

Bricolage of positions and perspectives from the panel discussion on prospects and contestations of Critical and Radical Humanist Work and Organizational Psychology: Are we ready to take over?¹

Laura F. Röllmann¹, Johanna L. Degen², Edina Dóci³, P. Matthijs Bal⁴, Severin Hornung⁵, Gazi Islam⁶, Thomas Kühn⁷ & Zoe Sanderson⁸

- 1 Leipzig University, Department of Work and Organizational Psychology and Department of Psychology in School and Teaching, Germany
- 2 European University of Flensburg, Department of Psychology, Germany
- 3 Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, School of Business and Economics, Department of Management and Organisation, The Netherlands
- 4 University of Lincoln, Lincoln International Business School, Department of Management, United Kingdom
- 5 University of Innsbruck, Department of Psychology, Austria
- 6 Grenoble Ecole de Management, Department of People, Organizations and Society and Institute for Research in Management and Economics (IREGE), France
- 7 International Psychoanalytic University Berlin (IPU), Erich Fromm Study Center (EFSC), Germany
- 8 University of Bristol Business School, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This article provides a compilation or, rather, composition of the position statements by the participants of the panel discussion at the first International Conference on Critical and Radical Humanist Work and Organizational Psychology, held from the 11th to the 13th of July 2022 at the University of Innsbruck. Unlike the loosely sewn together „patchwork quilt“ one might expect, the resulting text deserves the label „bricolage“ – a sculpture of ideas, complementing and contextualizing each other to form a higher-order meaning that goes beyond the sum of its parts. Bricolage can refer to the creation of cultural identity among social groups as well as to the psychological processes through which individuals retrieve and recombine knowledge. Both meanings seem fitting here and, in this sense, each individual contribution is a fractal of the overall gestalt of this article, which is structured as follows: The first contribution by Laura Röllmann is entitled „Creating niches or intervening from within – How individual theories of change influence our strategies towards transforming Work and Organizational Psychology“. This introduction is followed up by Johanna Degen’s thoughts on „Why a critical stance comes without didactics“. Subsequently, Edina Dóci writes on the topic of „Deterritorializing and reterritorializing Work and Organizational Psychology“, followed by Matthijs Bal, pondering the issue of „Criticalizing our colleagues?“. Next, Severin Hornung raises the question „Or should we even aspire to? Dialectics of resistance and assimilation in times of crisis“. After that, Gazi Islam elaborates on „Critique of practice and critique by practice: Collaborative possibilities in Critical Work and Organizational Psychology“. Next comes Thomas Kühn’s vision, entitled „The urge for a revolution of hope in Work and Organizational Psychology“. Finally, Zoe Sanderson concludes with „Building a house we want to live in: The importance of how we do Critical Work and Organizational Psychology“. Aside from adjusting the order of contributions, the organizers have refrained from summarizing or commenting on the contents, convinced that the „magic of bricolage“ speaks for itself.

Keywords

Critical and Radical Humanist Work and Organizational Psychology – transforming academic psychology – scholarly activism – radical engagement – bricolage

¹ The order of authors does not reflect their relative overall contributions to this article, but the sequential order of their individual contributions (position statements) in the text. This bricolage was compiled and edited by Severin Hornung. We thank Christine Unterrainer for her moderation of the panel discussion.

Creating niches or intervening from within – How individual theories of change influence our strategies towards transforming Work and Organizational Psychology (Laura F. Röllmann)

Critical Work and Organizational Psychology (CWOP) is an emerging perspective promoted by a loose network of people that have found each other after the first Small Group Meeting on the Future of Work and Organizational Psychology in Breda in May 2018. Since then, we have been working together, in slightly changing constellations, to organize workshops, a journal special issue, or panel discussions, like this one. What brings us together is the conviction that conventional Work and Organizational Psychology (WOP) does not serve the precarious and oppressed. We do not target a specific area of change (e.g., feminism, anti-racism or climate justice), but approach a broad range of topics. Many of us personally and professionally aspire to contribute to a general societal transformation towards a sustainable and more equitable future. Many of us want to make their access to academia and connected resources available and beneficial to the people that are affected by discrimination and/or precarious living conditions.

I am confident that our individual aspirations do align pretty well, in all their distinctiveness. However, the activities we engage in mostly arise from spontaneous ideas and are often based on sentiment. Seldom, our doings in CWOP are the result of a thorough strategic exchange to attain a defined common purpose. I think what is still missing in our network, such that it can become a real „movement“, is strategic exchange about several aspects. A central question for me is: How do we think that conditions and mindsets change – in WOP and in the world in general? This question is reflected in the concept of „Theory of Change“ that aims to visualize what participants of initiatives strive towards and by which processes they hope to succeed (Weiss, 1995). A common strategy (or several common strategies) should be further grounded in our concepts of the person – our ideas of how humans behave and why they behave the way they do.

I do not know what theories of change and concepts of the person are held by each individual who is part of CWOP or wants to join (by the way: you are very welcome!). When we look back to historical social movements, we can extract very different strategies that we can try to back-translate into a theory of change. Of course, these strategies do rely on context. However, they also rely on a strategic decision or on individual preferences. To give a few examples: Even if the two strategies have been later analysed as being fruitful for one another (Ali, 2015), Antonio Gramsci, with his idea of cultural hegemony and organic intellectuals, tried to find a different lever for societal change than Frantz Fanon, who thought that colonized people have to fundamentally fight for being able to live freely – eventually also using militant

actions. Angela Davis fought with different weapons than Kimberlé Crenshaw (e.g., Crenshaw, 1994; Davis, 1998). Also, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King had very distinctive strategies for fighting against racial segregation and discrimination in the United States during the 1950s to 1970s (Carson, 2005). As a side note: Malcolm X and Martin Luther King are certainly very interesting examples, as they were, at times, very annoyed with each other's political strategies, disagreeing on the role of (non-)violence, love or hate, and religion for the success of black liberation struggles. However, Malcolm X' apparently tried to support Martin Luther King when he was under arrest in Selma, Alabama in 1965.

