

Call for Papers

Organizational Practices of Social Movements and Popular Struggles: Understanding the Power of Organizing From Below

Special Issue of the Journal
Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/loi/qrom>

Maria Ceci Misoczky, Guilherme Dornelas Camara and Steffen Böhm
(for affiliations, biographical notes and contact details, see below)

Thematic Focus of the Special Issue

The study of social movements in the field of Organization Studies (OS) has been largely influenced by theories constructed to analyze business organizations and their interactions with formal and informal social movement organizations. The predominant approach has been to construct a theoretical model and then applying it to a largely passive object (social movements). As a consequence, OS has remained relatively blind to the processes of organizing and the knowledge produced in the organizational practices from below.

These organizational practices from below tend to be hidden from the view of hegemonic (structuralist and managerialist) organization knowledge: popular struggles, anti-corporative movements, occupy events, self-organized cooperatives, community groups, indigenous people, peasant movements, to name but a few. What also tends to be marginalized or even ignored are the organizational practices of social movements based in the South, East and other peripheral places.

There is a need to fill this gap and, in accordance with Dunayevskaya (1982), to make the movement from practice to theory. For her, the practice from below is itself a form of theory. In the same way, Rauber (2004) defends the need of articulating two dimensions of critical reflexive thought: the knowledge that is theoretically elaborated and the knowledge that emerges from below and remains, most of the time, restrained to the practices and spaces of struggle. This critical, reflexive thought and the movement from practice to theory is a qualitative one, being embedded within the realities of the social and environmental struggles of social movements and popular organizations.

Studying social movements and popular struggles from below requires qualitative methods that are, first of all, respectful of the ethical and political liberating purposes. The possibility of producing knowledge through research processes that articulate theory and praxis, that take the concrete reality as the starting point, that move from the simple to the complex, from the concrete to the abstract, that share the aim of creating a theoretical content that is relevant and meaningful because it is attached to activists' everyday life and provides a co-constructed meaning of organizing processes (Malo, 2004).

Such research perspective has a long tradition and has been experimented with and renewed for decades. This is the case, for example, of participatory research, a confluence of critical theory and social pedagogy (mainly popular education and the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, 1970), intending to articulate research and practical interventions with the knowledge, the experience and the needs of local communities. Another key element is the blurring of the separation between researchers and researched, in the sense that this is a process of co-research in which the participants are all partners sharing ethical and political values (Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg, 2011). Another example is critical ethnography and the recognition that researchers are subjects in dialogue with the Other, and

that in this encounter – following the inspiration of Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) – there is dialogue towards substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in the world.

Another important approach has been workers' inquiry. In 1880, *La Revue Socialiste* asked an ageing Karl Marx to draft a questionnaire to be circulated among the French working class. Called "A Workers' Inquiry," it was a list of exactly 101 detailed questions, inquiring about everything from meal times to wages to lodging. The most important modern-day application of workers' inquiry was dissident Italian Marxism in the 1960s and 1970s. Originating in the *Quaderni Rossi* journal, the idea was taken up by elements in Potere Operaio, Autonomia and Lotta Continua. The key aspect is the conception of the militant workers' self-inquiry as a means for investigating situations of transformation and the relationship between conflict and antagonism within it (Panzieri, 1994). The workers' inquiry is a kind of co-research – a form of research that tears down the division between the subject-researcher and object-researched (Malo, 2004). More recently, such approaches have been extended to militant research – the place where academia and activism meet in the search for new ways of acting that lead to new ways of thinking (Bookchin et al., 2013), connected with spaces where horizontal practices of organization are experienced.

The above mentioned approaches to qualitative research share a perspective on knowledge production in which the fixed roles of academic and activist are blurred. Following the proposition of Enrique Dussel (1974) for a methodology of liberation, we can name this approach as 'analectics', an attitude that requires the openness to think, to listen, to see, to feel, to taste the world from the perspective of the Other; it is conditioned by humbleness and solidarity. Analectics allows one to recognize the existence of a politics of Totality and the Other. The 'politics of the Other is an anti-politics, it is a politics of subversion and contestation', since it challenges established hierarchies and legal truths. It proclaims the injustice and illegitimacy of the actual system in the name of a new legitimacy (Mendieta, 2001, p. 21). Alcoff (2011, p. 67) defines analectics as 'an epistemology for the new revolution': a decolonized epistemology that puts 'at the center not simply the objective conditions of global impoverishment and oppression, but the systematic disauthorization of the interpretive perspective of the oppressed in the global South'. The idea of analectics is driven 'to get to a larger, more comprehensive, and more adequate understanding of all that is true concerning the experience of those whose experiences are most often ignored' (Alcoff, 2011, p. 71).

Call Details

With this Special Issue we are calling for contributions that analyze and understand the political organization of grassroots struggles and resistances against hegemonic power regimes. In our view, it is vitally important for OS to see and engage with the organizational practices of the marginalized communities of below, as otherwise our field simply contributes to the reproduction of existing power regimes, rather than seeing and analyzing those practices of hope that challenge dominant frames of organizational analysis.

