



Call for participation for an *ephemera* online conference on:

Activist organizing and organizing activism: A post-pandemic world in the making

Dates: 31 May-1 June 2021

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As we find ourselves in the midst of yet another crisis that undermines the ecological, political and economic bases of our lives, alternative forms of organizing are gaining renewed attention, and calls for a critical engagement with them are more urgent than ever. In response to this imperative, the conference will explore the current challenges and opportunities opened up by activist forms of organizing. In particular, the conference aims to expand on how these alternatives challenge dominant power relations and prefigure a more democratic, ecologically sustainable, and socially just society in the here and now.

From civil society organizations to grassroots initiatives and neighbourhood groups, progressive social movements constitute contentious spaces of reflection, action, and transformation. By intertwining theory and practice, social movements offer a range of emancipatory alternatives for organizing our economy and society. Efforts to rethink the way we live and work include, for example, the social solidarity economy (e.g. World Fair Trade Organization), the mutualist movement (e.g. Coop banks), local currencies (e.g. Bristol Pound), transition towns (e.g. Transition Network), intentional communities, and eco-villages.

As we witness growing mobilizations of people for climate justice, against anti-austerity policies, as well as gender and socio-economic inequality in radical forms such as global school strikes, occupations of forests and factories, we also find insider activists disrupting the status quo and promoting change within their organizations. Finally, other organizational and social experiments that seek to blur traditional boundaries between the public, the private, and the civil society, such as social enterprises and non-growing companies, emerge with the promise of incremental social change. Beyond their diversity, these alternative forms of organizing, working and living embody not only a world already in the making, with its own tensions and paradoxes, but also contain the seeds of a post-pandemic future that is yet to come, bursting with hope and possibility. Therefore, we wish to learn from various forms of activist organizing, their bottom-up practices, strategies, tensions and transformative potential but also from academics' role and engagement with these struggles.

Indeed, following the activist turn in the field of critical organization studies, scholars are pointing to the need to develop a radical praxis that goes beyond discursive types of interventions. Acknowledging the power relations embedded in research relationships and reproduced in modes of knowing, such scholarship explores how research practices can become tools of resistance for transforming society and subverting the politics of knowledge production. This continues to pose numerous theoretical and methodological questions worth reflecting on as we do research *about/for/along* activist movements. How can academics and activists build non-exploitative, accountable and ethical relations on equal terms? What kind of methodologies can we develop together? How do academic-activists negotiate their multiple identities and work in and outside the field?

Meanwhile, and against the background of increasing threats by corporate-conservative agendas aiming at silencing all critical and heterodox perspectives within universities¹, critical scholars continue blurring the boundaries between research and organizing, drawing from the traditions of academic activism and its heritage in critical theories. To this extent, they seek to pursue situated and practically engaged knowledge that both emerges from and feeds into progressive social, political and economic

¹ see in France, [the attack on academic freedom](#); in the UK, [targeting critical management and political economy scholars for redundancies](#); in Turkey, [the appointment of a president to Boğaziçi University from outside their community and the protests of academics](#).

struggles. We would like to hear about the theoretical and experiential interventions of academics involved in organizing activism.

We invite activists, artists, practitioners and researchers to join us in the ongoing dialogue on activism, organizing, and socio-ecological transformation. We encourage participation in a variety of formats including articles, notes, photo essays, short films, artistic performances or any other experimental contributions. Possible topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Activist organizing and emerging transformative subjectivities
- Self-management, collective ownership and other practices of activist organizing such as solidarity, autonomy, shared leadership, etc.
- Collective action and mobilization within, against and beyond capitalist practices
- Organizing activism by building alliances to transform institutions
- Challenges of/to academic-activist forms of engagement and the politics of knowledge co-production
- Contribution of critical theories to activist organizing (e.g. diverse economies, social movements theory, the commons, queer theory, anarchism(s), Marxism(s), feminism(s), post/decolonialism(s), etc.)

The deadline for submitting abstracts is 2 April 2021

Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be submitted in a PDF/word document, and any questions addressed to Yousra Rahmouni Elidrissi (y.rahmounielidrissi@uu.nl) and Ozan Nadir Alakavuklar (o.n.alakavuklar@uu.nl).

The conference will be online and free for participants.

An open call for a special issue in *ephemera* will follow the conference to which participants and non-participants will be able to submit their contributions.