I think it is crucial that we are transparent with our theories of change, so that we can see if they match or if they counteract each other. We should try to find out where they complement one another, where we have blind spots, where we need allies, and which allies we should search for. To that aim, first, I think each and every one of us should at least broadly think about the following questions:

- 1) What is my vision of a good world?
- 2) How do I think that society can change?
- 3) How could society approach my vision of a good world?

Then we should analyse our strategies to determine if we want to continue every step as a unit or if there are fundamentally different approaches that some of us want to pursue together as a subgroup. This scenario should not be a divisive one: No matter how different our strategies may be, it is important to me that we respect and support each other. But I imagine that we can use our energy in a more focused and purposeful way after we have had an exchange about our strategies. In the end, a multitude of strategies might emerge, in more or less detail. For a better visualization, let me exemplify the two strategies mentioned in the title to depict what I mean regarding strategies for CWOP: On the one hand, we might search to create a *niche*, from where new things can develop – a safe(r) space that is as undisturbed from traditional (WOP) academia as possible. Establishing own journals, mentoring, funding, institutions might be a part of this strategy. The theory behind this would be that the creation of alternative environments empowers participants and inspires others to also become part of the movement. Finally, this niche could become more and more hegemonial, until it supersedes the former infrastructure. On the other hand, intervening from *within* could mean staying within the prevailing institutions and attempting to change structures from the inside. The theory behind this approach could, for example, be that more people are reached if the focus is not on exclusive, parallel „filter bubbles“, but on the entirety of the field of WOP. I am curious and sincerely looking forward to getting to know your visions.

Why a critical stance comes without didactics (Johanna L. Degen)

The title of symposium asks „Are we ready to take over?“. However, the more pressing question to ask might be: „Are we *being* taken over?“. I believe the answer is „Yes“ and in the following will outline, why this is the case.

The radical humanist stance could be called the core and the overarching value in the otherwise diverse field of critical scholarship. However, this very core is currently threatened, leaving the critical stance undermined by neoliberal capitalism, „woke-capitalist“ discourses, and dissolving of opposite political poles. Within such conditions, the critical core becomes ungraspable and didactics become directive and instrumentalized – such that they are no longer about the subject’s autonomous enlightenment, but turned into an interest-guided ideology. Such challenges start, but do not end with linguistics and discourse. Below, I will give some contemporary illustrations.

First of all, there is a problem with the term radical *humanism*, because what does „humanism“ mean after all? How can humanist values remain the meaningful core of critical scholarship, when it becomes increasingly clear, that „the human“ needs to be understood as being inhumane, ill-defined and even threatening life on earth (Degen, Rhodes, Simpson & Quinnell, 2020; Degen, Smart, Quinnell, O’Doherty & Rhodes, 2021; Fluss & Frim, 2022)? Contemporary and historical events only seem to prove that humans are hardly able to maintain any relationship, neither the human-human relationships between single subjects and groups, nor the human-ecology, or the human-non-human-species ones. If critical scholarship wants to continue using the word „humanism“, but really meaning higher values, we might need to reconsider the wording.

Second, neoliberal capitalism has been *co-opting concepts and wordings* of the critical stance, twisting them into the – more or less hidden – format of the „business case“ (Boyd, 1996; Köllen, 2020). This is well-proven in green- and pink-washing (de Luca, Schoier & Vessio, 2017; Vassilopoulou, 2017) and structural changes, such as diversity being taught in marketing programs at business schools. It becomes increasingly hard to communicate what really is meant by equality and sustainability, when such concepts have been transformed into facades, empty phrases, and woke capitalism (Rhodes, 2022), to the point that their connotation even sounds cynical.

Third, critical scholarship is increasingly robbed of the core of the *identity of being leftist*. Under the current dynamics, where political poles of left and right become intertwined and their distinctions blurred (Noury & Roland, 2020). Specifically, this refers to an observed

change where the left becomes radicalized, also in a non-humanist manner, and once distinct humanist values then become lost in radicalisation and populism (Gandehsa, 2018). In this confusion critical scholarship is challenged by where to locate and how to position.

In the context of these developments, power increasingly seems exercised thorough discourses aimed at narrowing down and quieting subjects and groups – and stifling dialogue as such. Within the restrictions of the „sayable“, the once established „right to say something back“ is suspended and replaced by the right to „never be offended“. This deterioration of discursive practices, where unfinished thoughts, discussions, the controversial and differences are not welcome, but are connotated negatively and seen as a threat within a *cancel-culture* (Teixeira da Silva, 2021), restricts communication and impedes mutual growth.

Didactics and critical teaching are noticeably changing their principles. Initially, at their very core was the idea of nudging subjects to become enlightened by developing their *own* understandings and reflections on meanings. Nowadays, the critical doing seems to be more about spreading a moral stance, an *ideology*. Under the flag of critical scholarship, enlightenment and trust in subjects to change their own subjectivity has been suspended in favor of directive didactics. Situativity and individuality are then sacrificed for generalizable universality (read more on situativity and ethics here: Gergen, 2009). Ethical principles are abandoned in favor of simple solutions and being right– phenomena that the critical stance once explicitly criticized. Critical didactics thus tend to suspend their principles in favor of „checklists“ of politically correct thinking, name-dropping, hidden business cases, and literature summaries that accelerate the zeitgeist of „who reads a book anyways?“. And this is why we need to distance ourselves from directive didactics and redirect our efforts towards situativity, exploration, trust in the other, and dialogue – daring to let subjects go free, to find their own truths, whether it is ours or not – at the risk of learning something new.

