

Call for Papers Special Issue of *Organization*

On the Development of Ethnographic Organization Studies: Towards New Objects of Concern

Deadline: April 28, 2017

Special Issue Editors

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Ethnography is enjoying much attention in management and organization studies with the recent publication of new journals, important research monographs, and edited collections providing some markers of its growing popularity (Garsten & Nyqvist, 2013; Kostera, 2007; Neyland, 2007; O'Doherty, 2016; Ybema et al., 2009; see Czarniawska, 2012). However, in recent years ethnographic approaches have undergone significant transformation that takes them far beyond the traditional anthropological and/or 'Geertzian' approaches still popular in management and organization studies. These changes have been explored most fully in business anthropology, science and technology studies, the social studies of markets and finance, and in digital technologies and information systems.

Amongst some of the most important pioneers of this new ethnographic sensibility are such authors as James Clifford, Bruno Latour, George Marcus, Marilyn Strathern, and Michael Taussig. Their influence has been taken up in important studies by people like Annelise Riles (2001), Bill Maurer (2005), Tom Boellerstoff (2008), and Eduardo Kohn (2013). Some relation to this work is present in the works of Annemarie Mol (2002) and John Law (2004), who are widely read in management and organization studies. However, we have still yet to see a significant breakthrough in the way in which ethnography is practiced and written in management and organization studies. Perhaps the discipline got stuck in a cul-de-sac of reflexivity and playful experimentation, fascinated with the previous mood of postmodernism in organization studies (Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Parker, 1995). This standoff is unfortunate because ethnography is a method, or better a mode of study, a form of 'work', or even a 'way of life' that can explore the complexities of 'organization' in ways that are less reductive and schematic than more popular methods (see Watson, 2012; cf. Van Maanen, 2012). It has much to contribute to intellectual developments in social sciences and humanities via an interest in business and management studies.

In this special issue, we are particularly interested in ethnographies that are tackling what we call 'new objects of concern' in management and organization studies. What can ethnographies do to enhance our understanding of things like algorithms, animals, military drones, plutonium, risk, robots, soil, and water, to name just a few candidates? Within mainstream approaches to management and organization studies these objects of concern might appear exotic or even insignificant. To us, they seem to be portents of a new era. This is why it is important to explore the ways in which the arbitrary might become the rule, or the ways in which the traditional dualisms of the social sciences – macro/micro, global/local, structure/agent – become unsettled and redrawn, or even inverted and displaced under the influence of these objects of concern. One might even argue that in order to study such objects of concern we will have to abandon these dualisms as the starting point for our analysis. In tracing the genealogy and effects of these new objects of concern we may

discover new ontologies of organization on the horizon – or are they here already, but still unseen within the dominant disciplining of the subject and its managerial practices?

There is a need to find ways of tackling the ‘big issues’ in ways that might renew and extend repertoires of political action and intervention. What is the *organization* of global warming, of ‘globalization’, the break-up of the modern nation state, ‘states of terror and emergency’, virtual and post-human ontologies, artificial intelligence, and augmented realities?

Papers

For this special issue, we specifically encourage papers that can address these issues in terms of three key themes: a) space, b) materiality, and c) new technologies.

Space

To include the organization and organizational implications of:

- New configurations of ‘The Global’ and ‘The ‘Local’, i.e. ‘the glocal’
- Mobile Space and spaces in mobility
- Military Spaces
- Security Space
- ‘Third space’ or liminal space
- New Borders and social containers – camps, transit zones, departure terminals
- Cyber-geography or virtual geographies.
- New architectures: intelligent space, smart buildings ...
- Social ‘topologies’ (Lury et al., 2012)
- Sustainable space
- ‘Outer space’
- ‘Water-spaces’, ‘eco-spaces’, land-space, underground space, etc.

Materiality

This might include:

- Dialectical materialism and its limits
- Varieties of ‘new materialism’ (Coole & Frost, 2010), ‘vital matter’ or ‘vibrant matter’ (Bennett, 2009)
- New materials: physical, chemical, or biological
- Graphene
- Synthetic materials and their organizational implications. Plastics, silicon, nylons, rayon, acetate but also newer materials – i.e. bioplastics, nanocomposites, and smart polymers.
- ‘nuclear’ and ‘atomic’ materials
- ‘digital’ material
- waste materials
- Material cultures: from the overlooked flotsam and jetsam of organization to the ‘urban fabric’
- The return of earthy materials and their energies: wood, land, air, sea
- New ‘eco-materialities’
- Atmospheric materialities, globes, bubbles, spheres ...

Technologies

These might include

- Military technologies – robots, drones, etc.
- Bio-engineering, genetic engineering
- Bio-Security and security risk detection hardwares and softwares
- New Information Systems in the management of organization
- Digital technologies in recording, storage, broadcasting, and distribution
- Algorithms and other calculative technologies in financial trading software or their application to web-mining for e-commerce and e-services
- Personal Mobile Digital Technologies
- Social Media.
- Online data analytics and real time data analysis: ‘scraping’, Infomous, Twitter ‘streamgraph’, Mentionmap, etc.
- ‘Big Data’.
- ‘Augmented reality’ technologies – headware, etc.
- Artificial intelligences

Submission

Papers may be submitted electronically from March 31, 2017 until the final deadline on April 28 2017 to SAGE Track at: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/organization>

Papers should be no more than 8,000 words, excluding references, and will be blind reviewed following the journal’s standard review process. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in Organization and on the journal’s website:

<http://www.sagepub.com/journals/Journal200981/manuscriptSubmission>.

Further Information

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