



ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Special Issue Call for Papers
Technology and organization

**Editors: Timon Beyes, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Jean Clarke,
Mikkel Flyverbom, Robin Holt**

Submission Deadline: Oct 31, 2019

At present, hardly a week passes without new revelations of how networked technologies organize life. Lives are saturated with data: movements are monitored; moods are modulated, cities are smartened, and perceptions manipulated in order to target consumers, educate workers, or help sway elections. Technological processes and infrastructures of gathering, identifying, sorting and connecting or manipulating data have ushered in platform-based organizational forms and communities (de Vaujaney et al., 2019; Srnicek, 2016) automated processes of organizing (Neyland, 2015). They enable new possibilities of collective action (Nunes, 2014) and at the same time establish segregated, ‘homophilic’ networked communities (Chun, 2018).

Organization can thus no longer be thought without recourse to technology and technological mediation. It never could be: the very word *organon* means tool of thought in Greek, and in Latin *organum*, instrument. Yet arguably, the past 20 years have brought about a more wide-ranging change in the way that organization and organizing are thought about and researched in relation to the apparatuses and objects of what is a socio-technically organized world. This transformation in organizational scholarship has many names and nuances: we might call it new materialism, or a theorizing of sociotechnical entanglement, or more recently, an attention to the infrastructural or mediated condition of organization. It can be traced back to: the emergence of actor-network-theory, as well as science and technology studies, to feminist studies, to studies of cyborgs and robotics, to affect, spatial and affordance theories and their increasing awareness of materiality, to cybernetics and the study of networks, to theories of time and the instantiation of time in technology, and to media studies. Recent scholarship on digital data, algorithms, social media and artificial intelligence also feed into a growing realization of the need to revisit and extend our understanding of organization. Importantly, technology here is not limited to production technology, and neither is media limited to questions of organizational mass media or social media communication. Rather, objects, devices and protocols that constitute technology are also constitutive for all forms of organizational life.

Perhaps we can detect an early mover of this kind of work in Robert Cooper’s notion of ‘cyborgization’, developed in conjunction with John Law and Martin Parker (Cooper & Law, 2016; Parker & Cooper, 2016). Fusing cybernetic thought and Donna Haraway’s cyborg politics (with a nod to Stafford Beer, Gregory Bateson and Mary Shelley) here organization was conceived of as information processing, yet without succumbing to cybernetic ideals of control, stressing instead the unfinished and varied nature of technological-human ordering. In a similar way, the architectural and media theorist Reinhold Martin argues that post WWII ‘organization man’ – fixed in nature as of a singular and predictable type and gender – needs to be understood as “a technologically mediated module circulating within the organizational complex”

(Martin, 2003: 12). We are emphasizing the notion of “cyborganization” because such attempts ask us to more fully and radically consider the implications of taking the technological and mediated constitution of organizing seriously. It is increasingly difficult to separate organization from technologies, material infrastructures and digital resources. So rather than adding objects and actants to given understandings of formal organizations or processes of organizing, the challenge is to rethink what organization is and what it can become with and through the technologies and infrastructures that condition and enable it.

Much of the current focus on technology and media has to do with what, in EU parlance, is called the ‘digital shift’: how digital networks reconfigure the ways in which management and control, innovation and entrepreneurship take place, and how digital data constitute a new ‘resource’ for organizational development and innovation. Yet much of this ‘turn’ regards technology as a powerful but additional force that can be controlled and put to organizational use. What we want to encourage are studies of how technology transforms the nature of control itself: studies of how management, entrepreneurship, community and political engagement, innovation, policy making, and many other organizational activities are configured by and through networked technologies. And in posing the question of organization with regard to technology, media and data in this more constitutive way, we should not yield to a cult of the new. In fact, the ubiquity and pervasiveness of digital media brings us back to age-old concerns. As John Durham Peters (2015: 7) has pointed out in his recent ‘philosophy of elemental media’, “digital media traffic less in content, programs, and opinions than in organization, power, and calculation.” As media they hark back to and evoke “ancient navigational functions: they point us in time and space, index our data, and keep us on the grid.” They thus cast the oldest troubles and concerns into fresh relief, such as how information, life and bodies and their relations are organized, steered and governed. In reflecting such fundamental troubles and concerns, we would thus do well to look at older transformations of technology and technological media in their interrelations with forms and processes of organizing.

