

(Hybrid) Workshop: Call for Participation

**Resisting Business-as-Usual:
Organizing for Hope and Justice in Times of Socio-Ecological Crises**

February 22nd & 23rd, 2024

Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria

“Climate is a set of worldly relationships (...), and climate change is a change in those relationships. (...) A small minority of fossil-fueled-humans benefit from climate change in the short term, but even that small minority never intended to make climate change happen. Climate change thus totally challenges the anthropocentric belief that human agency and intentionality are aligned; despite our best efforts, we cannot seem to control our ‘own’ effects on the world.” (Verlie & CCR 15, 2018)

Purpose of the workshop

Work organizations represent a key interface for addressing both the climate crisis and intersecting inequalities. On the one hand, business-as-usual within work organizations is a central driver for accelerating the climate crisis as well as the growing inequalities within and between countries. On the other hand, work organizations are crucial agents for tackling global earth heating and intersecting inequalities as they bundle resources for inventing less polluting products and technologies as well as have a huge impact on the life opportunities of their individual (non-)members. However, the organizational level has been largely neglected in research on the entanglement of the climate crisis and social inequalities. Thus, we need to explore the relations, processes and practices at this intersection on the organizational level and identify alternative ways of organizing for hope and justice in times of socio-ecological crises.

The purpose of this workshop is to create a space for conversations and potential collaborations to (start to) address the multiple ecological crises in connection to issues of social justice in work organizations. For this, we turn to feminist, more-than-human, indigenous, de-/postcolonial and imaginary perspectives – and other voices at the margin – that can help us to analyze and fundamentally rethink the relations between work organizations and socio-ecological in/justices. Importantly, this workshop is for any scholar who is concerned about business-as-usual and wants to work on bridging the separation between social and ecological issues and imagining hopeful futures. This workshop is for you, even though you have not written a full paper on this topic yet!

Possible questions that we would like to address in the workshop but are not limited to the following:

- *Organizing with More-Than-Human Relationships:* How can more-than-human, feminist new materialist and ecofeminist approaches help us unthink business-as-usual at work places and the organizing of work more generally? How can we connect alternative approaches that center de-growth and a ‘good life for the many’ as core to ‘doing economy’ to contemporary forms of work organizing and where might they reach their limits?

- *Organizing against Hierarchy and Oppression:* How are organizational hierarchies and power relations entangled with the acceleration of the climate crisis? How do persisting forms of oppression such as ableism, capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, racism and sexism in work organizations interrelate with the socio-ecological crises? And which (collaborative) methodologies can help to unravel these intersections?

- *Organizing against and with 'Climate Technologies'*: How does the focus on the imagination or actual construction of technologies for 'handling' climate change maintain or disrupt climate destroying business-as-usual? How is the confidence in 'technofixes' connected to (the dominance of) different masculinities in tech and industrial companies?

- *Organizing (with) Imaginaries and Speculation*: How can we collectively imagine, speculate, and care for abundant, socio-ecologically just futures in work organizations and beyond? Which methodologies, relations, spaces, and voices does this require? How do art and utopian imagination (e.g. afrofuturism, feminist science fiction) inspire hope and allow for thinking about practice of organizing for socio-ecological justice that radically differ from business-as-usual?

- *Organizing Climate Activism*: How do different groups (e.g. climate activists, union members, farmers) collaborate or compete with each other to address socio-ecological injustices? How are intersecting inequalities embedded in forms of climate activism and how can they be addressed? How to organize actor coalitions in civil societies that can successfully disrupt business-as-usual of fossil-fueled capitalist interests?

- *Organizing Transformation in Academia*: How can we as academics contribute to disrupting our own business-as-usual (e.g., through slow publishing)? Which kind of knowledge production, forms of teaching and engagement with different audiences is necessary not to sustain logics of fossil capitalism? Which complicities (aware or tacit) might hinder us from engaging in transformative practices?

Program

The hybrid workshop will be hosted at the JKU Linz (Austria) and will start in the morning of February 22nd and will end in the afternoon of February 23rd. For participants who arrive on February 21st we will organize a get-together in the evening. The workshop will include different formats (keynote, paper presentation, idea garden etc.) that should provide enough space to familiarize ourselves with each other's work on the connection between work organizations and socio-ecological in/justices and explore emergent themes. Participants will have the opportunity to present their research projects, discuss conceptual ideas, and explore methodological challenges as well as think about potential collaborative research/activism endeavors. One concrete way to promote academic collaboration will be the launch of a Special Issue of *Gender, Work & Organization* that addresses the themes of the workshop.

Application process

Scholars interested in participating are invited to apply by email by **November 30th, 2023** (socioecologicalorganizing@gmail.com), briefly outlining their motivation to participate (2-3 sentences can be enough) and how their research (idea) relates to the workshop focus. Please also indicate, if you would like to present a paper, a research idea or a burning dilemma/question and if you want to participate on-site at the JKU Linz or online. The workshop is financially supported by the journal of *Gender, Work and Organization*. Workshop participation is free and there is a limited number of early career travel and accommodation stipends available. Please indicate in your application if you would like to apply for funding. Acceptance decisions for the workshop and the funding respectively will be announced by December 20th 2023.

We look forward to seeing you all in Linz and online,

Laura Dobusch (JKU Linz), Katharina Kreissl (JKU Linz), Monica Nadegger (University of Innsbruck) and Dide van Eck (Utrecht University)

Inspirations and Readings:

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- Ergene, S., Calás, M. B., & Smircich, L. (2018). Ecologies of Sustainable Concerns: Organization Theorizing for the Anthropocene. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 25(3), 222–245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12189>
- Haraway, D. J. (2016). Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene. *Experimental futures Technological lives, scientific arts, anthropological voices*. Duke University Press.
- Hultman, M., & Pulé, P.M. (2018). *Ecological Masculinities*. Routledge: London.
- Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions.
- Tallberg, L., Välikangas, L., & Hamilton, L. (2022). Animal activism in the business school: Using fierce compassion for teaching critical and positive perspectives. *Management Learning*, 53(1), 55–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076211044612>
- Tsing, A. L. (2015). *The mushroom at the end of the world: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Princeton University Press.
- Valtonen, A., & Pullen, A. (2021). Writing with rocks. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(2), 506–522. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12579>
- Valtonen, A., & Salmela, T. (2023). Exploring Earthly relations through curiography. In M. B. Calás & L. Smircich (Eds.), *A Research Agenda for Organization Studies, Feminisms and New Materialisms* (pp. 141–160). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Verlie, B. & CCR 15 (2018). From action to intra-action? Agency, identity and ‘goals’ in a relational approach to climate change education. *Environmental Education Research*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2018.1497147>