



# 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, 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:

Leading meaningful social change

### STREAM LEADERS:

Ms Bontu Lucie Guschke, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

Professor Alison Pullen, Macquarie University, Australia

Dr Nela Smolović Jones, Open University, UK

Dr Owain Smolović Jones, Open University, UK

Dr Alia Fortune Weston, OCAD University, Canada

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Leadership is perhaps unique amongst organization studies concepts in dealing with foundational matters of how meaning is shaped, mobilised, consumed and contested. As the Gender, Work and Organization conference meets in Cape Town, climate crises wreak havoc on populations and nature across the globe, and pre-existing inequalities widen. Bold and critical leadership is needed more than ever. Radical solutions to address inequalities and associated violence which are compounded by pandemics, wars and Indigenous land theft have exposed leadership failures and their relationship with masculinity. Alternative ways of thinking about leadership and gender are required for meaningful social change. As members of our communities, we need to think beyond the parameters of existing scholarship, working in collaborative ways with community members, organizers, practitioners, activists, and academics. Sometimes the problems are overwhelming and beyond the capacity of individuals, but we are inspired by the words of hooks (2015: 223), who saw that creativity in everyday passion and action stems from outside the norms which suffocate and oppress lived experience and ways to think: ‘Such diverse pleasures can be experienced, enjoyed even, because one transgresses and moves “out of one’s (imposed) place” pushing against oppressive boundaries set by race, sex and class domination.’

This stream offers a space of openness for playful and creative provocations to leadership practice and thought - but that nevertheless hold the potential to challenge status quo power (Simpson et al, 2020; Weston and Imas, 2018). This stream will be broad, interdisciplinary, inclusive, and inviting of studies that challenge status quo leadership from a position of nonconformity, which actively engage with current social issues, as doing so offers possibilities for hope and meaningful social change.

This positioning does not mean that submissions need to ‘think big’ or theorise through ‘big name male theorists’ to provide answers to the world’s problems. The field remains overrepresented by research that prioritises white, male, heteronormative perspectives, oriented to the Global North and impressed by people in positions of wealth and power. Rather, we prefer to make collective sense of a tapestry of empirical studies in formation, of creative injunctions, theory and methodologies not properly appreciated in the broader scholarly community. We welcome submissions which focus on leadership from a basis of lived experience, practices that reflect diverse and marginalised genders, the diverse global majority, and embrace approaches from the Global South. Submissions do not need to conform with traditional forms of academic writing but rather provoke creativity and reflection (Pullen et al, 2020).

We strongly encourage submissions that challenge status quo approaches to leadership and push against oppressive boundaries from a gendered and intersectional perspective. We see this work as particularly urgent in relation to the existential issue of climate crises. However, climate leadership - and indeed leadership against the status-quo in general - lacks meaningful purpose unless it is informed by a strong counter-ethos that demands and enables practices to be guided by an ethic of love and care. Moreover, such leadership towards meaningful social change needs to account for material and spatial reconfigurations that will challenge how wealth and power are envisaged and distributed. Hence we propose the following three emphases for submissions, which overlap and invite playful connection and subversion:

1. Gendered leadership to address climate crises.

Despite the fact that climate change is urgent and existential, the various fields generated to address the issue - from science to activism - are over-represented by those who do not experience the negative impacts of climate crises. If we are going to save and regenerate the planet, we need leadership from the diverse global majority, particularly from people currently suffering from the effects of acute climate degradation. Most importantly, we need rich empirical accounts of climate leadership from a basis of lived experience, from people who labour at the edge of climate catastrophe, in the Global South, or any climate hotspot. We need to better understand how diverse,

differently gendered leadership practice can offer new ways of interpreting and addressing climate crises. Submissions in this area could address questions such as:

- How can scholars envisage both leadership and climate crises from alternative and differently gendered perspectives so that more people can access ideas and practices that can help save the planet?
- In what manner can ideas from Indigenous leadership be adopted and adapted in meaningful and respectful ways that can shape practice globally (Jimenez-Luque, 2021; Spiller et al, 2020)?
- What resistances do (and would) alternatively gendered approaches to leadership face when they encounter patriarchy and the typically corporate organisation?
- Approaches to leadership will differ depending on whether or not we think it is possible to challenge and change current trends and manifestations of capitalism. Should scholars reluctantly focus on 'best possible' approaches, think beyond these to more revolutionary solutions, or somewhere in between?