Submissions to this special issue

The special issue seeks to stimulate and move forward the study of organization and technology. This means that we are less interested in ‘more of the same’: for instance, more ANT-inspired studies of organizational life. Rather, we are interested in new developments and next steps: How do we rethink the question of organization, its forms and its processes, through and with technology and its theories? Which theories and approaches have been overlooked and need to be pulled into the study of organization’s technological constitution? Do we need to fundamentally reconsider questions of agency, power, control and resistance, and if so, how? What different or other phenomena or aspects of organization come into view? What are the epistemological and methodological consequences for an organizational scholarship that is invariably predicated on media of knowledge and research?

Consistent with the mandate of *Organization Studies*, we aim to promote the understanding of organizations, organizing, and the organized, and the social relevance of that understanding in relation to the challenges identified here. This special issue therefore seeks to (re)pose the question of organization in light of its technological and mediated conditions and conditioning. In doing so, submissions from a variety of disciplines and perspectives, and using different methodological approaches, are welcome. We also encourage submissions that can craft an interdisciplinary conversation and are marked by fruitful engagements with e.g. media theory, philosophy of technology and further cultural- and social-theoretical

approaches to technology and media. In particular we encourage submissions engaged with the following:

- historical investigations of how media technologies effect and affect organizational form and of the interrelations between technological and organizational change, as they have been conducted in relation to, for example, files (Vismann, 2000/2008), paper (Kafka, 2012), cybernetic computing (Pias, 2003);
- studies of the changes in organizational form, as they for instance coalesce around the notions of ‘organized networks’ (Lovink and Rossiter, 2018) and ‘platform capitalism’ (Srnicek, 2016; Steinberg, 2019) or ‘platform cooperativism’ (de Vaujany et al, 2019);
- studies of the changes in processes of organizing that are connected to or rely upon technological apparatuses, as for instance constituted by “algorithmic organizing” (e.g. Neyland, 2015; Borch et al., 2015), new forms of “visibility management” (Flyverbom et al., 2016) or decision making (Constantiou & Kallinikos, 2015);
- interrogations of organizational and entrepreneurial subject positions and their technological milieus, such as the question of a ‘new organization (wo)man’ (Easterling 2004) work practices (Gregg, 2011; Flemming, 2016; Weil, 2014); craft work (Bratich, 2010)
- studies of overlooked or hidden phenomena of social organization that a ‘technological gaze’ allows us to think, for example the ‘technological unconscious’ (Beverungen & Lange, 2018; Hayles, 2017), machinic ecologies of affect (Angerer, 2017), atmospheric ‘homeotechnologies’ (Beyes, 2014; Sloterdijk, 2017) or the technological arcane (Beyes & Pias, 2019);
- reflections of hitherto neglected or new theories of technology and technological media that enable fresh insights into the nexus of organization and technology (e.g. Software Studies, Infrastructure Studies, ‘German Media Theory; see Horn, 2007; Beyes, Conrad & Martin, 2019);
- interrogations of the affective and phantasmatic dimensions, investments and affordances of technological media and their organizational implications, such as they routinely resurface in conjunction with so-called media revolutions (e.g. the printing press, radio, and of course the ‘digital shift’);
- studies of how technologies and media configure, structure and condition human agency (Campbell, 2011) as well as information, knowledge and communication (de Vaujany and Mitev, 2016, Innis, 1950/2007; Peters, 2015);
- studies of creativity and innovation in relation to technological media;
- interrogations of how digital transformations and data extraction industries underpin new formations of power and control and their political implications, such as they are discussed in relation to “surveillance capitalism” (Zuboff, 2019), the “security-entertainment complex” (Thrift, 2011), the “internet-industrial complex” (Flyverbom, Deibert & Matten, 2017) or the “cybernetic hypothesis” (Tiqun, 2001; Galloway, 2014);
- inquiries into the epistemological implications of technological media for organizational scholarship, e.g. how knowledge production is tied to certain technologies and their effects;
- inquiries into the methodological implications of studying organization in terms of its technology and media, e.g. on ‘media of method’.

Submitting your paper

Please submit your manuscript through the journal's online submission system (<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies>). You will need to create a user account if you do not already have one, and you must select the appropriate Special Issue at the "Manuscript Type" option. The Special Issue Editors handle all manuscripts in accordance with the journal's policies and procedures; they expect authors to follow the journal's submission guidelines (<http://journals.sagepub.com/home/oss>). You can submit your manuscript for this Special Issue **between 15th and 31st of October 2019**.

For further information please contact Timon Beyes (timon.beyes@leuphana.de) or one of the other editors. For administrative support and general queries, you may contact Sophia Tzagaraki, Managing Editor of *Organization Studies*, at sofficer@gmail.com.

