From radical black feminism to postfeminist hashtags: Re-claiming intersectionality

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Attend me, hold me in your muscular flowering arms, protect me from throwing any part of myself away.

Audre Lorde (1986/2009: 132)

Introduction

The term 'intersectionality' was coined by legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s. Originally, it referred specifically to the vulnerable position of black women victims of domestic violence in the socio-legal context of the United States. In a nutshell, Crenshaw argues that the particular situation of black women cannot be equated with that of white women victims or with the larger discrimination faced by the black population, and thus the legal apparatus is not conceived to appropriately consider their cases. In addition, an underlying aim was to contest the assumed 'colour-blindness, neutrality and objectivity' of the criminal justice system in the US (Nash, 2008: 2; Crenshaw, 1989). Besides its root in the legal field, the term 'intersectionality' mirrors debates brought about by radical black feminists in the previous decades and which centres on a critique of a western, white feminism that claims universal reach. Etymologically, an intersection is a place of crossing, of possible colliding. This crossing is here embodied by individuals; categories, grounds for discrimination and oppression are cutting through their bodies, limiting their ability to act, and placing them in some sort of organizational, institutional limbo in which their claims cannot be adequately addressed; Crenshaw (1991) further argues that this weakens the potential of both the anti-patriarchal and the anti-racist projects. Crenshaw is both academically and popularly acknowledged for this work, and although her original argument dates

back from the late 1980s, intersectionality appears to be still, or even more in demand today. Crenshaw (2016) herself defends 'the urgency of intersectionality' in a recent Ted talk which has received nearly one million views.

Yet, how much of the existing body of work is true to the original concept of intersectionality? To what extent the original concept is of relevance beyond its original context is contentious. In recent months, the intersectionality of sex and power has been taking the front stage in public debate. The #metoo hashtag has been used millions of times across social media platforms, and the eponymous movement has been extensively documented in the news media. The online movement has also fed into a discussion of how the shared stories of sexual misconduct is not to be understood as cases of 'women against men', but rather as instances of privileged individuals exercising power over others in specific contexts. Still, in the wake of the 'Black lives matter' movement, the #metoo campaign has been criticized for being co-opted by white, privileged women who are able to speak, and who are able to be heard. On Instagram, a seemingly more frivolous outlet, the hashtag #intersectionalfeminism and close derivatives have been used over 300,000 times. However, many voices denounce the depoliticized, de-contextualized heralding of intersectionality or intersectional feminism. Such hashtagging trends could be seen as idiosyncratic, symptomatic of a postfeminist era in which theories and concepts can be used ad hoc as buzzwords or temporary signifiers before moving on to the next fleeting wave of (online) 'activism'.

Contention points can also be identified in the academic realm. As a preamble, one can remark that scholarly work about intersectionality is still very much in its infancy. A rough analysis of data from Web of Science indicates that about 70% of articles on the topic of intersectionality were published in the last five years. It was only in the 2000s that reviews and classifications of early work about intersectionality, in particular the ones by McCall (2005) and Hancock (2007), helped develop the interest in the topic as both a theory and method. Such reviews show that already early on scholars have defined and applied intersectionality in varied ways, and that, whether as a political, theoretical, or methodological tool, intersectionality constitutes a fruitful heuristic for the social sciences at large. Furthermore, a recent special issue in Gender, Work and Organization (Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher, and Nkomo, 2016) testifies to the continued relevance of intersectionality for management and organization studies.

In this special issue, we voluntarily stick to outlining the set of problematics that we believe need our attention as management and organization studies scholars, rather than professing a specific definition of intersectionality or demarcating appropriate theoretical and methodological frameworks with which to approach it. In the call for papers, we emphasized three avenues that, we believe, deserve more

particular attention for management and organization studies scholars. To start with, the issue of translating the concept of intersectionality from its original legal setting to our areas of research is key. In addition, the possibility to not only focus on oppressed or dominated social groups, but also investigating intersections of power and domination, is also still open to debate. Second, as there is no unified approach to studying intersectionality empirically, there is a still unseized opportunity to experiment with and develop approaches that are suited to and fruitful for management and organization studies. Finally, we invited fellow researchers to consider intersectionality from an ethical and political standpoint, connecting the individual-level embodiment on intersectionality to more collective projects of emancipation and inclusion. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss how this special issue extends and resonates with both the academic and public debate about intersectionality, before turning to an outline of each contribution.

Intersectionality today: Where from, and where to?