We particularly invite – but do by no means restrict submissions to – manuscripts on one or several of the following topics, always in connection with the methodological aspects discussed above:

- The analysis of social movements and popular struggles, exploring the theoretical issues that are embedded in their practices;
- The organizational significance of ephemeral movements and/or events;
- Theoretical dialogues with the knowledge produced by activists in their organizational processes;
- Analysis of alternative (that is, non-hegemonic) organizations and their resistances/struggles;
- Critical discussion and reflection on what constitutes 'alternatives' and what organizational practices from below can be seen as contributing to the reproduction of existing regimes of power;

- The dialectics of organization in its multiple contradictions such as spontaneity/organization, autonomy/demands to the state, horizontality/hierarchies, leadership/leading by obeying, critical strategic reasoning/refusal of strategic reasoning;
- Organizational practices as experiments of prefigurative politics;
- Meanings and limits of self-organization practices;
- The organizational dimension in occupying events;
- Theoretical dialogues with the knowledge produced by activists in their organizational processes;
- Research practices for studying social movements and popular struggles and their limits;
- Examinations of and reflections on the relationship between researcher and researched;
- Theoretical debates on research methodologies to study social movements from below.

Submission Details

Deadline for submission of manuscripts is 1 November 2016.

Manuscripts should be a maximum of 10,000 words in length (including tables, figures and references) and should conform to the normal submission guidelines for Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management,

http://www.emeraldinsight.com/products/journals/author_guidelines.htm?id=qrom.

References

- Alcoff, L. (2011), "An epistemology of the new revolution", *Transmodernity*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 67-78.
- Dunayevskaya, R. (1982), *Marxism and Freedom: From 1976 until Today*, Humanities Press, Amherst, NJ.
- Dussel, E. (1974), *Método para una filosofía de la liberación*, Ediciones Sígueme, Salamanca.
- Rauber, I. (2004), "La transformación social en el siglo XXI: camino de reformas o de revolución", *Pasado y Presente*, No. 21, pp. 1-26.
- Bakhtin, M. (1982), *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.
- Bookchin, N. et al. (2013), "*Militant research handbook*", available at: http://www.visualculturenow.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/MRH_Web.pdf (accessed 1 June 2016).
- Freire, P. (1970), *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Herder and Herder, New York, NY.
- Kincheloe, J. L.; McLaren, P. and Steinberg, S. R. (2011) "Critical pedagogy and qualitative research: moving to the bricolage", in: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. (ed.) *Handbook of qualitative research*, 3^a ed., Sage, London, pp. 163-178.
- Malo, M. (Ed.) (2004), *Nociones Comunes: experiencias y ensayos entre investigación y militancia*, Traficantes de Sueños, Madrid.
- Marx, K. (1880), "*A Workers' inquiry*", first published in *La Revue socialiste*, April 20, 1880, uploaded in 1997, available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/04/20.htm> (accessed 1 June 2016).
- Mendieta, E. (2001), "Política en la era de la globalización: crítica de razón política de E. Dussel", in Dussel, E. *Hacia una Filosofía Política Crítica*, Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao, pp. 15-39.
- Panzieri, R. (1994), *Spontaneità e organizzazione: gli anni dei "Quaderni Rossi" 1959-1964*, BFS Edizioni, Pisa.

About the Special Issue Editors

Maria Ceci Misoczky is Professor of Organization Studies at the School of Administration of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. She coordinates the research group Organization and Liberation Praxis and is Co-Chair of the Critical Management Studies International Board. She has received his PhD from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Her research interests focus on the organizational practices of social movements and popular struggles, Latin-American social thinking and critical ontology. Contact: maria.ceci@ufrgs.br.

Guilherme Dornelas Camara is Assistant Professor at the School of Administration of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. He is member of the research group Organization and Liberation Praxis and holds Visiting Professorship at the University EAFIT, Colombia. He has received his PhD from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. He is currently the Vice-President of the Brazilian Society of Organization Studies. His research interests focus on the organizational practices of social movements, Latin-American social thinking and towards a critique of the political economy of organization. He is member of the committee of editors of the journal *Administración y Desarrollo*, published by the *Escuela Superior de Administración Pública* (ESAP) of Colombia, and of the collective of editors of the Brazilian Journal of Latin-American Studies (Rebela). Contact: guilherme.dornelas@ufrgs.br.

Steffen Böhm is Professor of Organisation & Sustainability at the University of Exeter, UK. He is also an Honorary Professor at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, and holds Visiting Professorships at both Uppsala University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. He received his PhD from the University of Warwick. His research focuses on political economies and ecologies of organization, management and the environment, with a special interest in the study of the politics and organization of social movement. He was a co-founder of the open-access journal *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*, and is co-founder and co-editor of the open-access publishing press MayFlyBooks. He has published five books: *Repositioning Organization Theory* (Palgrave), *Against Automobility* (Blackwell), *Upsetting the Offset: The Political Economy of Carbon Markets* (Mayfly), *The Atmosphere Business* (Mayfly), and *Ecocultures: Blueprints for Sustainable Communities* (Routledge). Contact: s.boehm@exeter.ac.uk; web: <http://steffenboehm.net>