

## **Call for a Special Issue to *Voluntas*: Paradoxes within the Management of Volunteers**

### **Guest Editors:**

Anders la Cour, Associate Professor at Copenhagen Business School, Denmark (corresponding guest editor)

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Proposal for deadlines:

Abstract submissions due: August 15, 2020 (between 400 and 700 words, send to Anders la Cour, email: [al.mpp@cbs.dk](mailto:al.mpp@cbs.dk))

Full paper submissions due: January 30, 2021

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The study of paradoxes has once again become fashionable in the studies of organizations and management. Leading journals within the field have devoted special issues on the topic, and central scholars have discussed the concept's analytical relevance. This special issue will build on a broadly defined concept of "paradox," and will use it as an important tool for understanding the interactional tensions that are specific for the management of volunteers.

Probably all organizations have to cope dilemmas: mismatches between elements of their stated missions, or between their missions and their funding sources' requirements, or between their stated missions and their unstated actions (Schneiberg and Clemens 2006; Clemens and Cook 1999). Accordingly, some scholars have suggested that the notion of paradox is enabling the next generation of organization and management theory (Weatherbee et al. 2008; Lewis & Smith 2014).

The notion of paradoxes in organizational studies has provided a steady stream of research since Weber, running through Thompson (1967) and of course, Simon and March (1958). Smith & Lewis (2011) further this approach, in a review paper, which defines the concept as "Contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time" (Smith & Lewis 2011:382) (see also Lewis (2000) for an earlier statement). Since managers need to preserve both sides of a paradox, choosing one at the expense of the other is not an option. Instead, managers realize that choosing one side in favour of the other only gives rise to further problems. Because of this, Lewis and others says that actors' first step, in managing a paradox, is to gain a better understanding of what kind of tensions are at stake and how they work. Actors' second step, for this approach, is to find a way to treat the contradictions as complementary and to embrace them, in order to fuel virtuous instead of vicious cycles (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Researchers from a wide range of disciplines and theoretical persuasions investigate how actors develop different strategies for how to create such virtuous cycles.

This special issue aims to contribute to this stream of research in two ways.

First, while we thus have seen an increase in the study of paradoxes within general organization studies, the same has not been the case within the studies of voluntarism and the management of it. There are, however, some exceptions. Some scholars have focused on how the increased orientation toward results and formalization have challenged the spontaneous character of voluntary social care and its ability to be flexible and creative (Hustinx et al., 2010; Brandsen and Pestoff, 2006; Hwang and Powell, 2009; Jäger et al., 2009; Salamon, 1995; Smith, 2003,). Some studies have instead focused on how the practice of voluntary social care represent a paradoxical practice in itself (la Cour & Hoejlund 2008, Toraldo et al.

2016). And others again, have investigated how the management request for authentic relationships within voluntary social care creates paradoxes of how to be loyal towards the organization (la Cour 2019). Many have examined the tensions between profit-making, political advocacy, and social giving in both corporate volunteering and corporate social responsibility efforts ( Shachar et al. 2018, Sharma & Bansal 2017). Others examine tensions between treating volunteers as “experts” in their own experience versus treating them as needing advice from experts (Meriluoto 2018, Berger & Charles 2014); or between treating volunteers as recipients of needed aid versus inviting or forcing them to become “active citizens” in participatory democracy (Carrell 2013, Hamidi 2011, Lee 2002; Lee et al. 2015; Montambeault 2016). Others examine the effects of contradictions in a social policy. For example, in some countries, people have a universal right to welfare, and on the other hand, some marginalized populations are considered to be less deserving than others; how does this inflect the volunteer experience? Sometimes, the puzzle involves the boundary between paid and unpaid labor (Krinsky and Simonet 2017). In all of these, the question is, “How, in everyday practice, do people manage these dilemmas in everyday interaction?”. Or how does concepts such as “empowerment” or community” as organizational and political aspirations, sometimes paradoxically undermine the very possibility of being empowered (Eliasoph 2011; Levine 2017). This special issue wants to contribute to the body of knowledge by further exploring what kinds of paradoxes that are challenging the organization of voluntary social work, in order to develop our understanding of the complexity, dynamics and social embedding of these emerging paradoxical situations.

Second, many researchers show that resolving the tensions is not necessarily the only a route to “success” (Lewis 2000; Lewis et al. 2014; Smith & Lewis 2011). Often, voluntary organizations develop a style for “navigating” the paradoxes *without* resolving them, (Eliasoph et al. 2019, la Cour 2019, Grubb & Henriksen 2019, Berger 2016, Tugal 2016, Clemens, forthcoming). In this, the question is, “How do organizations keep going, without resolving their characteristic dilemmas?”

The guest editors of the special issue welcome contributions dealing with different kinds of paradoxes that are challenging and/or stimulating management of volunteers. Papers submitted can be solely conceptual in nature and/or based on empirical insights, but must, in any case, make a significant contribution to the understanding of how paradoxes are at stake within the management of volunteers. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- What characterizes voluntariness as a certain paradoxical form of practice, and how do actors attempt to manage it?
- How can an organization manage the relation between the need for formal integration and at the same time respect the autonomy of the volunteers?
- What kinds of dilemmas appear within different “empowerment projects?”
- How might volunteers’ ideas of what care should be come into tension with the reality of the people who become objects for these caring ambitions?
- How and why avoiding intimacy becomes an important ambition within certain forms of voluntary care, and how is this achieved?

**Timeline:**

August 15, 2020: Submission of extended abstract (between 400 and 700 words), send to Anders la Cour, email: [al.mpp@cbs.dk](mailto:al.mpp@cbs.dk)

September 20, 2020: Selection of abstracts by guest editors

January 30, 2021: Full paper submission to guest editors.

March 30, 2021: Informal review by the guest editors.

May 15, 2021: Submission of the special issue for review to Voluntas.

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