Deterritorializing and reterritorializing Work and Organizational Psychology² (Edina Dóci)

What might Critical WOP (researchers) do? There are many ways to do critical research in WOP and contribute to the critical project. We may problematize existing social and organizational practices and arrangements, in terms of their underlying ideologies and naturalized assumptions and their impact on the individual’s psychological experiences. We may try to understand how social and organizational (power) structures translate

² This opening statement emerged from conversations with Gazi Islam. The title is inspired by the terms used by philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (2009).

into the subjective, lived experience of (marginalized) individuals. We may contribute to emancipation, by revealing the impact of the social and the political on the personal (in organizations) and vice versa. By doing so, we may empower the individual to enact their agency toward social change. We may create new, alternative sets of concepts to understand the social and organizational world, thereby creating the vocabulary for social change. We may foster social change by researching alternative social and organizational arrangements and by imagining different ways of organizing the social and organizational world. We may problematize the underlying assumptions, worldviews and philosophical underpinnings of our field. And the list goes on.

But what are our underlying assumptions, worldviews and philosophical underpinnings? Social constructionism instead of positivism? Postmodernism instead of enlightenment thinking? Post/structuralism instead of functionalism? Relativism instead of rationalism? Processism instead of reductionism? Becoming instead of being? Collectivism instead of individualism? Collaboration instead of competition? Others instead of self?

But what if by choosing sides we walk into dogma in the other direction, because no singular perspective can reveal the complexity of the human experience? Perhaps the very tension between these oppositions is at the heart of the human experience (de Beauvoir, 1962) and inquiry. These oppositions may never be reconciled, they've been structuring societal, philosophical and scientific discourse and debate for centuries. We cannot resolve the tensions between these opposing perspectives. We may take sides, temporarily, strategically, because we have to make sense of the social and organizational world and our place in it, but with the awareness that our final vocabulary is no closer to the truth than others' final vocabulary (Rorty, 1989).

For different purposes and stages of a critical project, we need to position ourselves differently, acknowledging the limitations of our approach. Instead of taking categorical positions at opposite ends and make truth-claims, we may use these oppositions and the tension they create to become a meaningful field. Not trying to eliminate contradictions, but not getting stuck in one perspective and dismiss the other side either: but being in a productive, ongoing dialectical tension, in dialogue with the other side – for the field to move forward. Because when science gets stuck in a singular perspective that debilitates it. So, as CWOP, instead of taking a rigid position at one end of these spectrums, we may use and cultivate the tension productively, to generate energy, to get the field moving. To be able to accept that most we can do is a temporary, strategic and reflective positioning based on the current purpose of our critical project, we may want to embrace ambiguity, instead of resisting it and trying to eliminate it (de Beauvoir, 1962).

Perspectives for the further positioning of critical research in WOP can be analyzed based on a dynamic model of the three interrelated axes of *location* (where? – internal and / or external), *mode* (how? – discovery and / or creation) and *purpose* (why? – denunciation and / or emancipation), which is outlined in the following.

Location: Internal / External. The location of critical WOP inquiry is always somewhere in the intersection between the Internal and the External, that is, how people's subjective, psychological experiences interact with contemporary social and organizational arrangements.

Mode: Discovery / Creation. If our mode of inquiry is Discovery, by doing research we want to get closer to understanding how the individual (and their psychological experiences) interact with, and operates within, contemporary social and organizational arrangements. If this is our goal, we are influenced by enlightenment thinking, reason, rationalism and reductionism; we are thinking in distinct and objective categories and try to discover the relationships between them, we try to order them and compare them. While this approach has been heavily criticized by critical scholarship, we might need it as a prelude, or groundwork for social change. For example, to overcome workplace inequalities in mental health, we need to first prove that such inequalities exist, for which we need to think in categories that can be compared with each other. If the mode of our inquiry is Creation, by research we may want to (de-construct and) re-construct contemporary social and organizational reality. We may go about this by denaturalizing social arrangements and the widely accepted assumptions they are built on, by constructing alternative ways to look at and organize the social world, and by imagining possibilities for fairer and more humane workplaces and society.

Purpose: Denunciation / Emancipation. If our purpose of inquiry is Denunciation, we may want to reveal and problematize social reality, and how it impacts (and manifests in) people's subjectivity. For example, we may reveal how capitalism dictates every parameter of social reality that people need to navigate in contemporary organizations, and how it permeates all psychological experiences, aspirations and actions, and creates an epidemic of mental health problems. This means revealing how the external (social and organizational structures and arrangements) act on and manifest through the internal (the individual and their subjectivity). By Emancipation we mean working towards the liberation of people's minds from oppressive structures. By generating a sense of critical consciousness and agency to challenge and change social arrangements, this contributes to paving the way toward the realization of new, more fair and (radically) humane versions of social and organizational reality, where people's mental and physical health, well-being and dignity is protected. Thereby, it refers to how the individual acts on the social structure.

There is nothing essentialist in these axes, they form a dynamic, interrelated (and, of course, arbitrary) system. Different phases, moments of the critical project require different tools, different ways of looking at the social world and the individual in it. Depending on the purpose of our inquiry, we can strategically and self-reflexively position ourselves on this map. And what is most interesting anyway are the interrelations between these axes – just like what is most interesting when it comes to people in organizations.

