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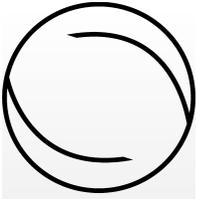
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Editorial

Organization Studies on the Look-out? Being Read, Being Listened To

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Publishing is an industry, and a very competitive one. Today more than ever, academic journals strive to be recognized as the most influential in their area, and this is shaped by somewhat strange, and often perverse, measures such as citation indexes and impact factors. *Organization Studies* plays this game: to be read, to spread the ideas expressed in the articles we publish; as well as to broaden the scope of our readership and to make sure that the most influential scholars and institutions see the journal as a key player and a necessary outlet for great research.

Clearly, there is a connection between the content and the style of a journal and its reputation within the academic community. More particularly, *Organization Studies* has one major peculiarity compared to other journals in the field. It is still known as deeply embedded in the EGOS community and its underlying values. People, especially newcomers, frequently ask whether they need to be EGOS members in order to be 'allowed' to submit a paper to the journal. This is of utmost importance as EGOS is still known as both an open and a closed 'polity'. Open, because members vote, give opinions, share ideas, go to the general assembly at each conference and discuss ideas for the common good etc. Closed, because being an *Egosian* still means being infused with certain values that other fragments of academia do not necessarily share: those values are close to reinforcing the *diverse diversities* shaping the very academic community, striving to ignore knowledge silos, keeping strong local-European and ethical roots while reinforcing the global side of the journal¹. In that sense, the relationships that *Organization Studies* has had with the North American community have never been simple. They are even still a bit unclear. We both strive to get North American scholars involved in OS, yet we sometimes tend to think that our traditions and backgrounds are better informed and less ignorant of the roots of social sciences. This has obviously changed over time, and the fact that North American colleagues are now much more involved in the running of the journal is clearly symptomatic of its 'globalization' as it retains its scientific roots and traditions. The recent move toward North American visions and colleagues is a good sign both of the influence of the journal and of its actual cultural and scientific openness. It is also important to develop closer connections with other academic communities such as those existing in Asia, Latin America and Africa. The challenge of incorporating such different strands of culture, experiences, and knowledge is an enormous endeavour for OS. It is definitely worth trying, though. Now that the journal is recognized as one of the 12 most influential journals in the field², we need to be careful that

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its progressive integration into the inner circle of top tier outlets does not result in amnesia regarding our traditions and 'communitarian' style, as well as often neglected 'academic' regions of the world.

This is easier said than done. Now that a new editorial leading team is taking over for 5 years, it is time to offer our vision of what role this journal could play in the future. This is not a theoretical essay. More modestly, this statement aims to give an idea to our readers of how we see the role of a journal like OS today, so as to encourage submissions in line with its very identity. Two ideas are guiding this statement: (1) Building on the shoulders of giants, and (2) Being read, being listened.

Building on the Shoulders of Giants

Organization Studies has not suddenly become an ecumenical journal, encompassing willingly any kind of approach and orientation, integrating all traditions and cultures, as long as it provides citations.... Not at all. OS has been deeply influenced, from its inception, by a specific social science orientation, more particularly by mid Twentieth Century political sociology approaches to organizations and their linkages to wider societal arrangements. This means in particular that it is a journal always at the forefront of inter-disciplinary debates. OS papers are supposed to deepen our understanding of the complexity of organizations as social and political objects, through the mobilization of wider social sciences' agendas and knowledge. This positioning is both a great advantage and a problem, because the organization and management field is more and more marked both by a thematic fragmentation and an ongoing over specialization of scholarship, as well as by a dual emphasis on organizations as hyper rational instruments OR as sets of discourses and ongoing processes (the administrative and the post-modernist 'chic'). As a result, being interdisciplinary proves to be more and more difficult because it supposes extremely broad sets of knowledge, as well as the harnessing of diverse methods and epistemologies.

