20th OS Summer Workshop

The Architecture of Hope in Distressing Times and Places: Construction, Action, and Possibilities

May 27th – 30th, 2026, Thessaloniki, Greece

www.os-workshop.com

Abstract Submission Deadline: December 8th 2025

Conveners
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Theme

The current world can be characterised as one of distress due to the convergence of several critical issues that challenge our collective well-being. Widespread inequality – domestically and internationally - exacerbates social tensions, creating a divide between the affluent and the marginalised, fuelling resentment and instability. Meanwhile, political polarisation and antidemocratic movements threaten the stability of domestic and international institutions, undermine cooperation, foster distrust, and hamper effective governance. The climate crisis looms large, threatening ecosystems and livelihoods, leading to both local displacement and cross-border migration, as well as resource conflicts. Additionally, ongoing wars and geopolitical tensions further destabilise regions, compounding the sense of insecurity and urgency in addressing these intertwined crises. Together, these factors paint a picture of a world grappling with profound challenges, where the path forward seems increasingly fraught.

In the upcoming Organization Studies Summer Workshop (OSSW) , we seek to focus on hope (broadly defined) and its prominent but somewhat overlooked role in navigating such distressing conditions, times, and places. Hope has been "defined as the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways" (Snyder 2002, 249). At the same time, hope is often found as a cluster of emotions and experiences, as both a source and an outcome of action, both an individual and collective experience.

Hope has been studied extensively in the social and health sciences (Averill, Catlin, and Chon 2012; Bar-On 1995; Gasper, Spencer, and Middlewood 2020; Bryant and Cvengros 2004; Chew and Ho 1994; Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Crisp, and Gross 2014; Hoppmann, Gerstorf, Smith, and Klumb 2007; Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal 2006; Lamont and Andrikopoulos 2014; Peterson and Byron 2008). Yet, while hope and its related emotions, and their deep connection to action formation are critically relevant to organisations and organising (Sawyer and Clair 2022; Branzei 2014), they have been less well examined by organisational scholars.

As Branzei (2014) has suggested, finding hope in the hopeless is a difficult task. However, it may be a key component in surviving and perhaps even thriving in exactly the sorts of distressing times and places already mentioned, as well as many others. Moreover, hope and its related emotions seem likely to provide an integral component of persons' motivation to ply their efforts toward mitigating the negative effects of distressing times and places on those experiencing that distress. Thus, we want to avoid generic treatments of the emotion of hope, or circumstances where the experience of hope might seem to be the most "appropriate" or "natural" response to a given context.

Aims and Scope

We seek to identify the role that hope plays in times and places where hope might seemingly be fleeting or even all but lost, and in the role that hope plays in creating liminal and provisional times and places where different possibilities might be envisioned. At the same time, we are interested in treatments that examine the social construction and contagion of hope, action that builds or leads to hope, and the opening up of possibilities wherein hope might emerge or be found. We thus welcome explorations of hope as both individual, building on traditional psychological perspectives, and collective phenomena, building on sociological perspectives. Moreover, we are also particularly interested in how hope is constructed as an artifact in opposition to the realities of crisis or distress which might manifest prefigurative practices, alternative imaginaries, or in reparative and regenerative organising.

The OSSW 2026 aims to advance our theoretical understanding of hope while generating insights for organisations and persons navigating increasingly turbulent, distressing times. By examining hope in its most challenging contexts, we can better understand its role in organisational resilience, transformation, and positive social change.

Our objective is to encourage authors to develop empirical examinations of hope in distressing times and places, including but by no means limited to finding hope, building hope, keeping hope alive, the social construction of hope, the organising of hope and its organisational implications, and the sources and consequences of hope under adverse circumstances. We are interested in treatments of collective hope, emotional clusters that include hope in adverse consequences, finding hope in counterintuitive places and counterintuitive ways, and constructions of hope via practice, imaginaries and prefiguration. We also welcome contributions that examine the temporality of hope and distress, hopeful or hope-filled resilience, places and spaces of hope or hopelessness, hope and power, and other related examinations.