As editors of this special issue, in line with other organization studies scholars (see e.g. Harding et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2016), we consider the current interest in intersectionality as a positive sign that feminist-inspired scholarship still has something significant to offer, and that its political dimension lives on. Intersectionality has been seized either as a theoretical lens or methodological approach in a number of literature strands in management and organization studies, including conceptual work (Holvino, 2010), and empirical work on identity (Johansson and Śliwa, 2014; Atewologun et al., 2016), language (Johansson and Śliwa, 2016), entrepreneurship (Knights, 2016), diversity management (Zanoni and Janssens, 2007), or international business research (Zander et al., 2010). Furthermore, we envision the current problematization of intersectionality as a reaffirmation of the existence of constraint in an era where identity is sometimes portrayed as an individual, open choice between a multiplicity of available social identities; and as a reaffirmation of how these identities are traversed by power. Intersectionality makes us question research output and societies seemingly only able to consider one injustice at a time. In particular, intersectionality diverts from a single, dominant focus on gender, as well as from considering only binary variables.

However, it would be too hasty to conclude that intersectionality is the answer to all ills, the panacea that can replace the use of the 'f-word' altogether. This is reminiscent of the idea or 'dream' that intersectionality can become a common language, a central node for feminism (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; Lykke, 2010). As Carbin and Edenheim put it:

> Intersectionality promises almost everything: to provide complexity, overcome divisions and to serve as a critical tool. However, the expansion of the scope of intersectionality has created a consensus that conceals the fruitful and necessary conflicts within feminism. (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013: 233)

In their article, they further interrogate such conflictual aspects of intersectionality from a poststructuralist and postcolonial perspective. In line with this, drawing on critical realism and complexity theory, Walby et al. (2012) identified six dilemmas in the existing intersectionality literature. This special issue addresses a number of tensions echoing such critical reviews. We formulate them as follows: i. a tension between seeing intersectionality as a bounded vs. polymorphous concept; ii. a tension between intersections as stable vs. fluid; iii. a tension between intersectional thinking as a tool to apprehend embodied experiences vs. as a possible limitation to a universal democratic and emancipatory project. Again, the aim of our special issue is not to take sides in these ongoing discussions, but rather to see what intersectionality can 'do' for organization studies at large. Authors in this special issue address, at times passionately, one or the other side of these arguments. We now briefly discuss these tensions and connect them to contributions featured in this special issue.

Intersectionality as a bounded vs. polymorphous concept

Intersectionality, as defined by Crenshaw (1989), is arguably rooted in a structuralist perspective, and tied to the particular intersection of gender and race in the US legal context. Nevertheless, there have been debates both about the concept's genealogy and elasticity. With regards to genealogy, there has been an ongoing discussion about how novel the idea of intersectionality actually was in 1989 – in which case this dating is rather one that signals crystallization of ideas that surfaced long before. For example, it can be contended that Marxist feminism or postcolonial feminism developed as a response to the insufficient discussion of gender in critical streams such as Marxist and postcolonial studies (Brah and Phoenix, 2004). In turn, such claims have been attacked as a typical attempt to deprive non-white feminists of voice, of their capacity to develop relevant and novel concepts and perspectives for feminist work (e.g. Crenshaw, 1992).

In particular, this poses the question of the flexibility with which intersectionality can be used as either a theory or method. Notwithstanding the above debates, a significant part of intersectionality scholarship positions itself vis-à-vis Crenshaw's 1989 milestone definition of and approach to intersectionality. In this issue, Ruel, Mills and Thomas as well as Ulus stay close to the original definition and contextualization of intersectionality and are concerned with gender and race in the United States of America. They operationalize intersectionality to understand

past iconic career trajectories with the notion of anchoring points (Ruel et al.), as well as to make sense of current socio-political debates in relation to (post)feminism by combining intersectionality with psychoanalytical tools (Ulus).