We believe that an important way to meet the challenge of this growing diversity, while being true to the identity of EGOS and OS, is to maintain an emphasis on key European social scientific traditions and ideas of the recent past (the 'Giants'). To provide such direction, we draw on Nisbet's (1966) five unit ideas that comprise the sociological tradition to suggest some broad organizational thematics that we believe provide useful focal points for OS scholarship:

- (1) how organizations function as **communitarian politics** (special types of human relationships marked by morality, virtue, friendship) or '**societal**' **polities** (marked by high degrees of individualism, impersonality, proceeding from 'volition' or sheer 'interest') to take the categories specified by Tönnies;
- (2) the varied nature of organizational **systems of authority** (seeing the different faces of power as the central tenet of organizational dynamics and regimes of governance);
- (3) organizational **modes of status and stratification generation** (seeing organizations as systems in which differentiation, hierarchization and discontinuity are constantly contested and legitimized as the same time; as

well as, pace Stinchcombe, how organizations contribute to as well as shape broader societal stratification dynamics);

- (4) organizations and organizational elements as **sacred units** (seeing organizations as not only specific bundles of beliefs but as, in a Durkheimian way, a spiritual way of multiplying the relations between individuals to make them more intimate with one another, thus strengthening the web of society); or
- (5) organizations as **regimes of alienation** (organizations being seen critically as modern symptoms of the deterioration of the nobility and greatness of man to take Tocquevillean views; and of the radical dissociation of the self into actor and thing--a subject striving to shape its fate and an object manipulated and exploited by others)

Such broad thematics are not proposed merely for the sake of paying tribute to some classics³. The OS tradition itself requires us to be reflective about organizations and understand organizational life as situated in fundamental historical processes that have given rise to modern organizational forms. These contemporary historical processes include *individualization* (the process of separation of individuals from communal and patriarchal ties in general), *abstraction* (the process of technologization of thoughts and behaviours as well as the abstraction of values which are removed from particular settings), and *generalization*. As Nisbet pointed out, organizations come to be seen as core to societies when the tendency to think in terms of the 'working class', 'the poor', the capitalists, is replaced by thinking in terms of voters, bureaucracy, citizenry and so forth.

One may ask whether it is true that OS has lost part of its original connections with Political Theory and Political Sociology, in particular through the post-modernist turn of the 1990s. At first glance, papers published in OS over the last 5 years are mostly related to three major traditions: (1) the critical/postmodernist/post-Foucauldian critical-discursive tradition; (2) the 'mainstream' management and 'endless-seeking-for-statistical-correlation-kind-of-papers'⁴ and (3) the emergence of what we may call 'sub-fields', like strategy-as-practice, neo-institutionalist approaches, business systems approaches among others. This enormous amount of research is somewhat 'dizzying', as we feel that it is more and more difficult to find a clear understanding (not the *best* way of understanding) of how organizations are evolving today, how their relationships to the 'world' are transformed by which conditions, and how organizational people live their private and public destinies in these enormous/amorphous and incredibly complicated contemporary polities. It is obviously a sign of times: more complexity, many more upheavals and movements in the organizational world, increasing numbers of new contenders and competitive constituencies, and new profiles of risks and uncertainties - all that means probably that the production of knowledge might require a variety of approaches and forms of specialization. It is not necessarily a problem, as long as journals serve as 'look-outs' and are capable of giving some directions about topics of interest which are crucial for the organizational world and the people who inhabit it.

For our part, we think that it is of utmost importance that *Organization Studies* lead the way by re-investigating the links existing between organizations, policies and polities. In other words, how organizations, whatever their political

configurations (bureaucracies, post bureaucracies, collegial organizations, collectivist organizations) and their activities (business firms, schools, government agencies, social movements etc) are interpenetrated with society and generate specific patterns of how we live in societies, as well as how those societies are actually governed and shaped. Seeing organizations as social and political constructs, as political communities vested with the power of building a sustainable social fabric, in particular in contexts where democracy, public institutions or policy-making instruments do not exist, is of utmost importance in our view. While some neoinstitutional and critical research has attended to such issues, we believe that a more sustained engagement with such 'big' questions might provide a useful focal point for more cosmopolitan and engaged conversations across different research communities. Thus, we believe that *Organization Studies* can contribute to this [re]investigation and reengagement with big questions through leading an 'academic movement' striving to *bring society back to center stage*, enriching our conceptions of politics and societal struggles. We believe that this will not only enable rich inter-disciplinary engagements across the domains of sociology, psychology, anthropology, history and political science, but also enable us to provide critical reflections of and more grounded alternatives to banal materialist and instrumental conceptualizations of organization on the one hand, or 'disembodied' versions of social structure and organization on the other.

