

Call for Papers on a Special Issue on
Philosophy and Organization Studies: How Does Philosophy Illuminate
the Study of Organizations?

Guest Editors:

Haridimos Tsoukas, Jorgen Sandberg, Anne-Laure Fayard, Mike Zundel

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Generating theories about organizational phenomena inevitably involves philosophical questions. Philosophy is often invoked in terms of *meta*-questions that focus on the frameworks, categories, and concepts - that is, the dominant ways of thinking about, researching, and justifying knowledge claims - within organization studies as a social scientific field (Mir, Willmott and Greenwood, 2016; Tsoukas and Chia, 2011; Van de Ven, 2007). Here, philosophical questions are generated from *outside* the scholarly practices within which organizational scholars ordinarily carry out their research.

But even when organizational scholars conduct their research without ever bothering with such meta-questions, philosophical considerations often surface from the *inside* of the scholarly process when researchers stumble in their efforts to make sense of the empirical world (Powell, 2001); when their theories are challenged by rival ones; when there are calls for conceptual clarity and integration as perspectives and theories proliferate (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020); when hitherto tacitly accepted frameworks and concepts of organizational inquiry come under scrutiny; when empirical findings or discrete theories need to be collated into a big picture; or when issues of ethics or judgment arise that fail to be resolved by recourse to theory or rule.

Philosophical questions are often conceptual in character (Uygor, 1964): they are concerned with the nature (or meaning) of the concepts we use to describe, interpret, understand, and explain organizations (including the concepts 'describe', 'interpret', 'understand', 'explain' and 'organizations'). For example, questions such as how we should think about organizational change, routines, strategy, learning and knowledge, decision-making, leadership, work, organizational ethics or aesthetics cannot be solved through empirical inquiry alone, but require engagement with these concepts themselves (Fayard, 2019; Fayard et al, 2016). They, therefore, invite us to think more clearly, systematically and/or creatively about the conceptual categories we habitually use to make sense of phenomena of interest. A philosophical approach to organization studies aims to scrutinize, critique, and elucidate key concepts, modes of thinking and researching, as well as ways of justifying knowledge claims commonly used in the scholarly practice of organization studies as a field (Sandberg, 2005; Tsoukas, 2005: Ch.14; Zundel and Kokkalis, 2010).

Similar to other institutionalized practices, organizational research legitimates and takes for granted particular ways of engaging with, observing, and talking about the world. Insofar as this is the case, some closure of meaning is inevitably brought about. Philosophical inquiry can help to counter such closure by questioning commonly accepted meanings underlying research practices, as well as cultivating an inquisitive disposition and openness. As Foucault (1985: 9) put it: philosophical inquiry is first and foremost an “endeavour to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimizing what is already known.” Or as Whitehead (1929:20) remarked: “Philosophy is the self-correction by consciousness of its own initial excess of subjectivity. [...] The task of philosophy is to recover the totality obscured by the selection”. Philosophical inquiry can do this in three main ways (see Tsoukas, 2019).

Cultivating the attitude of “wonder”. “For it is owing to their wonder that men [sic] both now begin and at first began to philosophize,” notes Aristotle in *Metaphysics*. An attitude of wonder finds the ordinary to be extraordinary, the usual unusual. Once in “wonder”, one must *think* - new concepts need to be invented and fresh distinctions to be made. What is taken for granted needs to be questioned and what has withdrawn from focal attention to be brought back to scrutiny (Carlsen and Sandelands, 2014; Tsoukas, 2019). To recover a sense of wonder about the very existence of things means to direct our inquiries towards letting the phenomena of interest reveal their own *be-ing* (Heidegger, 1994). For example, rather beginning with particular features of organizations as given (e.g. structure, routines, etc.), such inquiry may investigate how organizing is *accomplished* through routines, artifacts, language, authority, etc. (Cooren et al, 2006; Feldman et al, 2016; Weick, 1979).

Questioning received images of thought. Taken-for-granted frameworks, categories, and concepts that guide inquiry constitute “images of thought”: presuppositions that take the form “everybody knows that...” (Deleuze, 2004:167). Images of thought are tacitly accepted and non-reflectively practised in academic research. However, when researchers step back from their research practices to inquire about their theories (e.g. How can we think differently about and study organizational change, strategy or routines?), they enter the realm of meta-theory, where philosophical questions gain currency (Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2003; Tsoukas and Chia, 2011). Through meta-theoretical – philosophical – questioning, received images of thought (and their associated concepts) come to the fore and are open to “problematization” (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, 2013).