As we suggest above, we are interested in papers taking a broad range of approaches and perspectives to the study and conceptualisation of hope's multiplex roles in distressing times and places. For example, we are interested in social psychological or sociological approaches which seek to contextualise the experience of hope within distressing settings and emphasise the collective dimension of hope's constitution and functioning in such times and places. Some potential topics might include:

The architecture and dynamics of hope *(how and why to hope?):*

- What is the nature of hope as a singular emotion, and/or collective emotion? What are the mechanisms of emotional contagion with hope, and how is that different from or similar to other emotions?

- How does hope interact with other moral and social emotions under conditions of distress? Does hope interact differently with the so-called negative emotions than with more positive emotions?
- In distressing times and places, when is hope a part of a larger cluster of emotions, and when is it a dominant or even primary phenomenon?
- What is the role of hope in individual and collective action? What is the role of hope in perceptions of agency? And what kinds of outcomes might we expect from the presence or absence of hope? When does hope motivate action or when does hope lead to passivity and even acceptance of distressing conditions?
- How is hope used as a tool by powerful actors to either motivate action or to forestall it? Can hope be used to overcome anger or rage, or other emotions, in times and places of distress?
- When does hope shape or influence distress as an emotion? When does the emotion of distress shape or influence hope under conditions of distress?

Alternative conceptualisations of hope *(what is hope?)*

- How might we better understand hope not only as an emotion, but as a social construction of possibility and opportunity?
- How might we better understand the interplay of hope as human emotion and hope as societal discourse that expresses optimism about the future and creates a sense of community and solidarity to navigate distressing times and places together?
- How is hope constituted in and through sociomaterial objects as containers or carriers of people's hopefulness in distressing times and places? How do the affordances of sociomaterial objects and of digital and AI technologies affect how hope emerges and is sustained, changed or disrupted within and across communities?
- How is hope sustained in organisations and settings of routine distress, such as trauma or crisis centres, refugee camps, or social movement organisations or other settings of routine distress?

Temporality perspectives on hope *(when to hope?):*

We are also interested in explorations of the temporality of hope. Hope inherently has a strong future orientation. Thus, some potential topics might include:

- How does hope and other future oriented emotions provide communities with a sense of resilience in the midst of hardship as well as other liminal experiences in the present.
- While hope projects desired features into the future, other emotions might have some dominant temporalities – for example, anxiety and fear might force action in

the present. Uncertainty about the future and liminality creates even debilitating anxiety. In those settings, how does imagining desirable futures gives hope, or how does hope facilitate or constitute desirable futures?

- Recent studies explore how people mitigate the oppressive effects of indeterminate temporariness and liminality by restoring cognitive control and focusing on the present or near future to prevent rumination about a more distant future (Alkhaled and Sasaki 2022; Kodeih, Schildt, and Lawrence 2023). How does fostering even an illusionary sense of temporal control in such liminal settings reduce emotional toll and give hope?
- How does the sequencing of contextual hardships and collective emotional experiences lead communities to imagine alternative, hopeful futures, or how communities' various temporal orientations may predispose them to experience hope to greater or lesser degrees in distressing situations?
- How does hope emerge in time and over time in distressing conditions? How and when does hope fade or fail? What are the durational aspects of hope; for instance, when and how can hope be maintained? What are the effects of anticipatory hope in distressing settings?
- What are the temporal dynamics of collective hope? How is hope temporally produced and constituted over time?

Place-based perspectives on hope *(where is hope?)*:

Additionally, contributions to the recent conversations on place and space would also be of great interest to us. Places, or the amalgam of "geographic spot *and* actors' interpretations, representations, and identifications" (Gieryn, 2000: 466-67), draw scholars' attention not only to the contextual inequities or disruptions which can distress those inhabiting them, but to the intersubjective meanings persons build in and attach to those contexts. Places combine geographic location with materiality and meanings. Thus, some potential topics might include:

- How can places which have suffered horrendous material damage at a location – such as might be inflicted by war, violence, or natural disasters – still be a place of hope? How can people hold on to or actively create hopeful meanings as they interact with such places and each other?
- Places are not merely the context or container in which individuals, organisations, and institutions create (or stifle) hope through their interpretations, actions and interactions (Wright et al. 2023). How might places and hope be mutually constituted such that people's lived experiences of places shape, and are shaped by, the human expression of hope?

