

**Organizing Solidarity in Difference.**  
***Challenges, achievements and emerging imaginaries***

*Guest Editors:*

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Financial and climate crises, widening inequalities, exploitation of workers, and the marginalization of the Global South: the adverse consequences of a globalized neoliberal capitalism are omnipresent (Dunne et al., 2018; Piketty, 2014; Streeck, 2014). With the aim of exploring alternatives to the dominant model, this Special Issue focuses on the im/possibilities of *organizing solidarity* in an age of fragmentation (Collinson, 2003; Kallinikos, 2003) and ‘superdiversity’ (Özkazanç-Pan, 2019; Vertovec, 2007). Indeed, diversity and difference have globally become a prime concern for organizations and societies, being present in political struggles over gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, class, dis/ability, age and their intersections. Welfare logics of equality and solidarity are increasingly at stake, as questions of who is allowed to benefit are raised (Banting and Kymlicka, 2017; Holck and Muhr, 2017). With the hardening of borders and the populist right globally on the rise, “family, community, and culture” are promoted as “plurals of the self” (Lewis, 2016: 8) – undermining the bases for solidarity in difference.

Various scholars have engaged with solidarity since Durkheim (2013 [1902]) developed the classic distinction between ‘mechanical’ and ‘organic’ forms. Henceforth solidarity has been productively used, among others, in connection to class-based identities, in industrial relations (Atzeni, 2009; Hyman, 1999; Simms, 2012), and in questioning whether, in an age of individualized employment relations, new forms of solidarity can be envisaged to counteract insecurity and precarity (Paret, 2016). By conceptualizing solidarity as mediating between the individual and the collective (Scholz, 2015), difference can either be seen as a primary precondition of solidarity, since acts of solidarity would not be necessary within homogenous groups (Hyman, 1999), or as an element that questions the very possibility of solidarity in societies that are supposedly increasingly fragmented (see, e.g., Laitinen and Pessi, 2015). In a post-colonial world, where “it is homogeneity rather than diversity that provides the new rule”, Gilroy (2005: 2) advocates for “translocal solidarity” to go beyond this seeming deadlock position. From this perspective, solidarity implies that individuals accept “views and practices they dislike, to accept democratic decisions that go against their beliefs or interests” (Banting and Kymlicka, 2017: 1), an assertion that has a long tradition in feminist and decolonial approaches to solidarity (Allen, 1999, 2018; Gunn, 2001; Lugones, 2003; Morgensen, 2015). Mohanty (2003: 7), for example, proposes to focus on a “communicative, in-process understanding of the ‘we’” and connects solidarity inherently to diversity and difference to conceptualize it as “an achievement, the result of active struggle to construct the universal on the basis of particulars/differences”. This resonates with Hardt and Negri’s (2000, 2004, 2009) concept

of the ‘multitude’, which – unlike other social subjects, such as the masses or the working class – is inherently multiple and composed of countless internal differences, which can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity. Therefore, it is precisely the ability to communicate and act in common, while preserving internal differences, which allows to build a social alternative and take power differently, through “a revolutionary process that makes existing social subjectivities, in all their differences” (Hardt and Negri, 2017: 257). The focus on solidarity as a means of reconciling individualistic interests and universal aspirations for justice is also addressed by the theorists of radical democracy (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Butler et al., 2010), who mainly focus on racial, ethnic, gender, sexuality and migrant struggles (more than on the subversion of neoliberal capitalism), therefore bringing social movements to the center of the debate.

In bringing the manifold relations between solidarity and difference to the organizational level, this Special Issue intends to open up a discussion on *solidarity in difference* – an analytical frame that despite its close relation to current debates in organizational studies has been until now seldom used. Notions of solidarity are, for instance, at stake in studies on micro- and macro-emancipation (e.g., Huault et al., 2014; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007) or on resistance (Barros and Michaud, 2019; Fleming and Spicer, 2003; Liu, 2017; Pullen and Rhodes, 2014) within organizations. Moreover, a promising debate within organizational studies has recently revitalized the reflection on the organization of alternative/solidarity economies (Bittencourt Meira, 2014; Safri, 2015; Zanoni et al., 2017), but also on alternative organizing in general (Parker et al., 2014). At the same time, thinking of *organizing* solidarity also entails questioning it as a possible managerialist tool, identifying its possible connection to normative control in existing and emerging hierarchies.