Generating meaningful climate leadership, and indeed any leadership that involves challenging status quo identities and practices, necessarily needs to be informed by a counter-ethos. Such an ethos should ensure that leadership offers hope in radically new forms of practice, hence our second emphasis.

## 2. Sustainability through leadership with love and care.

hooks' (2015) approach to everyday resistance sets the tone for creative and embodied forms of leadership that challenge dominant, deeply held, and felt norms of gender, race, and class. Equally, hooks prioritised an ethic of care, responsibility, and love as a transformative, activist energy that promotes social change and social justice (hooks, 2001). In an era of hyper-exploitative economic and social relations, and in the context of climate crisis, this offers a space for corporeal social change and resistance that connect with the materiality of the land. Most obviously in activism, bodies assemble to usurp and subvert gendered power dynamics on streets and in centres of power (Just and Muhr, 2019; Smolović Jones et al, 2021). Such intercorporeal practice can offer distinctive forms of diversely gendered, and ethical leadership (Pullen and Vachhani, 2021). Activism and community organizing that promotes care for the planet, and sustainable practices is paramount. Bodies are thus sites of creativity, care and love between people in leadership practices which create anti-capitalist, decolonial, and material sustainable change (Weston, 2022; Fortune-Weston, In Progress). Questions arising include:

- How can diversely gendered leadership constitute a space for sustainable change that embraces creativity, responsibility, care and love?
- How can we engage with capacities and practices of sustainable leadership which engage anti-capitalist, decolonial practices?
- How can notions of time and space be re-thought and re-practiced to generate novel and creative forms of leadership that connect with the materiality of the land?
- How are bodies used to usurp and subvert gendered power dynamics, through acts of resistance and responsibility, activating diversely gendered, ethical and sustainable leadership outside centres of power?

Bodies, and by extension embodied leadership, always takes place within, shapes and is shaped by, particular spaces. Such spaces of workplaces, urban or rural scenes, are inter-dependent and tied to the ways in which social and economic relations are practiced. Hence we would like to encourage submissions that situate bodies, practices and the existential issue of climate crises spatially through our third emphasis.

### 3. Gendered leadership and uneven geographies.

Spatial views of leadership hold the promise to illuminate some of the hidden and overlapping dynamics of gender, economy, materiality, leadership and resistance at work (Smolović Jones et al, 2022). They view work and civic spaces as inherently contested, often dominated by bourgeois interests, but resisted and repurposed through grassroots forms of leadership. Spatial views enable sight of the dependencies between domestic and work spaces (reproduction and production), the blurring of these categories in the name of capital accumulation (Massey, 2005) and how spatial leadership can offer radical alternatives through disrupting gender norms. Questions arising include:

- How can we understand diversely gendered leadership by approaching the features of rural and urban space as dialectically entwined with economic and social relations?
- Can we better understand specific leadership practices through illuminating the ways in which capital flows through and against them? E.g., what is the gendered political economy of ‘transformational leadership’ practice within specific spatial contexts?
- How is leadership parasitical upon uneven geographical development and how is such leadership constructed in uniquely gendered ways?
- How can gendered and emancipatory forms of leadership be improved by novel forms of urban co-operation and co-design? Can leadership practices enhance the project of designing and producing the feminist city (Kern, 2019)?
- How can spatial views of leadership better situate climate leadership in the gendered dynamics of nature and economy?

For stream enquiries please contact: Owain Smolović Jones: owain.smolovic-jones@open.ac.uk

Abstracts of approximately 500 words should be submitted directly to the GWO2023 conference website in a ONE-page (A4-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/](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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