With regards to elasticity, scholars manifest both apprehension and enthusiasm regarding the possibility to use intersectionality outside of a structuralist perspective, as well as beyond the intersection of race and gender (Nash, 2016). In this issue, Liu denounces the liberal appropriation of and the ensuing de-radicalization of intersectionality in organization studies where there has been

> [...] a tendency to engage superficially with intersectionality; focusing on identities and categories of difference, but overlooking processes of differentiation and systems of domination (Dhamoon, 2011). Perhaps even more problematic is a rising tendency to use intersectionality to showcase multiple identities like gender, race and class without any commitment to the social justice aims of intersectionality's Black feminist roots. (p. 82)

In turn, proponents of a wider use of the concept argue that an exclusive focus on the intersection of discriminatory potencies can lead to the side-lining of agency, as well as overlooking potentially insightful intersections of oppression and privilege (Nash 2008). This broad use has led to a more general definition of intersectionality as the intersection of two or more categories; in this issue, Styhre argues that:

> The general proposition of intersectionality theory, which holds that social identities and subjectivities are composed of heterogeneous and at times even contradictory and/or colliding elements, leading to fragmented yet coherent, or at least functional, subject-positions, is applicable to a broader set of actors and organizational settings. (p. 51)

Power and privilege need not be absent from such studies, however. For example, there is still a dearth of research at the intersection of exclusion and privilege, such as that experienced by women in managerial or leadership positions, and on how such individuals can coalesce around this intersectional identity in both formal and informal networks (Villesèche and Josserand, 2017). In addition, echoing the sociological principle known as the 'Matthew effect' (Merton, 1968; Rigney, 2010), that is the fact that certain individuals tend to experience cumulative privilege, researchers in organization studies could also pay more attention to the intersection of privileges so as to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of power and social-symbolic work, and how these are contingent to the socio-historical context of intersections.

Moreover, given the long-deplored scarcity and underdevelopment of methodological tools to deploy intersectionality in empirical work (Marfelt, 2016), there is ample room for innovation and creativity. This challenge is remarkably

attended to across contributions to this special issue, with authors adding to existing methodological insights by way of extension (Liu; Ruel et al.; Shield, this issue), combination (Ulus, this issue), or even dissolution (Christensen, this issue). They thus collectively pose the question of how to track and deconstruct discrimination through space and time. In line with this, further self-reflexivity and debates as to what we assume are the boundaries of intersectional research is needed, to ensure that the concept remains fruitful without being defused.

Intersections as stable vs. fluid

What does it mean to talk about race and gender as intersecting categories? This is another one of the questions that researchers have debated in relation to intersectionality. The tension, or even paradox, between stability and fluidity is present in the original conceptualization itself: the intersection of the prejudice affecting the category 'black American' with the one affecting the category 'woman' results cannot be adequately addressed by considering its components either in isolation or in addition. Does this mean that a given intersection could be considered a new, distinct category? Judith Butler notoriously critiqued this additive logic:

> The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and ablebodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed "etc." at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. This failure, however, is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated "etc." that so often occurs at the end of such lines? This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the supplement, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all. (Butler, 1990: 143)

In the same vein, joining other researchers in management and organization studies such as Tatli and Özbilgin (2012), Risberg and Pilhofer (this issue) claim that 'categories are accompanied by power and relationships of inequality and have universalist and essentialist tendencies'. Yet, they do not argue for a dissolution of categories, and acknowledge that 'categorization helps us by simplifying and guiding our actions and behaviours in our everyday lives, routinizing them, providing structure, bringing order to a complex world'. How can we address structurally produced discrimination through fixed categories without taking the risk of perpetuating inequality regimes (Acker, 2006)? A proposed remedy is to construct categories from an emic rather than etic perspective (Talti and Özbligin, 2012; Marfelt, 2016), that is to detect locally relevant and significant categories that serve as a basis for privilege and discrimination. Still, these locally, inductively

constructed categories themselves could be argued to add to the 'etc.' type of list that Butler criticizes.

Moreover, the use of categories in intersectional research, regardless of whether their 'diversity' is developed in an etic or emic way, connects to a broader reflection on the connections between diversity and identity, and on identity as fixed or fleeting (Holck et al., 2016). Identities can be actual and projected (Beech, 2008); material and virtual (Schultze, 2014); past and present (Bardon et al., 2015). This poses the question of the way in which intersectionality can be addressed through space and time, and how loops of discrimination and privilege traverse individuals. In his note, Shield (this issue) draws attention to intersectionality in subcultures as expressed in virtual interactions when using the socio-sexual app Grindr. Specifically, he documents how discrimination takes place at the intersection of gay identity and other social categories, and comments on the affordances of app tools used to signify one's socio-sexual preferences. In such a perspective, identity work is not only a function of individual agency and discursive opportunities but is also swayed by technological affordances. In her conclusion to Gender Trouble, Butler comments that:

> This illimitable et cetera, however, offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing. If identity is asserted through a process of signification, if identity is always already signified, and yet continues to signify as it circulates within various interlocking discourses, then the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an "I" that preexists signification. (Butler, 1990: 143-144)