Criticalizing our colleagues? (P. Matthijs Bal)

A crucial element of the Critical WOP (CWOP) initiative pertains to how scientific work and the development of a CWOP community relates to the ‘mainstream’ area within WOP. While much has been said in relation to such divide within the Critical Management Studies area (Islam & Sanderson, 2022), it is important to differentiate among the various positions that can be held by critical WOP scholars in relation to the ‘remainder’ of WOP – i.e., all those scholars who may not identify as ‘critical’. Bringing this debate much closer than an abstract treatise on the critical-mainstream divide, we have to ascertain that many of the scholars active within CWOP have been ‘mainstream’ researchers themselves, or still are invested in more mainstream research. Moreover, both collaborations and friendships with scholars not identifying or even distancing themselves from critical scholarship, may still be present at the time of ‘criticalizing’. The question therefore is: how do ‘we’ relate to the more mainstream scholars within WOP? While CWOP is often critical of hegemonic practices in WOP (e.g., the dominance of positivistic ontologies and the lack of pluralism), the position of outsider who ‘knows it all’ is problematic and often leads to antagonism. At the same time, while the CWOP scholar may engage in genuinely reflexive practice, critically investigating not only hegemonic practice, but also one’s own position and practices in line with one’s values, this may not necessarily be recognized by other scholars in the field. In contrast, critical scholars are often subject to harsh criticism from (powerful) mainstream actors. Mainstream scholars often (implicitly) argue that it is preferable to remain firmly invested in one’s current position, rather than to engage in a process of criticalizing oneself, and be potentially confronted with one’s hypocrisy due to critical self-questioning. Is there a constructive way forward, even if genuine reflexivity is merely criticized by the mainstream as hypocrisy?

To remedy some of these problems, CWOP scholars have introduced the term criticalizing to get beyond an artificial binary critical-mainstream distinction. It is about criticalizing our thought and work, denoting a process of trying to more critically assess the research we do, the way we teach our students, the practices inherent to

scholarship (e.g., public engagement) and so forth. It is not about trying to reach to a certain level where one can justify the title ‘critical scholar’, but about implementing ways to criticalize our work. This criticalizing as a process is something that is not unique to critical scholars, but can be something that is much more widely shared, and which may manifest through many different ways and perspectives. For instance, the rise of attention to social justice and decent work in WOP (McWirther & McWha-Hermann, 2021), shows how mainstream journals become more open to critical work.

A process of criticalizing should be an invitation to anyone in the field to more critically reflect upon one’s work and assess how one’s own personal values could be more strongly aligned with one’s research. For instance, many scholars may not identify with neoliberal values such as self-instrumentalization (Bal & Dóci, 2018), but may nonetheless feel pressured to include such values in research designs to comply with hegemonic practices in top-tier journals. Critical reflection may help scholars to conduct research that is more strongly aligned with their own values. To do so, an important task for CWOP is to create visions and narratives of how critical scholarship may look like. As shown in previous CWOP meetings, a cohesive community has been formed of likeminded people in an atmosphere of trust and friendliness. The next step, therefore, is to show to our colleagues in the field how critical scholarship not only provides more meaning to one’s work, but also comes with strong friendships, a community of belonging, and a sense of direction towards a more sustainable academic field (Bal et al., 2019), and a better world generally. It might be difficult to appeal to senior scholars in the field who have invested their careers into hegemonic practice, so therefore, CWOP may have the broadest appeal to early and mid-career scholars, as our experience has also shown. CWOP’s task is not only to criticalize research, but also to showcase a more *humane* academia, and telling this story will be the strongest narrative for our colleagues in the field, a story of an academic discipline that exists in which we jointly, collaboratively, and in a spirit of friendship, work together towards a more humane and dignified academic field, and where we conduct research that helps to create more dignified workplaces and a more sustainable world generally.

Or should we even aspire to? Dialectics of resistance and assimilation in times of crisis (Severin Hornung)

Referring to the provocatively worded title of this panel discussion, asking „Are we ready to take over?“, it seems warranted to reflect upon the question if and how critically-minded scholars should even aspire to „take over“ the academic field. In this context, I want to discuss the positioning of CWOP with regard to WOP

based on the concepts of *resistance* and *assimilation* (e.g., Fontenelle, 2010). These two terms were partly chosen for rhetoric or polemic reasons and alternative terms could be used (e.g., Goetz, Gotchev, Richter & Nicolaus, 2020). For example, related concepts would be *revolution vs. reform*, *antagonism vs. agonism*, *macro-emancipation vs. micro-emancipation*, and *anti-performativity vs. critical performativity* – as debated in the field of Critical Management Studies (CMS; e.g., Fleming & Banerjee, 2016). Towards the end of this position statement, I briefly discuss current societal developments that may influence prospects and contestations regarding the future of CWOP.

Resistance (thesis)

First, a strategy of resistance or refusal implies an antagonistic counter-position, emphasizing divergence, conflict, and incommensurability of the critical and the mainstream paradigm. Resistance stands for the more radical approach, emphasizing principled refusal to compromise or play along with the mainstream. Advantages of such a genuinely critical perspective include being able to call out the injustices and wrongs of the system, as well as the complicity of both mainstream functionalist as well as „moderately“ critical research in maintaining and justifying these systemic dysfunctions (e.g., Klikauer, 2015, 2018). Radical resistance allows preserving theoretical purity and categorical opposition, in the sense of the credo of critical theory: „There is no right life in the wrong one“. Disadvantages of such a confrontational approach, however, are isolation and rigidity of fundamental opposition, possibly resulting in categorical negativity and „critical paralysis“ without real-world impact.