Being Read, Being Listened To

Put simply, we believe that *Organization Studies* should be seen more clearly as the leading journal in the production of 'relevant' knowledge that enhances our understanding of how organizations shape and are shaped by contemporary societies, and can decidedly not be reduced to *ad hoc* managerial artefacts and processes (however business relevant they might seem to be). Organizational knowledge has clear limits and, in particular, tends to minimize the cardinal importance of both micro narratives 'making History', and of macro structures shaping the conditions of History. Because micro narratives are 'factual' stories, they tell about 'facts' happening to people; they are not just subjective interpretations of personal experiences. Because macro structures are made of social movements, ideologies and cultural structures, they push scholars to engage with contemporary social theory and to [re]explore broad questions about social change, policy formation, political regimes, structures of power and authority, straddling diverse audiences in social sciences.

In short, we do not think that OS has a bright future if it tries to imitate or to have similar editorial policies as some other journals in the field. Obviously, all journals can work to convince potentially sceptical audiences that organization and management studies are key fields of knowledge. We think that scholars in management and organization and the journals in which they publish should cease to constantly fragment the field by reinventing and creating new journals, new chapels, and supposed new themes of investigation, so as to have their spot in the sun, whatever this hyper-competition produces in terms of knowledge and blurring of the foundations of the field. We are not naïve: we know that it is a

feature of all communities to see different sub-groups striving to establish their own chapel and to convince people that it is better than the neighbouring chapel. The fertility of such fragmentation is evident, as long as those chapels are not exclusively focused on building academic micro-hegemonies. As a result, we believe that journals need to be much clearer about what work they aim to publish. We have to define our conceptual boundaries much more clearly, beyond the willingness to foster interdisciplinary debates and conversations.

OS is not a chapel, but can be a shelter for many different chapels whose leaders and members want to talk and learn from other chapels instead of constantly laying into other chapels' tooth and nail in useless intramural bickering which does not promote scientific evolution. We sometimes tend to dismiss and denounce rather than truly debate the positions of others. This is a problem already picked up by social scientists like Bourdieu who has suggested that maybe this is why some social analysts who attain public visibility as 'intellectuals' are tempted to drift out of science to arenas where substantial disagreement is more easily tolerated (see also Best 2004). Is this because, after all, there is an actual ideological homogeneity among organizational scholars which discourages dissent and disagreement, while at the same time blurring the line between our beliefs and what we observe as researchers?

This simultaneous heterogeneity of chapels and homogeneity of beliefs and principles has consequences. First, it explains why our contribution to public debate on business and social issues is still weak: people inside as well as outside the world of organizational scholarship feel that they already know what we are going to say. Our way of sorting out the famous 'managerial implications' is often distressing as they are either incredibly predictable or simply naive.

We think that the strength of organization research is in our data: we shall be heard and respected when people find their own stories in our findings. And when our theoretical confrontations help us to make more interesting claims, accepting the legitimacy of alternative points of view is more easily and genuinely achieved, beyond the usual academic courtesy. We are not arguing that producing knowledge is a matter of popularity contests. We simply believe that if we want to have greater influence upon the larger society, we have to write as if the audience was larger than the usual forums where we talk to each other. We need to do this without sacrificing academic rigor and methodological soundness, and without poaching on so-called 'business oriented' journals' territories.