This directs us to consider identity as a practice, as something that is done, and agency as exercised in the interstices created by the ongoing repeated performance of a given (intersectional) identity, displacing that identity and the power relations the subject is inscribed into (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1982). In line with this, in this special issue Christensen discusses and provides us with a convincing illustration of how intersectionality can inspire poststructuralist projects, as he recursively acknowledges the social existence of categories while suggesting to 'storm' these very norms. Such an attempt could be criticized by some as being a hijacking of structural ideas into another paradigm, yet perfectly aligns with the queer approach of denying stability and permanence to paradigms themselves. Finally, Liu (this issue) addresses the challenges of studying structurally oppressed identities while adopting a reflexive stance on our own embodied marginality/privilege with regards to particular intersections.

Intersectional thinking: From the individual to the commons

Besides the above-mentioned debate about categories and categorization, the projects tied to specific intersections are also a point of controversy. Indeed, the multiplication of categories described above suggests that these identified social groups can be the basis for differentiated struggles for equality. A number of authors vigorously argue for the even consideration of all emancipatory projects, since not doing so would again verse into a logic of domination (e.g. Hancock, 2007). Yet, other scholars warn against the supposed equal, universal value of all intersections and the related power struggles. For example, Walby et al. (2012) contend that intersectional research tends to overlook the ontology of unequal social relations, and relatedly suggest that 'some social relations of inequality are more important than others in structuring the environment which shapes these social relations' (Walby et al., 2012: 234).

As a corollary to this debate around the hierarchy or equality of struggles, one has to consider the implications for change projects. Are particular forms of discrimination and prejudice better addressed at their exact intersection and location, or is a holistic approach more effective? In terms of theorization and illustration, there is little doubt of the interest to explore and expose the complex ways in which power is exercised. This question, however, is more disputed with regards to enacting and enforcing change in practice. Is a universal, democratic project unattainable? Are intersection-specific struggles fruitful? This is reminiscent of the critique of identity politics as fragmenting, as operating another kind of reification, a critique which has recently developed traction in the public debate (Lilla, 2017; Nash, 2016). Such voices criticize the lack of attention to 'the commons', to a democratic project that can only be jointly built, yet without acknowledging possible biases in defining what this project would encompass and who would lead it. The challenge is thus to find fertile ground for change between pointing out that public space is defined and governed by those in power and be tempted to withdrawing from this space, and a rather naïve idea that goodwill and the societal acknowledgement of the existence of inequality are sufficient to conduct inclusive work on a democratic project.

While Crenshaw (1989; 1991) separates the political and theoretical aspects of intersectionality, by discussing feminism and intersectionality in the context of the 2016 US presidential election, in her note for this special issue Ulus shows how they collide, are intertwined; one could be tempted to say: how they intersect. This colliding is, she argues, not only observed in deliberate acts, but also in fantasies:

> Unconscious fantasies to fulfil wishes, needs, desires – and the defences that are invoked, when fantasies are threatened and stimulate anxieties – these interconnecting dynamics, occurring unconsciously, provide remarkable analytic

> connectivity for confronting the contested meanings of feminism in daily political practices. I contend that fantasies fuel the priorities that are given to specific feminist public enactments, for instance in mainstream, corporate-supported spaces, privileging some voices and attempting to smother others – with material consequences. (p. 165)

Other streams of the literature have focused more on how institutions produce these intersections. In that sense, individuals or groups are merely the sites in which we can empirically observe the intersections. In specific contexts, under specific institutional logics, specific intersections will be foregrounded, and some intersections – and the related change projects – will get more or less attention, constraining individuals' and groups' ability to act on discrimination. Aligned with such a perspective, in this issue Styhre experiments with intersectionality as a supplement to analyses grounded in institutional theory and its derivatives such as institutional logics, institutional entrepreneurship, or institutional work.