Enabling new images of thought for theory development. New conceptual distinctions enable novel theorizing to emerge. It is here that a philosophical approach to organization studies is most constructive: drawing on particular philosophical resources, alternative or more refined theoretical distinctions may be drawn, new theories suggested, and new ways of conducting research and evaluating knowledge claims advanced. Philosophical inquiry can thereby have a “genuinely originative and constructive [...] function” (Geuss, 2017: 11), as the examples of process philosophy, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and pragmatism have demonstrated, by providing organizational researchers with new ways of thinking. Process philosophy, for instance, furnishes a new image of thought – change is immanent – and so helps researchers to approach the experience of ongoing change in organizations, resulting in more sophisticated theorizing (Helin et al., 2014; Hernes, 2014; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Langley et al., 2013; Langley and Tsoukas, 2017). Similarly, phenomenology (and the practice-based perspective it has partly inspired – Hui, Schatzki, and Shove, 2017; Nicolini, 2013; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2015; Schatzki, 2002, 2005), seeking to overcome the mind-body and agent-world dualisms, provides another image – entwinement, absorption – that enables us to better understand

skillful action (Sandberg et al., 2017), sensemaking (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2020), competence (Sandberg 2000, Sandberg and Pinnington, 2009); mindfulness (Kudesia, 2019); strategy (Chia and Holt, 2006, 2015; Nayak, Chia and Canales, 2019), reflection-in-action (Yanow and Tsoukas, 2009); organizational knowledge (Hadjimichael and Tsoukas, 2019; Tsoukas, 2009), time (Bakken, Holt, & Zundel, 2013), and so on.

In a similar spirit, several other philosophical traditions and works have enabled the development of new theory in the field, including (to name but a few): a Wittgensteinian perspective on strategizing (Mantere, 2015) and organizational culture (Fayard, 2017); pragmatist explorations of organizations (Cohen, 2007; Dionysiou and Tsoukas, 2013; Lorino, 2018; Simpson, 2009); hermeneutical, narrative and discursive perspectives on organizational life (Cooren, 2007; Czarniawska, 1997; Grant et al., 2004; Morgan, 1997); a “realist” reconceptualization of entrepreneurial opportunities (Ramoglou and Tsang, 2016); practice-based approaches to organizing, strategy and theorizing (Nicolini, 2013; Gherardi, 2006; Golsorkhi et al, 2015; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011); philosophically informed institutional approaches to organizations (Greenwood et al, 2017; Meyer, 2008; Suddaby, 2015;); ordinary-language philosophy for understanding organizational mind (Weick and Roberts, 1993); virtue ethics, practical wisdom, and judgment (Akrivou and Sisson, 2016; Moore, 2018; Tsoukas, 2018; Mackay et al, 2014); discourse ethics (Scherer and Patzer, 2011; Reinecke and Ansari, 2015); aesthetics (Strati, 2019); poststructuralist, postmodern and feminist studies (Linstead, 2004; Fotaki and Harding, 2017); new approaches to theorizing (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011, 2013; Suddaby, Hardy and Huy, 2011; Thompson, 2011; Tsoukas, 2017); speculative realism and the Anthropocene (Campbell, McHugh, and Ennis, 2019); digital media theory (Beverungen, Beyes and Conrad, 2019), and so on.

Studies like these highlight that articulating and problematizing conceptual categories and frameworks through philosophical questioning, enables scholars to generate new modes of theorizing, make fresh distinctions, create new concepts, and open up originative inquiry spaces that lead to the development of novel and impactful theories.

Submissions to the Special Issue

The aim of this Special Issue is to consolidate and further develop ongoing efforts to advance a philosophical approach to organization studies. The aim is *not* to contribute to philosophy itself, but to advance *a more philosophically oriented organization studies* that will pursue both critique and new conceptual advancements in the field.

We invite papers from researchers who, drawing from any strand of philosophy, wish to critique and/or further develop current understandings about any organizational topic or type of theorizing in the field. The intention is for the Special Issue to be as broad as possible, not to favour any particular philosophical perspective or theme. Moreover, we welcome conceptual and empirical contributions.

