**OLKC 2018 – Symposium**

**Learning to make a Difference.**

**Power, Politics and Emotions in Organizational Knowing and Learning. Identifying problems and mobilizing possibilities**

*Convenors*:

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*If you would like to submit a paper for possible inclusion in this Symposium, then please indicate that it is for the Symposium when submitting your abstract to the OLKC 2018 online system.*

**Call for papers**

Power relations inform emerging and embedded structures and set the boundaries of thought, action and feeling in organizations. Emotions combine to both challenge and to reinforce those relations, structures and boundaries. *What are the implications of such dynamics for knowing and learning?*

In this Symposium we will explore diverse perspectives and approaches that contribute to our understanding of the connections between power, emotion, knowing and learning. Our aim is to offer support for ongoing, high quality research and scholarship within this area. Following on from the successful Symposiums at OLKC2016 in St. Andrews and OLKC2017 in Valladolid, we are again offering a Symposium design that will help to shape key theoretical and empirical papers for future publication in top journals, including pre-conference review of submitted papers.

For OLKC 2018, we encourage Symposium contributors to engage with the conference theme, ‘learning to make a difference’. We think that this can be done in ways that address the intersection between emotion and power in organizational learning. For example, ‘diversity' is a concept that often promotes the idea of different people with shared organisational values of working harmoniously together. This idea can also encourage the avoidance of difference arising from (e.g.) race and gender, and the potential conflicts that might arise from them. The fantasy that difference can be effectively managed through shared values also offers organizations a way to control difference, thereby ensuring that diversity becomes a dominant disposition, a mechanism to control what difference means, as well as defining expectations surrounding social relations. We would like to support scholarship that can contribute to the in-depth exploration of the emotional and political dynamics of difference.

There is great diversity in the underpinning assumptions, focal points and approaches adopted by scholars in this area. For example, studies have drawn upon works of Foucault and Latour to explain relational aspects of power (Costas and Grey, 2014; Heizmann, 2011). Reed (2012) has examined power relations and elites by drawing on realist/ materialist ontology and neo-Weberian frameworks. Beck (2008) has discussed global power games and ‘counterpower’ between global businesses, nation states and social movements. Beyes and Steyaert (2013: 1458) have called for work that is ‘attuned to and seeks to enact the affective forces that haunt and unsettle organizational life’.

Interest in the ‘white spaces’ of organizational life (O’Doherty, De Cock, Rehn and Ashcraft, 2013), in emotion and symbolic power (Vince and Mazen 2014) and in ‘ghosts’ of past relations (Orr 2014) offer different ways of exploring how power is implicated in aspects of organising, leading and learning. Similarly, the concepts of sense-making and sense-giving have been applied to capture the degree to which managers and employees use power resources in attempts to influence others (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014; Filstad, 2014). Thomas and Davies (2005) and Sonenshein and Dhalokia (2010) have engaged with dynamics of power and politics related to management of change. Gordon, Clegg and Kornberger (2009) have looked at how forms of power shape ethical practices. Recent work has also sought to understand more about the connections between emotion and power. For example, Voronov and Vince (2012) have shown how collective emotions are bound up with the reproduction of social structure and with systems of domination so that the constructed world that surrounds and is within us seems natural, obvious and not in need of change.

Practice-based studies of learning, innovating and change have become influential across several disciplines (Gherardi, 2006). Whereas some parts of practice-based studies bring power and interests to the fore, other lenses downplay the role of power. As Nicolini (2007: 917) puts it, ‘there is no change in practice without empowerment and disempowerment’. An influential strand of practice-based studies has looked at communities of practice. While Lave and Wenger (1991) had a more explicit focus on power and interests (see for instance Contu and Willmott, 2003) this focus has become downplayed. Swan et al. (2002), Mørk et al (2010), Roberts (2006) and others have therefore suggested exploring how power and politics are an important part of practice within and across such communities.

In order to help *our* community of scholars and scholarly practitioners to understand the diversity and complexity within this field, we positively encourage submissions from different positions and perspectives on power, politics and emotions to be part of the Symposium. We welcome theoretical, empirical and methodological papers on the role of power, politics and emotions in organising, leading and learning. Respective topics include, but are not limited to:

* Ways of theorising power, politics and emotions, in particular those challenging basic assumptions and approaches in our current understanding of organising, leading and learning
* Methods for studying power, politics and emotions in organizations
* Ways of re-presenting findings about power and interests in organisations
* Relationships between organizing and power
* Relationships between leading and power. The role of top management and middle managers as change agents
* Power in processes of sense-making and sense-giving
* The study of emotions beyond individual feelings, including social emotions, emotion contagion, unconscious emotions – as well as their implications for knowing and learning.
* Power and emotional issues in organizational learning, integrating past, present and future perspectives.
* Practice-based studies of power and politics, including studies within and across communities of practice and the practices of communities.

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