This Special Issue seeks empirically grounded, conceptual and methodological contributions that address these various strands to initiate a debate on the im/possibilities for solidarity in relation to difference based on, e.g., gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class, dis/ability, religion, age and their intersections. Hence, the submissions might explore the possibilities for solidarity within organizations, the practices connected to it and contribute to a general understanding of the relation between solidarity and difference, looking at questioning, reconceptualizing, reinventing and reinvigorating the very concept of solidarity in organizational studies – and bringing it back to the center of an alternative, politicised epistemology. This also implies, as feminist, queer and decolonial critiques have shown, to question who is and has been a viable subject to be in solidarity with (Dhawan et al., 2015; Mohanty, 2003). We also welcome contributions that question the phantasmatic utopia/dystopia – present also in this Call for Papers – of *organizing* the social through solidarity *and* difference. And, last but not least, when discussing the concept of solidarity, it is also paramount to interrogate ourselves on how and to what extent, as academics, we practice solidarity in our everyday organizational life and research practices (Contu, 2018; Esper et al., 2017; Routledge and Discroll Derickson, 2015).

Accordingly, we encourage contributions to the following topics and are grateful for additional perspectives:

- Solidarity with whom? Questions of inclusion and exclusion
- Feminist, decolonial and queer possibilities for and contestations of solidarity
- Solidarity and difference in relation to equality or justice
- Solidarity as group-thinking vs. solidarity with the ‘absolute’ other?
- Solidarity as a tool of management, its governmentality and relation to normative control

- Solidarity in the *on-demand* and gig economies
- Solidarity in alternative economies
- Solidarity and workers' organizing in times of precariousness and fragmentation
- Solidarity on the meso-level of organizations in light of current challenges to welfare states
- Solidarity on the micro-level in relation to intra and inter group interactions
- Solidarity and forms of organizational micro- and macro-emancipation
- Solidarity and the re-emergence of collective identities
- Solidarity as academic practice

## Timeline

Papers may be submitted electronically from 1 February 2020 until the deadline date of 1 March 2020 (final deadline) to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/organization>.

Authors may send in their ideas and queries to the SI editors at [solidarity.difference@gmail.com](mailto:solidarity.difference@gmail.com)

Papers should be no more than 10,000 words, including references, and will be blind-reviewed following the journal's standard review process. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in *Organization* and on the journal's website:

<http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200981/manuscriptSubmission>

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#### About the Guest Editors:

**Alexander Fleischmann** is University Assistant at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business and currently finishing his PhD project on alternative forms of organizing in their relation to diversity and difference. He studied International Business Administration at the University of Vienna and Hanken School of Economics (Finland) as well as Gender Studies at the University of Vienna. After appointments in Equal Opportunities at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, he works since 2015 at WU Vienna. Alexander presented his work, among others, at EGOS, CMS, Gender Work and Organization and co-edited a book on art, theory and activism. His contributions appeared in *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, *Journal of Management and Organization*, *ephemera – Theory and Politics in Organization* and are under review for *Work, Employment and Society* as well as *Organization*.

**Lotte Holck** is Associate Professor at Copenhagen Business School (Denmark). Lotte's work explores issues of employment relationship and work force diversity and inclusion. Her current research is a study of team diversity and its leadership in ISS Denmark on how to ensure inclusion and the leverage of team dynamics to unfold the diversity potential of the team. Her work appears in *Organization*, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *Personnel Review*, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – an International Journal*, and *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*. Lotte furthermore draws on 15 years of work experience within labor market integration and diversity management in the public and private sector.

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**Sara Louise Muhr** is Professor at Copenhagen Business School. She is also Academic Director of the CBS Business in Society Platform 'Diversity and Difference'. Her research focuses on critical perspectives on managerial identity and HRM, especially in relation to issues around coping with diversity and expectations in modern, flexible ways of working. Following this broader aim, she has worked with various empirical settings such as management consultancy, prisons, the military and police force, pole dance studios and executive networks where she has engaged with issues such as power, culture, emotional labor, gender, ethnicity, migration, leadership and work-life balance.

**Helena Liu** is a Senior Lecturer at UTS Business School in Sydney, Australia. Her research critiques the way power sustains our enduring romance with leadership and imagines the possibilities for organizing through solidarity, love and justice. She is currently a co-Chief Investigator on the ARC Discovery project, 'Leadership Diversity through Relational Intersectionality in Australia'. She serves as Associate Editor at Human Relations, Management Learning and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. In addition to those journals, her work has also appeared in Organization, Journal of Business Ethics, Gender, Work and Organization, Culture and Organization, and Leadership. Her first book, 'Redeeming Leadership: An Anti-Racist Feminist Intervention', will be published with Bristol University Press in January 2020.