Authors interested in submitting a paper to the Special Issue are encouraged to focus on the following questions (the list is indicative):

- What new ontological distinctions and frameworks do we need to overcome long-held dualisms, such as individual vs. collective, mind vs. body, values vs. science, cognition vs. emotion, social vs. material, agency vs. structure, ethics vs. explanation, etc.? How might non-dualist ways of thinking assist us in the development of new theories for the study of particular organizational phenomena?
- How could well-known organizational phenomena, such as organizational change, routines, sensemaking, decision making, leadership, power, work, digitization and Artificial Intelligence, risk, communication, knowledge and learning, strategy, identity, time, diversity, etc. be studied afresh through particular philosophical perspectives? What do organizations look like if seen through a pragmatist, phenomenological, Wittgensteinian, Kantian, Aristotelian, post-modern, etc. lens?
- What kind of science is organization studies? What should it try to accomplish? What types of explanation or understanding work best, for what purposes? What are different conceptions of generalizability and how are they best achieved in organization studies? How should the coherent study of singularity/particularity be accomplished? How should rationality and causality be viewed in the study of organizational phenomena? How are space and time, the body, ethics, aesthetics, and gender related to knowledge? What are the implications of particular philosophical perspectives for how organizational empirical research should be conducted?
- How is actionable knowledge to be advanced in the field? What makes organizational knowledge truthful? What makes knowledge about organizations practical? How is knowledge in organizations related to knowledge about organizations? How is theory related to practice? How is practical reasoning exercised in organizations? How is agency enacted? What are the pedagogical implications of what types of knowledge about organizations?
- Following Whitehead's suggestion that "the task of philosophy is to recover the totality obscured by the selection", how can philosophical approaches and ideas help transcend simplistic means-end causalities, disciplinary silos, or disjointed answers to bigger problems?
- How can philosophical considerations help address or frame grand challenges for organization studies, such as climate change, inequality, the proliferation of technology, machine learning, robotics, biotechnology and the future of work and organizing and the possibility of an 'authentic' life, or the organizational influences on truth and democracy in public discourse? What is the role and responsibility of the academy in relation to these challenges?

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 October 15th and October 31st 2021.**

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Guest Editors

Haridimos Tsoukas (www.htsoukas.com) is the Columbia Ship Management Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Cyprus and a Distinguished Research Environment Professor of Organization Studies at Warwick Business School. He is an Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney and at Queensland University. Former Editor-in-Chief of *Organization Studies* and co-founder (with Ann Langley) of the annual International Symposium on Process Organization Studies. He has co-edited several volumes published in the OUP Series “Perspectives on Process Organization Studies”, the *Sage Handbook of Process Organization Studies* (with Ann Langley, Sage, 2017) and the Special Issue of the *Academy of Management Journal* on “Process studies of change in organization and management: Unveiling temporality, activity and flow” (56/1, 2013) (with Ann Langley, Clive Smallman, and Andrew Van de Ven). Author of *Complex Knowledge* and *Philosophical Organization Theory*, both published by Oxford University Press.

Jörgen Sandberg (<https://business.uq.edu.au/profile/155/jorgen-sandberg>) is Professor in Management and Organization in the University of Queensland Business School, Australia, and Distinguished Research Environment Professor in Organization Studies at the Warwick Business School, the UK. He is Co-Lead of Practice and Process Studies, a multi-disciplinary research group within UQ Business School. He has published extensively in top-tier journals, including *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of Organization Behavior*, *Harvard Business Review* and *Organization Studies*. He has also written several books and co-edited volumes including *Skillful performance: Enacting capabilities, knowledge, competence and expertise in organizations* (with Rouleau, Langley and Tsoukas, Oxford University Press, 2017), *Constructing research questions: doing interesting research* (with Alvesson, Sage, 2013), *Managing understanding in organizations* (with Targama, Sage, 2007), and *Understanding the research process: conventional and alternative metaphors* (with Alvesson, Sage, 2020).

Anne-Laure Fayard (<https://engineering.nyu.edu/faculty/anne-laure-fayard>) is Associate Professor in Management in the Department of Technology Management and Innovation and Associate Professor in Innovation, Design and Organization Studies in the Department of Technology, Culture and Society at NYU Tandon School of Engineering. She also is an affiliated faculty with the Department of Management and Organizations with NYU Stern School of Business. She has published in leading journals such as *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Organization Science*, *Information System Research*, *Harvard Business Review* and *Organization Studies*. She has co-edited a forthcoming volume, *The Routledge Companion to Organizational Anthropology* (with Raza Mir) and co-authored a book, *The*

Power of Writing in Organizations (with Anca Metiu). She is a member of the editorial board for the *Journal of Organizational Design*.

Mike Zundel (<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/management/staff/mike-zundel/>) is Professor and Associate Dean, Faculty, at the University of Liverpool Management School. He is also an Otto Moensted Visiting Professor Copenhagen Business School. Mike is a Senior Editor for *Organization Studies*, and his work covers questions of strategy, learning, and increasingly media studies and fiction. He currently co-edits a special issue on ‘rationality’ for *Academy of Management Learning and Education* and, with Robin Holt, he is about to publish a monograph on strategy.