Assimilation (antithesis)

The other strategy of assimilation or integration implies a degree of trying to „fit in“, seeking compatibility, or at least communication or exchange with the mainstream. This could mean trying to provide a complementary critical perspective or a strategy of *criticalizing* the functionalist mainstream from within. Advantages of such a more pragmatic approach would be the greater potential for making an impact on the field and maybe also on people's lives. However, the disadvantages or dangers would be to dilute and water down the critique. Indeed, there is a risk that critical research is assimilated as one compartmentalized stream, serving as a „fig leaf“ to legitimize an overall uncritical field of WOP, complicit in social and environmental exploitation (e.g., Klikauer, 2018). The idea here is that „too much compromise is compromising“ the integrity of radical critique. Or, to put it with Oscar Wilde (1895 / 2001), the worst slave-owners are those that are kind to their slaves – as they prevent the horrors of an unjust and exploitative system to be seen for what they really are.

Dynamism (synthesis)

As a dialectic synthesis, I suggest a hybrid strategy, combining both – seemingly incommensurate – approaches. This could mean pursuing a two-pronged strategy of principled theory-based dissent and radical refusal, combined with more hands-on, engaged, and subtle subversion to ensure the continuous development and impact of the movement of critical work and organizational psychology. There are actually role models for this. For example, in research on social movements, such a dual approach of radicalism and reform has been called „*movement dynamism*“, whereby the tensions between different fractions advance the momentum of the common cause (Rowe & Carroll, 2014). Notably, a similar discussion has been led in the field of CMS with regard to more radical proponents of anti-performativity and more moderate advocates of critical or progressive performativity (e.g., Fleming & Banerjee, 2016). This debate is highly relevant and instructive for our cause (even though I am not sure that they have really resolved the problem). Based on our discussions in the CWOP steering committee, I feel that to a certain extent this is what we are already doing and that the conversation between those two positions is productive and does bring our movement forward. Moreover, I would suggest that this is not only a matter of fractions or wings within the overall movement, or within research groups, but also a dual strategy of each individual researcher – where and how they seek to advance resistance versus assimilation or infiltration into the mainstream.

Prospects and contestations

To conclude, what are prospects and contestations for CWOP in these times of crisis? What gives me some hope is that there is an increasing consciousness that we are in the middle of a social and ecological crisis and that things need to change dramatically. I can especially observe this among our students (who are very open, not to say enthusiastic, about the critical perspective we try to provide in our teaching), but this can also be observed in the scientific literature, for example, on concepts of critical sustainability and degrowth (e.g., Banerjee, Jermier, Peredo, Perey & Reichel, 2021; Ergene, Banerjee & Hoffman, 2021). Moreover, the COVID-19 crisis has shown that regulatory measures and interventions by democratically elected bodies, which many of us deemed impossible, can in fact be implemented (which is not to say that all of them were reasonable or, in hindsight, called for). Among the contestations is the fact that during the crisis social inequality has further increased dramatically and civil rights have been constrained while profits of transnational companies have soared and national states have increased their debt, making further austerities likely – and as always these are mostly readily imposed upon the poorest and most vulnerable groups. To summarize, I see some extended theoretical prospects, but practical mostly

contestations to the project of CWOP. How does this affect the most appropriate or effective mix of resistance and assimilation strategies? I personally would suggest that the current extreme developments demand and justify a stance of more radical and categorical resistance, but this is just my opinion, which I want to put forward for further debate.

Critique of practice and critique by practice: Collaborative possibilities in Critical Work and Organizational Psychology (Gazi Islam)

It is a pleasure to be able to participate in this collective discussion around the possibilities of critical and radical humanist work and organizational psychology, and to add my reflections to what have been very insightful presentations. I will begin with a thought on the title of this panel, „whether we are ready to take over“, which I found to be a provocative question, even if intended with some humor. Initially my reflex was to resist the idea of „taking over“ from dominant perspectives in psychology, counterposing one hegemony with a newer one, and falling into the position of that which we have been critiquing.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that there is an important insight contained in this half-joke. Although my reflex is toward dialogue rather than conflict, cooperation rather than opposition, it may be that the moment of refusal, of opposition, and of breaking with a dominant order is a needed prerequisite for a renewed synthesis with work and organizational psychology, one that can find a more equal footing, a just dialogue rather than „just“ dialogue. Seen dialectically, we can demonstrate our opposition in the classroom, in the seminar room, and in our writings, while keeping the sense of collegiality that will allow us to reconstitute the field together with our peers who remain unconvinced at present.

Moreover, this dialectical spirit is reflected in our relation to practitioners, and this relation will be the main object of my reflections. Critical work psychologists have an ambivalent relation with practice, both seeing it as the source of exploitation and domination, on the one hand, and as the source of an emancipatory impulse and a meaningful life, on the other. This raises the question of how critical work and organizational psychologists should best approach practice, with what expectations and in what spirit. To paraphrase the philosopher Amy Allen, critical theory is not so much defined by what it studies, but by who it takes itself to be in the moment of study, how the subjectivity of the analyst herself is positioned in that process. In this spirit, I would like to outline three possibilities for our relation to practice, each with its own possibilities and limitations.

First, in keeping with our critical project and in line with our analytical skills to uncover hidden connections, power relations and forms of domination, we can take

practice as our object of critique. Focusing on the domination of employers, the alienation of employees, and the myriad instances of ideological obfuscation, moral harassment, and dehumanization at work, we can use our analytical tools to uncover these moments and demonstrate their systematic character, revealing what seemed to be idiosyncratic and arbitrary suffering to be systematic and thus allowing for organized opposition. Fundamental to a critical project, this approach nevertheless carries the disadvantage of positioning the analyst in a position of epistemic superiority, able to see what is hidden on the ground, and potentially framing practitioners as unaware of the meanings of their own actions and experiences.