Institutions and elites are also at the heart of the interview with Philomena Essed conducted by Sara Louise Muhr (Essed and Muhr, this issue) and the response by Martin Parker (this issue) that is especially attentive to race, privilege, and the public space. This can be seen as a continuation of the arguments put forward by Carmichael (later known as Ture) and Hamilton about black power and the existence of institutional racism (Ture and Hamilton, 1967/1992), as well as of Foucault's 1976 series of lectures at the Collège de France in which he discussed the existence of a racisme d'Etat, literally 'State racism' (Foucault, 1997). To start with, such concepts want to make explicit that the more important issue is not that specific individuals are racist or display racist behaviour, but that the State itself can function on racist foundations. Yet, in institutional (or systemic) racism, the state is not deliberately developing racist laws or explicitly deploying its power based on a racist ideology – which would rather make it a 'racist state' – as was the case with segregationist countries such as South Africa, the USA, or Nazi Germany, and as still is the political aspiration of a number of right-wing, nationalistic parties across Europe and beyond. Rather, it is argued that this form of racism is both long-ingrained and at times nearly invisible. Such countries can even have developed anti-racist legislation, while the functioning of institutions still reinforce inequalities based on a binary opposition between the norm and the 'other' based on the social construction of race. At the individual or group level, this results in what sociologists call racialization (see for example Murji and Solomos, 2005). This discussion has, for example, recently resurfaced in France, following the organization of 'non-mixed' events by groups of Muslim female students or the Afrofeminist (the French term for black feminists) collective Mwasi. In November 2017, writer and activist Rokhaya Diallo was barred from a national council following complaints that she had publicly referred to the existence of institutional racism in France. The discussion is also vivid in Denmark

and crystallizes around the notion of national identity and its genealogical/genetic foundation.

Overall, this displacement of the focus from the individual to institutions offers fruitful avenues for future research as it deviates the 'burden' for action from affected individuals or groups. In the same vein as institutional racism, concepts such as patriarchy or ableism indirectly suggest that if individuals or groups can adopt and reproduce discriminatory behaviours or ideas, it is also because they are available and validated as a discourse in a given context. This is what Essed calls 'entitlement racism' (Essed and Muhr, this issue), a notion that undoubtedly deserves further scholarly attention. In addition, this calls for work paying close attention to institutional contexts when considering intersectionality as countries differ as to their institutional approach to constructing the racialized 'other' (Tatli et al., 2012; Wrench, 2012).

Introducing the papers

This special issue features four articles, three notes, as well as a commented interview; two book reviews end this issue to give us inspiration for more reading. We hereafter give the reader a brief overview of the different contributions.

To start with, Stefanie Ruel, Albert Mills and Janice Thomas address the challenge of using the concept of intersectionality throughout the research design rather than confining it to a theoretical frame. In their own words, they want to 'put intersectionality to work'. They take a specific interest in the workplace marginalization experienced by Ruth Bates Harris, who was not only the first black senior manager ever hired by NASA but also the first woman. Her case is approached through a critical sensemaking framework, which is used both to reconstruct her story from archival data and to analyse it. Beyond intersecting social identities based on phenotypical traits, the authors exemplify that studying an organizational participant from an intersectional perspective also means studying their socio-historical situatedness and the related institutional and organisational discourses that shape identities.

Alexander Styhre also looks into identity construction through the prism of intersectionality, albeit the focus is here on professional identities at the intersection of heterogeneous sets of norms and organizational arrangements. In particular, Styhre argues that there has been too limited attention given to elite identities and how intersectionality plays out in the related identity work. In this article, Styhre gives specific attention to life science professionals working for small, start-up type companies which are highly dependent on access financial

capital to continue to innovate. An intersectional analysis of the material shows that these professionals both dissociate themselves from other actors in the field, yet are dependent on their norms, practices and resources. This undermines the possibility for a coherent self-identity and demands constant work with heterogeneous resources.

Helena Liu goes in a quite different direction in her methods-centred piece. Rather than arguing for the stretching of intersectionality, Liu pleads for its re-radicalisation; this re-radicalisation is necessary if organisation studies want to use intersectionality as more than a 'totemic symbol'. In particular, Liu advocates for a more sensitive contextualisation of struggles and aligning of researcher and subject standpoints. Attention to biography and history are thus proposed as methodological remedies. Liu illustrates her argument with examples from a study of Chinese Australian leaders, as an oppressed yet relatively privileged group. Biography and history notably allow to create fruitful rapport with the interviewees and gather rich data about social identification processes and identity performance in complex systems of domination. More broadly, Liu's contribution raises the complex question of who can speak about and research intersectionality.