References

- Angerer, M.-L. (2017). *Ecology of Affect: Intensive Milieus and Contingent Encounters*. Lüneburg: meson press.
- Beverungen, A., & Lange, A.-C. (2018). Cognition in High-Frequency Trading: The Costs of Consciousness and the Limits of Automation, *Theory, Culture & Society* 35(6): 75–95.
- Beyes, T. (2014). Peter Sloterdijk, in Helin, J. et al. (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Process Philosophy and Organization Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 567-584.
- Beyes, T., & Pias, C. (2019). The Media Arcane, *Grey Room*, 75 (Spring): 84-107.
- Beyes, T., Conrad, L., & Martin, R. (2019). *Organize [In Search of Media]*. Minneapolis/Lüneburg: University of Minnesota Press/meson press.
- Borch, C., Hansen, K. B., & Lange, A.-C. (2015). Markets, bodies, and rhythms: A rhythmanalysis of financial markets from open-outcry trading to high-frequency trading, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33(6): 1080–97.
- Bratich, J. (2010). The digital touch: Craft-work as immaterial labour and ontological accumulation. *Ephemera* 10 (3/4): 303-318
- Campbell, T. (2011). *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Chun, W. H. K. (2018). Queering Homophily, in Apprich, C. et al. (Eds) *Pattern Discrimination*. Minneapolis/Lüneburg: University of Minnesota Press/meson press.
- Constantiou, I. D., & Kallinikos, J. (2015). 'New games, new rules: big data and the changing context of strategy', *Journal of Information Technology*, 30/1: 44–57.
- Cooper, R., & Law, J. (2016). Organization: Distal and Proximal Views, in Burrell, G., & Parker, M. (Eds) *For Robert Cooper: Collected Work*. London: Routledge.
- de Vaujany, F. X., & Mitev, N. (2016). The post-Macy paradox, information management and organising: Good intentions and a road to hell?, *Culture and Organization* 23(5): 379-407.
- de Vaujany, F.-X., Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, A., & Holt, R. (2019). Communities Versus Platforms: The Paradox in the Body of the Collaborative Economy, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, online first: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492619832119>

- Hayles, N. K. (2017). *The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Easterling, K. (2004). The New Orgman. Logistics as an Organising Principle of Contemporary Cities, in Graham, S. (Ed.) *The Cybercities Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 179–184.
- Flemming, P. (2016). Confronting the Robots, *Demos Quarterley*, December.
- Flyverbom, M., Deibert, R., & Matten, D. (2017). The Governance of Digital Technology, Big Data, and the Internet: New Roles and Responsibilities for Business, *Business & Society* 58(1): 3–19.
- Flyverbom, M., Leonardi, P., Stohl, C. & Stohl, M. (2016). The Management of Visibilities in the Digital Age, *International Journal of Communication* 10: 98–109.
- Galloway, A. R. (2014). The Cybernetic Hypothesis, *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 25(1): 107-131.
- Gregg, M. (2011). *Work's Intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Horn, E. (2007). Editor's Introduction: "There Are No Media", *Grey Room* 29 (Fall): 6-13.
- Innis, H. A. (1950/2007). *Empire and Communications*, Toronto: Dundurn Press.
- Kafka, B. (2012). *The Demon of Writing. Powers and Failures of Paperwork*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lovink, G. & Rossiter, N. (2018). *Organization after Social Media*. Colchester: Minor Compositions.
- Martin, R. (2003). *The Organizational Complex*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Neyland, D. (2015). On organizing algorithms, *Theory, Culture & Society* 32(1): 119-132.
- Nunes, R. (2014). *The Organisation of the Organisationlessness: Collective Action after Networks*. London: Mute.
- Parker, M., & Cooper, R. (2016). Cyborganization: Cinema as a Nervous System, in Burrell, G., & Parker, M. (Eds) (2016) *For Robert Cooper: Collected Work*. London: Routledge.
- Peters, J. D. (2015). *The Marvelous Clouds. Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pias, C. (ed.) (2003). *Cybernetics / Kybernetik: The Macy Conferences 1946-1953* (2 volumes). Zurich: diaphanes.
- Sloterdijk, P. (2017). *Not Saved: Essays after Heidegger*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Srnicek, N. (2016). *Platform Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Steinberg, M. (2002). *The Platform Economy: How Japan Transformed the Consumer Internet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Thrift, N. (2011). Lifeworld Inc – and what to do about it, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29(1): 5-26.
- Tiqqun (2001). 'L'Hypothèse cybernétique', *Tiqqun* 2: 40–83.
- Visman, C. (2000/2008). *Files*. Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Weil, D. (2014) *The Fissured Workplace*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Zuboff, S. (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: Public Affairs.