- How can communities construct places of hope, even when such places are engulfed by war, violence, or natural disasters. How can experiences of hope motivate the (re)construction of the physical artefacts comprising place?
- What aspects of place shape, and are shaped by, experiences of hope and distress in organisations, institutions and communities? How do these dynamics play out in different types of places? This could include global and local places affected by distressing events of varying scale and scope, as well as temporary places that provide shelter during distressing and extreme events.
- Which place-based concepts and theories, ontologies of place, and insights from other disciplines – such as sociology, humanistic geography, architecture, and urban planning – could open up pathways for more generative theorising and empirical examinations about places of hope in distressing time?

Other perspectives on hope *(what and how of hope?)*:

We seek to expand the focus on hope from that focused on emotionality to that focused on practice. Potential topics might include:

- How is manifesting and generating hope a state of reconstructing possibility and good in moments of despair.
- How do the practices of repair and restoration in distressing contexts implicate emotion work, particularly using hope?
- How is hope focused on prefiguration, imaginaries (Bhatt, Qureshi, Shukla, and Hota 2024; Kokkinidis 2015; Augustine, Soderstrom, Milner, and Weber 2019).
- How is hope the work of reparation and regeneration (Crawford, Toubiana, and Coslor 2024; Dacin and Dacin 2008).

Hope in professions and occupations *(who works at hope?):*

Additionally, we would also be interested in studies addressing the "who" of hope, answering questions regarding, for example, how occupations and professions draw on hope to work toward the mitigation of distressing circumstances. Thus, some potential topics might include:

- Which professions and occupational groups are expected to act as sources of hope for organisational and community members during distressing times? How do they express, communicate, and display hope in their everyday work practices and with what consequences for the individual?
- What is the role of hope in the identity work of frontline professionals as they navigate a crisis? How do frontline professionals draw on hope to maintain, reconstruct, disrupt or escape their existing professional identities?

Methodological approaches to hope *(how to study hope?)*

- What different quantitative and qualitative methods have scholars adopted to study hope in distressing times and places? How might these methods be improved to enrich data collection, deepen data analysis, and strengthen theorisation of both hope and distress?
- How and when are phenomenon-driven approaches more appropriate than theory-driven approaches to investigating hope in distressing times and places?
- How can a researcher reflexively navigate their own sense of hope and distress when undertaking fieldwork in extreme contexts and crisis situations? How does the researcher's own personhood shape the research process?

Theoretical lenses on hope *(how to think about hope?)*:

We are similarly interested in a broad range of theoretical lenses to be applied to empirical investigations on the topic, to engage with puzzles broadly focused on hope in distressing times and places, including but not limited to institutional and inhabited institutions perspectives, critical theory, power and politics, hope in organisations, and hope of organisations.

Important dates OSSW workshop 2026

• Deadline for submission of abstracts: **08 December 2025**

• Acknowledgement of acceptance: **10 January 2026**

• Full paper submission: **10 May 2026**

• Workshop date: May 27-30 2026, Makedonia Palace Hotel, Thessaloniki, Greece

Abstracts should be of no more than 1,000 words.

Please note that we cannot consider purely theoretical manuscripts. Such manuscripts would be more appropriately addressed to our sister journal, *Organization Theory*.

For further information, please visit: http://www.os-workshop.com or contact **Sophia Tzagaraki** at: osofficer@gmail.com

OS Special Issue

As per tradition, Organization Studies will host a Special Issue in connection to this Workshop and the Call for Papers will be available as soon as the workshop is over. Attending the event is not a prerequisite for submission to the special issue. Manuscripts for the Special Issue can be submitted between January 15th & January 31st 2027.

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