

2019 ICA Annual Conference

Preconference

Organizing resistance beyond the boundaries of neoliberal capitalism

Call For Papers

24 May 9:00 - 17:00 (Washington Hilton)

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Since the 1980s, capitalism has entered a now well-known neoliberal phase, characterized by two complimentary logic: the extension of the logic of the market on a global scale and the logic of competition to all facets of social life. This ‘new rationality’ (Dardot & Laval, 2009) gives rise to the emergence of new forms of social relations and subjectivity. In response, collective action of resistance is organizing itself to denounce the economic, social, moral or ecological disastrous consequences of neoliberalism (for example: the Occupy Movement, *Nuit Debout*, Blak Live Matters). And alternatives to this new rationality (cooperatives, self-management, popular education, local currencies, etc.) are emerging. Very recently, the French *Gilets Jaunes* movement has profoundly shaken resistance practises. Redefining all at once “revolution,” “the people” and “social movements.” This circumstantial actuality is a great opportunity to open up new avenues in social science research and more specifically in communication to think resistance anew.

In organizational studies, political science, sociology or anthropology, studies of resistance are vast, disparate and complex. In sum, these studies make the following claims: First, it is difficult to resist because resistance is always in/with/beyond neoliberal capitalism (Böhm, Dinerstein, & Spicer, 2010; Courpasson & Vallas, 2016; Dinerstein, 2015; Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014). Meaning that, neoliberal capitalism tends to continuously recuperate critics in order “to make it work for their own purpose” (Böhm et al., 2010, p. 27). Second, resistance is characterized by a disparate and fragmented nature (Courpasson & Vallas, 2016). Meaning that, resistance constitutes a dynamic phenomenon that can occur at multiple levels and can take multiple forms. For instance, it may or may not reflect conscious intent. It may or may not succeed in renegotiating the claims that elites can make on their subordinates. It may or may not harbour a conception of an alternative order, in however inchoate or fantastic a state. Despite this increasing scholarly attention to resistance, most of these studies often remain very descriptive (focusing on social media and forms of management, for example) privileging a macro perspective that discloses mere strategies or general logic. Hence, more attention to practices of resistance that seek to reveal ‘what is occurring’ and ‘how’ resistance is at work are needed (Ganesh, Zoller, & Cheney, 2005; Mumby, 1993; Obregón & Tufte, 2017).

As Obregón and Tufte (2017) remind us, in organizational communication studies on resistance, social movements and collective action, the focus is mostly put on three lines of research: strategic use of communication and media as tools; activist-driven use of communication for social mobilization and political transformation and media focus approach. Although studying media is crucial in the changing landscape of social movements and resistance, it's also judicious to further explore the 'micro-practices' of organizing resistance (Ganesh, Zoller, & Cheney, 2005; Mumby, 1993). Doing so, "changes our understanding of power from sweeping characterizations to empirical observations of everyday interaction." (Ganesh et al., 2005, p. 9) One way to explore in more detail such practices is to focus on the communicative dynamic that constitutes social movements of resistance (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009). Communication is here understood as a key process through which resistance is organized: resistance is communicatively accomplished in a dialectical relationship with/against/in neoliberal capitalism. A communicational approach circumvents weak aspects of critical political economy which focuses more on the macro dimension giving less room for the exploration of communication practises (Dean, 2005; Ganesh, 2018; Obregón & Tufte, 2017). Moreover, such an approach complement political sociology studies of resistance (Courpasson & Vallas, 2016) by adding communication to the heterogeneous processes of resistance (Ganesh & Stohl, 2014).

Based on the idea that "any politics that seek to reform, reject, or surpass capitalism must place the boundary question front and centre" (Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018, p. 176), this preconference invites critical scholars and members of social movements/alternative organizations to address the (re)organization of resistance, and more specifically to reflect on how a communicative understanding of these processes of (re)organization can incite and provoke disruption, change and transgressions to the boundaries established by neoliberalism.

Topics related to the re/organization of resistance may include, but are not limited to the following questions:

- Which practises and discourses shape movements of resistance and how?
- How do alternative modes of organizing redefine boundaries of neoliberalism?
- What are those boundaries, to begin with?
- How can communication transgress or modify boundaries of neoliberalism? Theoretically? Practically?
- What role should academia and civic organizations play in the redefinition of boundaries?

This preconference will be an occasion for students, scholars and members of social movements, alternative organizations and resistance at large to share both studies and practices of collective resistance, such as feminist/racial/sexual (Ashcraft, 2004; Davis, 2015, 2018; Gittens, 2018), social movements (Ganesh & Stohl, 2014; Ganesh et al., 2005; Ganesh & Zoller, 2012), alternative organizations (Cruz, 2017), or postcolonialism and non-western epistemology (Cruz, 2017; Cruz, McDonal, Broadfoot, Kai-chun, & Ganesh, 2018). But also, it will be an invitation to discuss the role of academics in "crossing the boundaries" of neoliberal normativity in order to put forth a more "engaged" community.

Submission details

Please submit a 500-800 words abstract (excluding references, one page, word document –NOT PDF–), single-spaced, no header, footers or track changes) together with your contact information to **Sophie Del Fa: del_fa.sophie@uqam.ca**

The deadline for submission of abstracts is **February 1st**, and we will notify our decisions by the end of February. Selected participants will have to submit an extended abstract or full paper by May 1st.

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