

I resign from association with the Tax Justice Network

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Further to [John Christensen's resignation from the Tax Justice Network](#) earlier this week I sent this mail to Alex Cobham, its CEO this morning:

Dear Alex

Resignation as a senior adviser to the Tax Justice Network

Earlier this week John Christensen resigned as director and Chair of the Board of the Tax Justice Network (TJN). Since John considers me a senior adviser to TJN he copied his letter to me and gave permission for me to publish it on my blog.

Since John's resignation I have decided, as John has, to disassociate myself from the way that you and your senior management team have been running TJN, and since many think I am still involved with TJN I must do so publicly.

Although I am aware that much of my role in the creation of TJN, the formulation of most of its key policies with John, and in bringing them to the state of adoption that they now enjoy has been written out of TJN's history on its own web site, as has the contribution of so many other senior advisers now also excluded and treated as "externals", the reality is that for about a decade I worked almost tirelessly, and typically without pay, for TJN. That commitment - and that of so many who helped create TJN - is now side-lined, forgotten or just ignored.

I strongly suspect that is deliberate. You have sought to make TJN something that the founders never intended.

That TJN was a network is forgotten. It's now a not very good econometrics outfit.

That it was set up to campaign is also ignored or downplayed.

TJN's vision of social justice has been replaced by a desire to perpetuate employment for its staff by the production of ever more meaningless indices.

And instead of innovating policy solutions to influence debate TJN now ignores those who disagree with it and who it needs to influence, from the OECD onwards.

As for political economy, when once this underpinned TJN's thinking, now any understanding of it appears to be absent.

Although that puts that issue alongside tax at TJN, where quite extraordinarily there now appears to be no one working at or advising TJN who has ever worked in tax, or accounting, or financial services. That was not true when we began. It's as if TJN has forgotten what it was all about.

Actually, that is a perfect summary of the real problem. TJN was set up to campaign for tax justice. That's a big, complex issue requiring innovation, adept communication and negotiating skills and some real, broadly based, comprehension of the technicalities, none of which TJN now has.

Instead it has the Financial Secrecy Index, and calls for solutions that can only delay progress towards any tax justice objective, but which will perpetuate index production for the indefinite future.

So let's address those indices, because amongst the many things that you and your team have forgotten is that I was tasked with creating the Financial Secrecy Index, and did so in 2009, including providing its still completely recognisable structure and the theory that underpinned it. That included defining the term 'secrecy jurisdiction' which the index was intended to popularise as basis for campaigning for the reform of tax havens.

I would remind you, that the latter was the aim. The production of the index in perpetuity was not. To be honest, we thought we could usefully publish the FSI two or three times and then the message would be clear. It was. And much has been won as a result. Enough, in very many ways to say it is time for TJN to move on to other, new, bigger and more pressing tax justice issues. I have listed many of these of late, because in past, but not current, TJN tradition I never mention a problem without offering a solution.

It has been the failure to offer solutions, and your preference to hide behind data collation and analysis, that has led to the crisis currently convulsing TJN. Because you have eliminated all knowledge of tax and political economy within it there is nothing it can now say that is of use. TJN is now a hindrance to tax justice now, and can no longer play a useful leadership role. This sad situation has risen entirely on your watch and you must accept responsibility for this failure. Of course, I wish to dissociate myself from that failure, which is why I resign from any association now. I will come back when you and your management team are gone, if there is anything left of worth by then.

Yours sincerely

Richard

Director, Tax Research LLP

Director, Corporate Accountability Network