



Gender, Work & Organization Conference

28-30 June 2023 | Stellenbosch | South Africa

GENDER, WORK & ORGANIZATION

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Gender, Work and Organization

13th International Interdisciplinary Conference

28-30 June 2023, Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa

Conference theme

Marginalized gender identities - how can intellectual activism transform work and organization?

(Read more about the conference theme on the conference website).

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS/PAPER SUBMISSIONS

STREAM TITLE:

Queer(ing) activism in organizations:
Voicing experiences of queer bodies, allyship and alliances across intersectional marginalization

STREAM LEADERS:

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The first references to queer theory in organisation studies date back to the late 1990s (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Since then, queer matters have received some scholarly attention in this field, yet such efforts remain limited. The journal *Gender, Work and Organization* currently counts 20 articles containing the term 'queer' in the title and a few others that discuss queer(ing) practices without explicitly naming them as such. In these studies, queer theory has been used to critique oppressive heteronormative structures as well as to reflect on the material experiences of queer bodies alongside practices of queering normative spaces (Vitry, 2020). There is, however, a general tendency to employ 'queering' as a discursive practice of critical anti-establishment thinking (see Parker, 2016), forgetting the embodied experiences of queer people in being at odds with normal, legitimate, dominant ideas of gender and sexuality (Halperin, 1997). This abstract use of queer theory is problematic because it keeps invisible the original subject of study, namely LGBTIQ+ individuals and their communities (Pullen et al., 2016), particularly in the Global South. We echo this concern as in this way, the "bodies, experiences and expressions of those (of us) who identify as queer get lost" (p. 2). Therefore, we raise the urgent question of how to bring back queer bodies into endeavours to queer organisational research while at the same time exploring alliances across intersectional experiences of marginalisation and allyship in society and organisations.

Queer research investigates experiences of displacement and dissatisfaction (Hadjisolomou, 2021), informing alternative forms of organising politically (Rumens et al., 2019) across intersectional differences and social locations connected through commitment, trust and hope for something else (Goltz et al., 2015). Feminist thinker Sara Ahmed (2006) problematises the normative, directional and straightening devices that marginalise phenomenological experiences of otherness in the social world, discussing the emancipating potentials of queering normative ways of being, thinking and behaving, for speaking and acting from different, othered, queer bodies, both socially and epistemically. Hence, queer research should also be seen as an embodied act of knowledge creation that recognises different other bodies as sites of knowledge (Mandalaki and Perézts, 2021), as a transformative worldmaking practice investigating and creating new conditions for queer(ing) collective survival (Muñoz, 2009). With the ultimate goal to render visible marginalised experiences that go traditionally unregistered and unseen in social and academic discourses, queer research can offer possibilities for queering traditional phenomenological perspectives (Perézts and Mandalaki, 2022) as well as organisational spaces and practices (Vitry, 2020; Pullen et al., 2016).

In this stream, we wish to reflect on queer(ing) as a space where matters of queer embodiment coexist with queering practices, understood as creative forms of activism, resistance and organising against institutions and other forms of systemic oppression that demand cis-heteronormative compliance. We invite scholars to share experiences of queer embodiment in the context of organisations as well as of queering practices beyond sole markers of queer identities, for building joint alliances (Pullen et al., 2016). This understanding of allyship is based on the awareness that queer(ing) is not just a metaphor for thinking critically. It is rather a way of existing, being and becoming and a practice aimed at improving the lives of marginalised queer bodies (Hines, 2010; Muhr et al., 2016).