Second, in dialectical opposition to that position, critical work and organizational psychologists can see themselves as the representatives of the stories, experiences and voices of the practitioners that they study. In more of a descriptive, ethnographic style, this positioning accompanies practitioners' own self-attempts to develop their skills and work relationships, find meanings, and interact with others in the workplace. Rather than revealing hidden assumptions, our position would be to give voice to the immanent reflexivity with their own practice, in the Socratic role of midwife to knowledge that was waiting to emerge from below. Didactic only in our questioning and not in our judgment, this position demonstrates respect for and openness to those whom we study. Nevertheless, by exposing ourselves to and taking seriously the narratives and images emerging from practice, we run the risk of validating ideologies that reproduce rather than contest domination, even when these ideologies are carried by the very participants whose emancipation is of most concern to us.

Third – and this in the sense of a dialectical third, a synthesis – we can recognize that diagnosis must come from below, but that the objective conditions for reflexivity in many sites of practice are rendered difficult by the contradictory logics, double talk, and split consciousnesses that characterize workplaces. Taking participants to be highly reflexive and more expert than we are regarding their own lives, we can nevertheless recognize that critical insight is difficult from within the fog of practice, and thus our role is less as an expert knower than as an ally or guide standing in a position from which direction can be more easily given. To paraphrase Perry Anderson, this position is less of an ivory tower than a watch tower, a point partially withdrawn from action specifically because it allows better reconnaissance, for the ultimate benefit of movements on the ground.

As increasing social crises unfold, we will have an increasing number of chances to practice these different forms of relation to practice, and develop allyships with practitioners in ways that can be mutually beneficial. As we do so we will learn both about the world of work and about our own project as critical work and organizational psychologists.

The urge for a revolution of hope in Work and Organizational Psychology (Thomas Kühn)

It's time for a scientific revolution ...

„Under normal conditions the research scientist is not an innovator but a solver of puzzles, and the puzzles upon which he concentrates are just those which he believes can be both stated and solved within the existing scientific tradition.“ (Kuhn, 1962 / 2012, p. 144)

„Though the world does not change with a change of paradigm, the scientist afterward works in a different world.“ (Kuhn, 1962 / 2012, p. 121)

„In science novelty emerges only with difficulty, manifested by resistance, against a background provided by expectation.“ (Kuhn, 1962 / 2012, p. 64)

We are living in the midst of a phase of major upheavals that are associated with considerable global challenges. By way of illustration, debates on climate change, growing social inequalities between and within nation states, and polarization in the population can be cited as examples, without providing anything like a complete list. Questions of work and organizational psychology are directly related to this, be it the role of organizations in shaping change, be it changing modes of interaction between humans and machines, to give again only a few examples. Within critical currents in industrial and organizational psychology, there is a consensus that science must contribute to questioning the status quo. In work and organizational psychology, as in other social sciences, the focus of many projects is too much on the (seemingly) objective measurability of phenomena rather than on the actual significance of projects for understanding how work and organizational psychology can make an important contribution to shaping transformation. Metaphorically, a kind of scientific revolution is needed, in the sense of Thomas Kuhn, which goes hand in hand with a renewed basic understanding of science and its significance for social development.

... the revolution of hope

„Hope is a psychic concomitant to life and growth.“ (Fromm, 1968 / 2010, p. 25)

„Hope is a decisive element in any attempt to bring about social change in the direction of greater aliveness, awareness, and reason.“ (Fromm, 1968 / 2010, p. 19)

More than 50 years ago, not only Kuhn referred to the necessary change with the image of "revolution", but also Erich Fromm, who speaks of a "Revolution of Hope" in his work published in 1968 - with the subtitle "Toward a Humanized Technology". In my opinion, this revolution of hope should be considered as a guiding principle in a

critical work and organizational psychology in a twofold sense: First, in our self-image as scientists. We should not be too quick to assimilate ourselves into a system and orient ourselves to its standards, in which measurability, for example based on impact factors, the classification of different journals according to their coverage, and the general devaluation of longer publications in book form compared to shorter journal publications, are accepted as central normative guidelines. In particular, we should be ever vigilant that we do not ourselves begin to assess colleagues and their scholarly productivity according to this logic. Rather, we should not give up hope for a different togetherness in science and use our possibilities to actively strive for it. Secondly, the critical examination of the prospects of the environment and social development, which are in many respects very questionable, should not lead us to fall into a cynical or despairing basic attitude. Fromm shows how much hope relates to being human and how important hope is also in the struggle for an improved coexistence between people in the world, without this being connected with naivety or the fading out of dangers.

„Not that I am optimistic about the chances of success; but I believe that one cannot think in terms of percentages or probabilities as long as there is a real possibility – even a light one – that life will prevail.“ (Fromm, 1968 / 2010, p. 10)

„Hope is paradoxical. It is neither passive waiting nor is it unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur. It is like the crouched tiger, which will jump only when the moment for jumping has come. Neither tired reformism nor pseudo-radical adventurism is an expression of hope. To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born.“ (Fromm, 1968 / 2010, p. 22)

The urge for a revolution of hope – Prospects and contestations of Critical and Radical Humanist Work and Organisational Psychology – 5 Theses

With this in mind, I formulate 5 theses about what a revolution of hope means for prospects and contestations of Critical and Radical Humanist Work and Organizational Psychology:

- 1) As scientists we are urged to fight against resignation, cynicism, and doomsday mood: There's a need to re-thinking growth in connection to hope and ideas for a better future (Kühn & Bobeth, 2022).
- 2) We have to take care to integrate hope and still remain critical, e.g. in the sense of unmasking toxic positivity and ideological legitimations of power (Kühn, 2019).
- 3) Research needs to be based on a psychodynamic perspective on motivation and everyday practice (Kühn, 2020), not only on moral-ethical reflections

- (e.g. social character theory, normative identity work, life course frameworks).
- 4) We should realize how much we don't know and stay in dialogues instead of retreating into snail shells: This means to acknowledge shared ambiguity and ambivalences as a base for mutuality and a potential to fight against polarization (Kühn, 2015).
 - 5) We need a self-understanding as political psychologists and not underestimate the power of ideas for social transformation.

