, and the ethics of cohabitation. *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 26(2): 134–51.
- Butler, J. 2015. *Notes towards a performative theory of assembly*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Candrian, C. 2014. Taming death and the consequences of discourse. *Human Relations*, 67(1): 53–69.

- Carroll, A. 2000. Ethical challenges for business in the new millennium: Corporate social responsibility and models of management morality. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 10(1): 33–42.
- Courpasson, D. 2016. Looking away? Civilized indifference and the carnal relationships of the contemporary workplace. *Journal of Management Studies*, 53(6): 1094–110.
- Derry, R. 2012. Reclaiming marginalized stakeholders. *Journal of Business Ethics* 111: 253–64.
- Elias, N. 1985. *The loneliness of the dying*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Estevez, A. (Ed.). 2021. *Necropower in North America: The legal spatialization of disposability and lucrative death*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fleming, P. 2014. When “life itself” goes to work: Reviewing shifts in organizational life through the lens of biopower. *Human Relations*, 67(7): 875–901.
- Fotaki, M. 2019a. Feminist ethics: Embodied relationality as a normative guide for management and organizations. In C. Neesham, M. Reihlen, & D. Schoeneborn (Eds.), *Handbook of philosophy of management*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Fotaki, M. 2019b. A crisis of humanitarianism: Refugees at the gates of Europe. *International Journal of Health Policy Management*, 8(6): 321–24.
- Fotaki, M., Altman, Y., & Koning, J. 2020. Spirituality, symbolism and storytelling in twenty first-century organizations: Understanding and addressing the crisis of imagination. *Organization Studies*, 41(1): 7–30.
- Fotaki, M., Islam, G., & Antoni, A. (Eds.). 2020. *Business ethics and care in organizations*. New York: Routledge.
- Fotaki, M., & Prasad, A. 2015. Questioning neoliberal capitalism and economic inequality in business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 14(4): 556–75.
- Foucault, M. 2008. *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978–79*. London: Palgrave.
- Henry, M. 2012. *Barbarism* (S. Davidson, Trans.). London and New York: Continuum.
- Hughes, R. 2019. Paying people to risk life or limb. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 29(3): 295–316.
- Human Rights Watch. 2020. Greece: Island camps not prepared for Covid-19. April 22, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/22/greece-island-camps-not-prepared-covid-19>.
- Islam, G. 2020. The future(s) of work. *Revista De Administração De Empresas*, 60(5): 365–70.
- Islam, G. 2022. Business ethics and quantification: Towards an ethics of numbers. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 176: 195–211.
- Jagannathan, S., & Rai, R. 2022. The necropolitics of neoliberal state response to the Covid-19 pandemic in India. *Organization*, 29(3): 426–48.
- Komporozos-Athanasidou, A., & Fotaki, M. 2015. A theory of imagination for organization studies using the work of Cornelius Castoriadis. *Organization Studies*, 36(3): 321–42.
- Le Theule, A.-M., Lambert, C., & Morales, J. 2020. Governing death: Organizing end-of-life situations. *Organization Studies*, 41(4): 523–42.
- Levin, A., Owusu-Boaitey, N., Pugh, S., Fosdick, B. K., Zwi, A. B., Malani, A., Soman, S., Besançon, L., Kashnitsky, I., Ganesh, S., McLaughlin, A., Song, G., Uhm, R., & Meyerowitz-Katz, G. 2021. Assessing the burden of COVID-19 in developing countries: Systematic review, meta-analysis, and public policy implications. *medRxiv*. DOI: [10.1101/2021.09.29.21264325](https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.09.29.21264325).
- Levine, D. P. 2001. The fantasy of inevitability in organizations. *Human Relations*, 54(10): 1251–65.
- Levy, D. L., & Spicer, A. 2013. Contested imaginaries and the cultural political economy of climate change. *Organization*, 20(5): 659–78.
- Maitland, I. 2002. Priceless goods: How should life-saving drugs be priced? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 12(4): 451–80.
- Mandalaki, E., & Pérezts, M. 2021. Abjection overruled! Time to dismantle sexist cyberbullying in academia. *Organization*. DOI: [10.1177/13505084211041711](https://doi.org/10.1177/13505084211041711).
- Mbembe, A. 2019. *Necropolitics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Mbembe, A. 2020. The weight of life: On the economy of human lives. *Eurozine*. <https://www.eurozine.com/the-weight-of-life/>.
- Mechanic, D. 1989. *Painful choices: Research and essays on health care*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

- Oxfam. 2022. *Inequality kills: The unparalleled action needed to combat unprecedented inequality in the wake of COVID-19*. Oxford: Oxfam. https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Inequality-Kills_EN_web.pdf.
- Painter-Morland, M. 2006. Redefining accountability as relational responsiveness. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 66: 89–98.
- Painter-Morland, M. 2007. Defining accountability in a network society. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 17(3): 515–34.
- Painter, M., Pérezts, M., & Deslandes, G. 2021. Understanding the human in stakeholder theory: A phenomenological approach to values-driven leadership. *Management Learning*, 52(2): 203–23.
- Pérezts, M. 2021. Getting away with murder: unpacking epistemic mechanisms of necropower and disposability in North America. In A. Estévez (Ed.), *Necropower in North America: The legal spatialization of disposability and lucrative death*: 107–27. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pérezts, M., Andersson, L., & Lindebaum, D. 2021. Numbers and organization studies, *Organization Studies*, 42(8): 1351–56.
- Pérezts, M., Faÿ, E., & Picard, S. 2015. Ethics, embodied life and esprit de corps: An ethnographic study with anti-money laundering analysts. *Organization*, 22(2): 217–34.
- Punch, M. 2000. Suite violence: Why managers murder and corporations kill. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 33(3): 243–80.
- Quental, C., & Shymko, Y. 2021. What life in favelas can teach us about the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: Lessons from Dona Josefa. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(2): 768–82.
- Reedy, P., & Learmonth, M. 2011. Death and organization: Heidegger's thought on death and life in organizations. *Organization Studies*, 32(1): 117–31.
- Roux-Rosier, A., Azambuja R., & Islam, G. 2018. Alternative visions: Permaculture as imaginaries of the Anthropocene. *Organization*, 25(4): 550–72.
- Shymko, Y., Quental, C., & Navarro Mena, M. 2022. *Indignação and declaração corporal: Luta and activism in Brazil during the times of the pandemic*. *Gender, Work & Organization*. DOI: [10.1111/gwao.12793](https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12793).
- Vachhani, S. J., & Pullen, A. 2019. Ethics, politics and feminist organizing: Writing feminist infra-politics and affective solidarity into everyday sexism. *Human Relations*, 72(1): 23–47.
- Valencia, S. 2018. *Gore capitalism* (J. Pluecker, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Werhane, P. H. 1998. Moral imagination and the search for ethical decision-making in management. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 8(S1): 75–98.
- Werhane, P. H. 2008. Mental models, moral imagination and system thinking in the age of globalization. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 78: 463–74.
- Wright, C., Nyberg, D., De Cock, C., & Whiteman, G. 2013. Future imaginings: Organizing in response to climate change. *Organization*, 20(5): 647–58.