Gender, Work and Organization  
Special Issue Proposal

Gender Equality and ‘Austerity’: Vulnerabilities, Resistance, and Change  
Sue.Durbin@uwe.ac.uk; Margaret.Page@uwe.ac.uk; Sylvia.Walby@Lancaster.ac.uk

This special issue invites papers that analyse the impact of gendered austerity measures on advocacy, support services and employment for women and feminist organisation and resistance to these measures. Our aim is to take forward debates on ‘gendering change’ (Benshop, Mills, Mills and Tienari, 2012) by focusing on the gendering of change in the organisation of public services within austerity regimes, and on emergent forms of resistance.

Although initial government positions have often been that ‘we are all in it together’, there is some evidence that measures to address the current economic crisis, including ‘fiscal consolidation’ have widened inequalities, and that vulnerable demographic groups, vulnerable geographies and vulnerable organizations are bearing the brunt of national and international austerity measures (Leschke and Jepsen, 2012; Pearson and Sweetman, 2011). Within the UK, there are suggestions that women, particularly those with intersecting disadvantages such as poverty, disability ethnicity and age (young and old), are bearing the larger part of the impact of austerity (Fawcett, 2013; Women’s Budget Group, 2014). Government strategies of reducing regulation (‘cutting red tape’) as well as public expenditure, appear to be reducing the scope of equality legislation and institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality and diversity (Conley and Page, 2010). There is emerging concern for the fate of the ‘Third Sector’ in this context. Some of the public and voluntary sector organisations that provide and advocate for services to women in crisis appear to be casualties of austerity (Women’s Resource Centre, 2013). The increasing use of competition rather than democratic accountability as a principle mechanism for organising public services has changed the environment in which public and Third Sector organisations are working (Breitenbach, Brown, Mackay and Webb, 2002; Newman and Clarke, 2009). These organisations include services supporting women, some of which, such as refuges and rape crisis centres, have been supported by state funding and have emerged from feminist activism.

In this context, there appears to be a resurgence of feminism and feminist activism in a variety of traditional and non-traditional forms within the UK and internationally (Walby, 2011). Equality advocates, social movements and trade union activists, are seeking new ways of organising, and of defending democratic accountability in relation to public services and the state, and women are playing a lead role in many of these initiatives (Newman, 2012). Alongside these traditional forms of protest, networked and lateral forms of organisation offer potential for extending the scope of political engagement, and for developing new forms of feminist political practice, locally and transnationally (Conway, 2013; Franzway and Fonow, 2011). Among these, new media, cultural practices and arts
based and aesthetic modes of inquiry offer potential for developing new forms of organisation and pre-figurative political practice.

This special issue seeks to bring together conceptual and empirical papers that investigate these issues, with a focus upon emergent feminist organisation and resistance to gendered austerity measures, and their discursive and organisational forms.

Papers on the following indicative topics would be welcome:

- The impact of gendered austerity measures on the organisation of advocacy, support services and employment for women;
- The implications of neoliberal de-regulation for public and third sector organisations providing services to women;
- Feminist engagement with austerity discourses and strategies;
- Analyses of initiatives and practices that address gender equality in the context of the economic and financial crisis;
- Case studies of legal and organisational challenges to the gendered impact of austerity measures, at local, national and international levels;
- Analyses of the narratives and discourses of gender in/equality that underpin resistance and challenge to austerity measures;
- Research on the use of social media, aesthetic and arts based practices and analysis of whether and how these may complement, extend, or promote feminist political practice in the context of neo liberalist discourses of austerity and in response to austerity measures.

Deadline for submission of full papers: 31 January 2015
Manuscripts should be around 9,000 words. Manuscripts considered for publication will be peer-reviewed following the journal’s double-blind review process. Submissions should be made via the journal’s ScholarOne Manuscript Central at: http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/gwo. Author guidelines can be found at the journal’s website at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291468-0432/homepage/ForAuthors.html.

Further enquiries about the special issue should be directed to Sue.Durbin@uwe.ac.uk; Margaret.Page@uwe.ac.uk; Sylvia.Walby@Lancaster.ac.uk

References


Editorial team

The editorial team consists of three researchers who are international experts in the field of gender equality ensuring a wide network of contacts in North America and Europe. Team members have wide experience in organising key events to research and to promote gender equality within state institutions in the changing policy and legislative landscape. These include: the panel on 'Gender and the Crisis' for RC02 Economy and Society of the International Sociological Association in Yokohama, Japan, July 2014; a conference stream at GWO 2014, 'The impact of austerity on women: vulnerabilities and resilience'; research workshops for activists and researchers on “Gender and Austerity: The Impact of Recession on Women” and contributions to gender equality networks and campaigns.

**Margaret Page** is an experienced researcher in gender equality practice in the local state and her publications are concerned with critical inquiry into the narratives and practices for promoting gender equality within local government. They include book chapters and peer reviewed journal articles in *Gender Work and Organization*, *The International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *Management Learning*, *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*. She is co author of *Gender Equality in Public Services; Chasing the Dream* (Routledge, November 2014).

**Sylvia Walby** has prior experience in editing special issues of journals, including for GWO, Social Politics, Current Sociology, and the International Journal of Feminist Politics. She is Distinguished Professor of Sociology and UNESCO Chair in Gender Research at Lancaster University. Her publications, such as *Globalization and Inequalities* (Sage 2009) and *The Future of Feminism* (Polity 2011). She has organised the panel on 'Gender and the Crisis' for RC02 Economy and Society of the International Sociological Association in Yokohama, Japan, July 2014.