Relatedly, and this is not merely a detail, we think that OS should care more about the implications of the work we publish for societal and civic purposes. Put differently, answering the question 'why don't they listen to us?' (Best 2004) is crucial, because if we want our journal to be strong, we must care about our voices being heard. Not only by the business community, of course. If the journal and its representatives keep on asserting that it is based on strong [humanist] values, we must publish work which enables us to trigger debates about what is good and desirable in [organizational] life: the communal conception of EGOS should, therefore, be more clearly related to a communal vision of organizational societies that the journal could bring to the fore. Without being another *Organization*, or another *Social Forces*, being the journal of organizations and societies, of organizations *within* societies.

In the same vein, we do have numerous proposals and ideas for commissioning special issues and for using the OS workshop in order to foster this communal and socio-political vision of organizations and of *Organization Studies* as an interesting journal for scholars and public debates of topical relevance. Special issues in particular should be connected to this editorial signature, because they give the statement its legitimacy and they have to therefore be chosen and devised carefully. They help the journal to play its role of 'looking out', and of direction giver. Our future OS workshops will also highlight particular visions of how organizations can play their social and political role, beyond economic performance and value-adding processes - realizing Harry Eckstein's idea of producing *political performance* (1969).

Running the Journal Today

Organization Studies is soon going to leave the old world of handmade reviewing processes and enter now the world of online submission systems, thanks to the terrific job made over the last months by SAGE and Sophia Tzagaraki. Someone told one of us that it was a sign that *Organization Studies* was leaving its close connections with the people, its 'old fashioned but empathic style' and was becoming a cold manufactured product like others in the field. We think that we can keep the same relational quality with our authors and reviewers while improving the swiftness of the reviewing process. We shall keep personal relationships with our authors and reviewers, while leaving the 'unproductive' sides of the process to the machine...that is the simple objective of this move. A move also rendered necessary by the increasing number of submissions we get each year (see Table 1 and Figure 1): the price of fame and of progress.

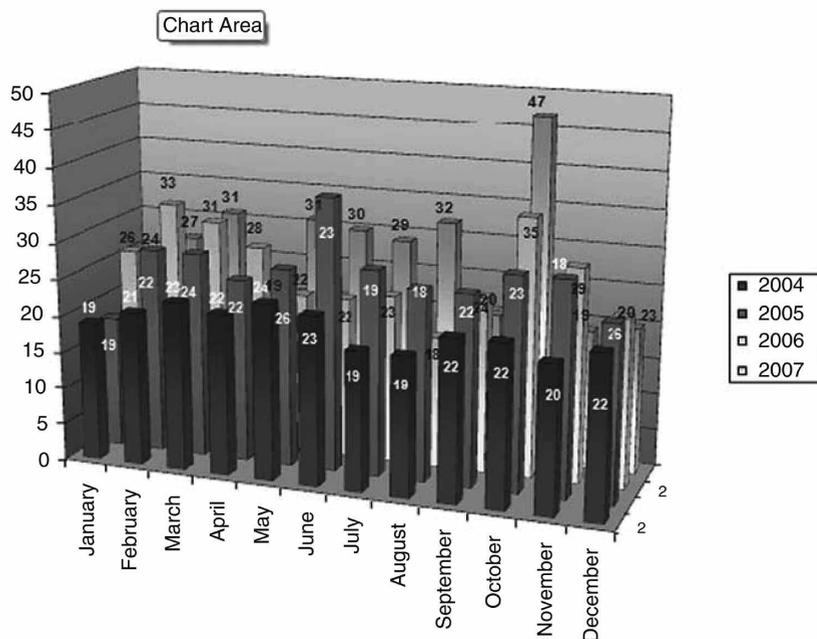
Table 1. Yearly submissions since 2004

	2004	2005	2006	2007
January	19	18	26	24
February	21	28	33	27
March	23	28	31	31
April	22	25	28	19
May	24	27	22	31
June	23	37	22	30
July	19	28	23	29
August	19	26	18	32
September	22	26	24	20
October	22	29	35	47
November	20	29	29	19
December	22	24	23	20
	256	325	314	329