Jannick Friis Christensen also has his core interest in methods with relations to intersectionality, although his proposition asks us to look beyond intersectionality in order to fruitfully deliver on the related aims of change and power-states disruption. Based on a joint reading of the literature about critical performativity and queer theory, Christensen proposes a norm-critical method that can be actioned in both research and practice. This method aims at overcoming the challenge of how to discuss categories without reifying them. Christensen details how this method is derived from intervention methods developed in practice by a non-profit association as well as by a collective of Danish trade unions and focuses on work related to the LGBT+ people. The detailed examples create a rich agenda for both academics and practitioners and pushes the agenda for intersectionality beyond identity politics by seeing equating queer performativity with ephemeral intersectionality.

The note section is equally rich in contributions addressing intersectionality as theory, methods, and politics. The section starts with Annette Risberg and Katharina Pilhofer's reflection over categories and categorisation. They discuss how these tools are used in intersectional scholarship as well as in the broader body of diversity and difference research. Rather than taking the standpoint that categories have to be abandoned, they acknowledge the inevitability of categorisation in human socialization, and rather try to contrast problematic uses with fruitful avenues. In particular, they draw attention to the assumptions and stereotypes that can be attached to widely used categories such as race or gender.

In turn, they advocate for a use of categories that pays conscious attention to how and by whom they are developed, that is to say acknowledging power structures and power relations.

Andrew Shield addresses multiple intersections experienced by non-heterosexual immigrants and looks at such intersectionality in the context of virtual encounters facilitated through a popular socio-sexual mobile application called Grindr. Shield to consider this virtual space as a rich site for gaining new insights into the complexity of gay culture. Thanks to his online and face-to-face data collection, Shield unveils some of the interrelations of race, gender and sexual orientation that lead to complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion on Grindr, where oppressed sub-groups (e.g. Asians or Muslims) can themselves display discriminatory behaviour (e.g. towards 'feminine' or transgender users). In addition, the data analysis shows how app-specific affordances such as drop-down menus reinforce categorization. Yet, it is also highlighted that some users explicitly use an anti-discrimination discourse in their profiles, opening up research avenues about user-led remedial work.

Next, Eda Ulus' note takes the form of an inflammatory essay on 'white feminist fantasies'. In particular, Ulus denounces the continued exclusion from the political arena of women of colour, and by extension the exclusion of their struggles and societal projects. Ulus also extends the debate to contrasting intersectional feminism with neoliberal feminism, questioning the latter's legitimacy as a form of feminism. These white fantasies are explained thanks to psychoanalytical tools such as narcissism as well as the Freudian concept of defence mechanisms, in which fantasies are a form of denial when individuals are faced with a threat to their beliefs. The essay's red thread is the 2016 presidential election in the United States of America, and more specifically the case of Hillary Clinton, whose candidacy was repeatedly appraised as a triumph for women and for feminism. Ulus ends her piece with what could be seen as her personal intersectional feminist manifesto.

In addition to the contributions in the form of articles or notes, this special issue also includes an interview feature. Sara Louise Muhr interviewed Philomena Essed on entitlement racism and its intersections. Intersectionality is explicitly related to specific institutional contexts, in which certain groups of individuals feel free to say whatever they want about whomever they want, that is to say where privilege groups use racist discourses or display racist behaviour on the deceptive premise that this is about freedom of speech (as a universal and absolute right). Essed further discusses the effects on individuals, in particular humiliation and what it means that a person feels humiliated. Finally, she reflects on neighbouring concepts such as entitlement sexism, and about ways to conduct inclusive activism.

Martin Parker offers a comment on her reflections, based on this interview as well as on their previous interchange during a seminar held at Copenhagen Business School in 2017. Parker develops an analogy with the Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park (London) and Oosterpark (Amsterdam) to reflect on who is granting the freedom to speak, in what institutional context, thus highlighting the relational dimension and situatedness not only of rights but also of the human condition.

Finally, this issue features two book reviews: Kirsty Janes considers subject boundaries and communication through her reading of Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation by L. Blackman, and Toni Ruuska takes us into the 'post-apocalyptic' with her take on A. Allen's The Cynical Educator.

We hope that the reader will share our proud sentiment that this special issue testifies to the vitality of research about intersectionality in and around organizations. Intersectionality came about as a necessary reaction to universalist and democratic projects built on systems of exclusion, including feminist ones, and which are not sufficiently questioned to this day. To contribute to more social justice in and around organizations, we thus want to end this introduction by encouraging you to engage scholarly with the research avenues and methodological tools authors proposed and debated in this special issue, and even more so to take a participatory, if not activist approach to intersectionality in order to 'walk the talk' (see also Ashcraft and Muhr, 2017; Contu, 2017; Just et al., 2017).

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