Building a house we want to live in: The importance of how we do Critical Work and Organizational Psychology (Zoe Sanderson)

It is possible to develop critical academic fields that are judged to be „fragmented and slippery“ (Fournier & Grey, 2000, p. 188), „consistently negative“ with a „cynical poise“ (Spicer, Alvesson & Kärreman, 2009, p. 542 and p. 555), and that may not achieve much except „think[ing] hard about words and things“ (Parker, 2005, p. 362), even by their proponents. A critical field can fall short of its aspirations and still be worthwhile – as many, perhaps most, change-making efforts do - but that doesn't lessen the importance, or mitigate the urge, of trying to do better. So how can we grow critical scholarship in work and organizational psychology (CWOP) well? One approach is to think like activists as well as academics: nurturing shared values, clarifying visions, and emphasising the importance of practical action.

Values and vision

While we have individual values that we may want to pursue in our own CWOP research, such as prioritising marginalised populations, as we develop a scholarly community it becomes possible to identify values that we share. These principles indicate what does or should matter to us as we develop CWOP together, such as caring for each other or acting inclusively. Working in these ways can be nice, but also potentially consequential. If we are non-hierarchical, valuing the voices of PhD students as much as professors, we will probably see more research and activity led by junior scholars, which may enlarge the potential for CWOP in future years. In caring contexts, we may feel safe to play with untested or innovative research approaches more frequently and confidently, potentially increasing the creativity of our research. While the links between values, practices and outputs are complex, the basic principle is that how we do CWOP affects what it becomes.

Any positive values that are emerging in the CWOP community are contingent: they don't have to exist. Insofar as they are counter-cultural in wider academia, they require effort to maintain, and they may naturally dissipate over time, as often happens in growing movements and

organisations. Valuing our values by articulating and demonstrating them may strengthen them, but each of us understands values differently, they look different in principle and practice, and how they are enacted will vary according to context and the individual assessment of priorities. It is inevitable that we will imperfectly enact our principles, even if we clearly identify what they are. Nonetheless, a reflexive, shared, evolving discussion about values and practices may enable us to stay engaged with the question of how CWOP can and should be conducted as the work develops over time.

Vision-work accompanies values-work. There are as many approaches to this as there are theories of change, but one element is surely imagining the possible impacts of CWOP in academia, workplaces, and the wider world. This will probably generate a myriad of imaginaries, around some of which people may gather, helping to orientate our shared direction of travel. Next, we could identify mechanisms to reify our visions into reality, prioritise, strategise, and take steps accordingly, or alternatively adopt a less linear approach to change that foregrounds emergence and fluidity in how CWOP develops. The tension between these perspectives can be generative if it does not entirely eclipse the possibility of practical action. On this, and many other issues, we can learn from other efforts to develop critical scholarship in work and organizational psychology – historically and elsewhere in the world - and similar fields such as critical management studies, mentioned in the opening section above.

Action

CWOP amplifies individual desires for change through enabling collaborative action. One of the current efforts to develop it has emerged from the grassroots of academia, creating a self-organising network that grows as people find each other, have ideas, and work together to make them happen – the Future of Work and Organizational Psychology network or FoWOP (www.futureofwop.com). There is little institutional or infrastructural support for this work: mostly we only have us. So, if we want CWOP to grow, we need to act. There are many useful things to do. One, obviously, is to conduct research and teaching in more critical ways. Others include promoting the work of critical researchers, planning and attending events, joining reading groups and mailing lists, administrating websites, developing and sharing teaching resources that showcase CWOP scholarship, or helping to organise larger projects. This list is only a starting point, although while new ideas for developing this work are wonderful, those that are accompanied by a relevant offer of practical action are even better.

Opportunities for critical scholarship seem to open and close across academic disciplines at different points in geography and history. We seem to be at a moment of possibility for CWOP. To seize it, I encourage us to take collaborative action while reflexively thinking about

values and vision. Perhaps this will help us to build CWOP into a house we want to live in for the future.