This shall be realized thanks to an enthusiastic team of Senior Editors: some have joined the boat in early September and will do their best to both keep the journal in its traditional 'communal' tracks while continuing the professionalization achieved over the last five years by the team led by Haridimos Tsoukas. Welcome to Bobby Banerjee, Rossella Cappetta, Elizabeth George, Frank den

Hond, Candace Jones, Anca Metiu, Carl Rhodes, Graham Sewell, and John Weeks. Other experienced Senior Editors are staying with us for some more years and we shall benefit greatly from their wisdom and thoughtfulness: thanks to Frank Barrett, Paul Carlile, Catherine Casey, Roger Dunbar, Georg Von Krogh, Ann Langley, William McKinley, Catherine Paradeise, Georges Romme, Yehouda Shenhav, Jacky Swan and Richard Whittington. This senior editorial team will be led with considerable dedication by us, Editor-in-Chief David Courpasson and co-editors David Arellano-Gault, Andrew Brown, and Michael Lounsbury. We hope to be equal to the task.

Figure 1.
Submissions by month



Welcoming new members is delightful. Acknowledging outgoing members is another type of exercise. The previous Editor in Chief, Haridimos Tsoukas; deserves special recognition together with Cynthia Hardy and Raghu Garud, for the reputation the journal developed under his leadership. They built on the excellent foundation that several outstanding editors, David Wilson, Arndt Sorge, John Child, Stewart Clegg, David Hickson, established for years now for publishing creative and 'different' papers. Organization Studies' vitality also comes from talented and generous colleagues having served as Senior Editors for a long time, and stepping down now : Marie Laure Djelic, Richard Nielsen, Nelson Phillips, Kathleen Sutcliffe, Richard Whitley. Thanks to all of them for the tradition of excellence that they contributed to maintain and develop.

Of course, there is no journal without good and thoughtful reviewers. This is probably the most precious resource in an academic world increasing its productivity on an exponential basis. Journals are fighting to get the best reviewers to work for them! We are confident that both experienced reviewers and the next

generation of reviewers, young scholars and PhD students, are going to help us to make the publishing process a rewarding experience (Homburg 2003), beyond a new line that is written in the resumé. Because our submissions have increased and will keep on increasing with the new online submission system, we have expanded our editorial review board so that we can continue to provide timely reviews (an average of 16.1 weeks turnaround), without overburdening members of our board. We are delighted to welcome to our editorial review board new colleagues who have all a large experience as outstanding reviewers and/or represent the new generation of scholars and reviewers. Thanks to Guido Möllering, Kim Boal and Susan Ainsworth for dealing brilliantly with the important book reviews section: there is no journal striving to get heard without enhancing debates and controversies around books, a unique outlet for developing very significant work and making long term strides in the field of social sciences. Susan Ainsworth is stepping down after three years of dedication to this section. Thanks to all of them.

We are pleased to announce several new special issues for *Organization Studies*. Two new special issues are accepting manuscripts in 2009: Marianna Fotaki, Larry Hirschhorn, Susan Long, and Howard S. Schwartz with a Special Issue on 'Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Organizations' and Nils Brunsson, Andreas Rasche, and David Seidl with a Special Issue on 'The Dynamics of Standardization'.

We are also pleased to announce that the OS workshop will continue, still as a setting where participants explore new ideas, new connections with other disciplines. For logistical reasons, the next workshop is going to take place in 2010. The call for papers shall be published in a forthcoming issue, early 2009.

All those constituencies are shaping what Durkheim refers to as a community: social entities which get their strength and durability from the feeling of belonging to each other, from the certainty that others will do their best to help as I would do my best if I were in a similar situation. This is not a naïve and romantic dream, but a necessity, for hundreds and hundreds of scholars, to build up the best possible journals to help their 'science' to be heard and well esteemed.

Notes

- 1 See Tsoukas, H., Garud, R. And C. Hardy (2001)
- 2 See the 2007 ISI impact factor of 2.042
- 3 Although we think that organization scholars should pay much more attention to the 'classics' beyond demonstrating some kind of erudite perspective on contemporary issues...
- 4 As one colleague said to one of us at the last EGOS conference in Amsterdam, July 2008.

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