Further, by extending the practice of research beyond a discursive exercise, queer(ing) research and researching queer(ing) practices can be key in forming intellectual activism (Ahonen et al., 2020), since such approaches not only question normative identities, processes and institutions but also provide the means to rethink ways of organising with the potential of improving people's lives. Nevertheless, beyond a general agreement that heteronormative organisational assumptions need queering, actual forms of alternative organising and queer activism informed by embodied experiences remain yet to be fully explored in organisation studies (Vitry, 2020). At the same time, epistemic efforts in queer research methodologies and writing remain largely underexplored. Responding to this void, this stream aims at gathering stories of queer(ing) embodied marginalisations as well as practices of collective organising for the queering of organisational spaces and their academic investigations. Accounting for embodied experiences requires safeguarding the multiplicity of standpoints from which different bodies speak (Ribeiro, 2016) and accounting for subjective experiences across geographical

contexts and their different histories (Abdellatif et al., 2020). Queer(ing) activism therefore needs to acknowledge different experiences of queer embodiments and queer allyships from the Global South and the Global North to explore how they might dialogue and oppose, complement and/or support each other through different ontological approaches, ways of organising and ways of doing research. Dealing with difference in the process of building a sense of collective ‘we-thinking’ (Fleischmann et al., 2022) is a task necessary for building forms of queer(ing) activism based on intersectional alliances and allyship across groups and social contexts, and their different ontologies and epistemologies.

In this stream, we wish to nurture a reflexive multivocal space to engage with tensions, ambivalences and differences alongside stories of joyful encounters, political solidarity, and social and epistemic transformations. This will be the starting point for a collective discussion that will allow us to engage creatively with the disruptive potential of queer(ing) organising as an existentially unfinished and constantly shaping project.

The stream encourages methodological, empirical and theoretical contributions from the Global South and the Global North on topics including, but not limited to, the following issues:

- Queer and LGBTIQ+ embodied subject positions in organisational spaces, and investigations of lived materialities and emotions of queer bodies.
- Queer(ing) activism and queer voice in organisations and pinkwashing practices.
- Queering the organising of solidarity, and queering for social change and transformation (e.g. the role of trade unions and other social movement organisations in advancing queer(ing) activism).
- Reflections on queering gender, work and organisational life, including feminist, critical and decolonial perspectives on queer(ing).
- Intersectional experiences within queer(ing) activist endeavours, across different organisational and national contexts, and queering as an emancipating force for voicing intersectional experiences of otherness and marginalisation.
- Acts of politicisation and reorganising beyond normative institutions, for example queer(ing) relationships, intimacy, childcare, private economic relations and strategies to bring queer research to society.
- Queer(ing) activism in academia (e.g. queering business school pedagogy and queer approaches to and practices in teaching differently).
- Queer(ing) research methods and academic writing, for example queer insights on auto-ethnography, vulnerable writing, participatory action research and collective writing endeavours, and queering as a form of researching, writing and doing differently in academia.
- Queer ethics and queering the ethics of organising and/or of doing research in organisation studies.

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Abstracts of approximately 500 words should be submitted directly to the GWO2023 conference website in a ONE-page (A-4 size, single-spaced, excluding references, with no headers, footers or track changes) Word document, NOT PDF. Abstracts are invited by the end of day 7 November 2022 (Central Africa Time - CAT), with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream leaders by December 2022. Prospective contributions will be independently refereed. Abstracts should include full contact details, including your name, institutional affiliation, mailing address and e-mail address. We are hoping to circulate abstracts prior to the 2023 GWO conference to those attending the conference.

Subject to full peer review, this stream may select suitable full papers for a special issue of the *Gender, Work and Organization* journal post the conference. If your abstract is accepted for this stream, you are encouraged to submit a full paper (5 000 to 7 000 words excluding references) by 28 February 2023, which may be considered for such a GWO journal special edition.

More information about the conference can be found at:

https://www.usb.ac.za/usb_events/gender-work-organization/

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More information about the *Gender, Work and Organization* journal can be found here:

Gender, Work and Organization is a scholarly journal published by Wiley and edited by Alison Pullen and Banu Ozkazanc-Pan. The journal has an Impact Factor of 5.428 (2021) ISI Journal Citation Reports and a ranking of 2/44 (Women's Studies); 95/226 (Management).

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