References

- Ali, N. G. (2015). Reading Gramsci through Fanon: Hegemony before dominance in revolutionary theory. *Rethinking Marxism*, 27 (2), 241-257.
- Banerjee, S. B., Jermier, J. M., Peredo, A. M., Perey, R. & Reichel, A. (2021). Theoretical perspectives on organizations and organizing in a post-growth era. *Organization*, 28 (3), 337-357.
- Bal, P. M. & Dóci, E. (2018). Neoliberal ideology in work and organizational psychology. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27 (5), 536-548.
- Bal, P. M., Dóci, E., Lub, X., Van Rossenberg, Y. G., Nijs, S., Achnak, S., ... & Van Zelst, M. (2019). Manifesto for the future of work and organizational psychology. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 28 (5), 289-299.
- Boyd, D. R. (1996). Dominance concealed through diversity: Implications of inadequate perspectives on cultural pluralism. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66 (3), 609-651.
- Carson, C. (2005). The unfinished dialogue of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. *OAH Magazine of History*, 19 (1), 22-26.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1994). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In M. A. Fineman & R. Mykitiuk (Eds.), *The public nature of private violence* (pp. 93-118). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Davis, A. J. (1998). Prosecution and race: The power and privilege of discretion. *Fordham Law Review*, 67, 15-68.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1962). *The ethics of ambiguity* (B. Frechtman Trans.). New York, NY: Citadel Press.
- Degen, J. L., Rhodes, P., Simpson, S. & Quinnell, R. (2020). Humboldt, romantic science and ecocide: A walk in the woods. *Human Arenas*, 3 (4), 516-535.
- Degen, J. L., Smart, G. L., Quinnell, R., O'Doherty, K. C. & Rhodes, P. (2021). Remaining human in COVID-19: Dialogues on psychogeography. *Human Arenas*, online first.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (2009). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (R. Hurley, M. Seem & H. R. Lane, Trans). New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- de Luca, P., Schoier, G. & Vessio, A. (2017). Cause-related marketing and trust: Empirical evidence on pinkwashing. *Mercati & Competitività*, 23, 51-73.
- Ergene, S., Banerjee, S. B. & Hoffman, A. J. (2021). (Un)sustainability and organization studies: Towards a radical engagement. *Organization Studies*, 42 (8), 1319-1355.
- Fleming, P. & Banerjee, S. B. (2016). When performativity fails: Implications for critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 69 (2), 257-276.
- Fluss, H. & Frim, L. (2022). *Prometheus and Gaia: Technology, ecology and anti-humanism*. London, UK: Anthem Press.
- Fontenelle, I. A. (2010). Global responsibility through consumption? Resistance and assimilation in the anti-brand movement. *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, 6 (4), 256-272.
- Fournier, V. & Grey, C. (2000). At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 53 (1), 7-32.
- Fromm, E. (2010). *The revolution of hope. Toward a humanized technology*. New York, NY: American Mental Health Foundation. (Original work published 1968)
- Gandesha, S. (2018). Understanding right and left populism. In J. Morelock (Ed.), *Critical theory and authoritarian populism* (pp. 49-70). London, UK: University of Westminster Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (2009). *Relational being: Beyond self and community*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Goetz, A., Gotchev, B., Richter, I. & Nicolaus, K. (2020). Introduction to the special issue: Reform or revolution? What is at stake in democratic sustainability transformations. *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy*, 16 (1), 335-352.
- Islam, G. & Sanderson, Z. (2022). Critical positions: Situating critical perspectives in work and organizational psychology. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 12 (1), 3-34.
- Klikauer, T. (2015). Critical management studies and critical theory: A review. *Capital & Class*, 39 (2), 197-220.
- Klikauer, T. (2018). Critical management as critique of management. *Critical Sociology*, 44 (4-5), 753-762.
- Köllen, T. (2020). Worshipping equality as organizational idolatry? A Nietzschean view of the normative foundations of the diversity management paradigm. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 36 (2), 101108.
- Kuhn, T. S. (2012). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (50th Anniversary Edition). Chicago, IL and London, UK: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1962)
- Kühn, T. (2015). *Kritische Sozialpsychologie des modernen Alltags: Zum Potenzial einer am Lebenslauf orientierten Forschungsperspektive*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer.
- Kühn, T. (2019). Leadership in a digitally transforming social world based on Fromm's humanistic approach. *Fromm Forum (English Edition)*, 23 / 2019 (Special Issue), 95-107.

- Kühn, T. (2020). The potential of critical social psychology from a life course perspective for the understanding of subjectified work (Commentary on Höge). *Journal Psychologie des Alltagshandelns / Psychology of Everyday Activity*, 13 (1), 50-52.
- Kühn, T. & Bobeth, S. (2022). Linking environmental psychology and critical social psychology: Theoretical considerations toward a comprehensive research agenda. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 947245.
- McWhirter, E. H. & McWha-Hermann, I. (2021). Social justice and career development: Progress, problems, and possibilities. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 126, 103492.
- Noury, A. & Roland, G. (2020). Identity politics and populism in Europe. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23, 421-459.
- Parker, M. (2005). Writing Critical Management Studies. In C. Grey & H. Willmott (Eds.), *Critical Management Studies: A reader* (pp. 353-363). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rhodes, C. (2022). Woke capitalism: How corporate morality is sabotaging democracy. Bristol, UK: Bristol University Press.
- Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rowe, J. K. & Carroll, M. (2014). Reform or radicalism: Left social movements from the Battle of Seattle to Occupy Wall Street. *New Political Science*, 36 (2), 149-171.
- Spicer, A., Alvesson, M. & Kärreman, D. (2009). Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 62 (4), 537-560.
- Teixeira da Silva, J. A. (2021). How to shape academic freedom in the digital age? Are the retractions of opinionated papers a prelude to „cancel culture“ in academia? *Current Research in Behavioral Sciences*, 2, 100055.
- Vassilopoulou, J. (2017). Diversity management as window dressing? A company case study of a Diversity Charta member in Germany. In M. F. Özbilgin & J.-F. Chanlat (Eds.), *Management and diversity: Perspectives from different national contexts* (pp. 281-306). Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Weiss, C. H. (1995). Nothing as practical as good theory: Exploring theory-based evaluation for comprehensive community initiatives for children and families. In J. Connell, A. Kubisch, L. B. Schorr & C. H. Weiss (Eds.), *New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods, and contexts* (pp. 65-92). New York, NY: Aspen Institute.
- Wilde, O. (2001). *The soul of man under socialism*. New York, NY: Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1895)

Correspondence to:
Severin Hornung
University of Innsbruck
Department of Psychology
Universitätsstraße 15
A-6020 Innsbruck
severin.hornung@uibk.ac.at

Contributors:
P. Matthijs Bal (mbal@lincoln.ac.uk)
Johanna L. Degen (johanna.degen@uni-flensburg.de)
Edina Dóci (e.doci@vu.nl)
Gazi Islam (gazi.islam@grenoble-em.com)
Thomas Kühn (thomas.kuehn@ipu-berlin.de)
Laura F. Röllmann (laura.roellmann@uni-leipzig.de)
Zoe Sanderson (zoe.sanderson@bristol.ac.uk)