



Organization Studies

Special Issue on

New Sites/Sights: Exploring the White Spaces of Organization

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Whatever happened to 'organization'? Or, to be more precise, whatever happened to organization studies? New sites and sights of organization are emerging in the post-industrial landscape that pose complex epistemological and ontological questions to the discipline of organization studies. Consider the airport for example, or the system of streets and their denizens in metropolitan cities, or shopping malls, flash-mobs, industrial wastelands, funfairs, theme-parks, and online role playing games. A combination of sites and sights, these organizations seem to exist in multiple dimensions of space and time. They are in themselves agents of temporality and spatiality. Recent developments in urban theory (Amin & Thrift, 2002) and the 'spatial turn' in the social sciences more broadly (Massey, 2004; Thrift, 2007; Warf & Arias, 2008) invite us to think of these sites as spatially and temporally active – variously theorised as 'networked', 'distributed', 'transductive', 'performative' and 'virtual'. It is in this sense that these kinds of organizations are perhaps best thought and researched as *both* 'sites' of contemporary organizing and the product of a new 'in-sight' developed by novel and experimental methodological practice in the social sciences (Thompson, 2008).

These new organizational sites/sights might stretch the boundaries of the discipline beyond what is currently recognized as 'organization studies'. Without doubt they pose questions regarding the relationship between an assumed 'organization studies' and other disciplines in the social sciences that study organizational forms – urban planning, online sociology, criminology, heterodox economics, etc. As the field of organization studies finds itself searching for its own identity amidst claims of irrelevance and incommensurability, the organizational terrain is becoming evermore complex. If a healthy discipline is one that is able to question its own foundations and conditions of possibility, this inter- and post-disciplinary suggested by new sites/sights perhaps offers a fertile ground for growth and regeneration.

We therefore wish to invite papers that engage with some of the phenomena outlined above. This may be through a study of emerging lines of demarcation and complex territorialities in work organization, of 'zones' that transpire and shape-shift between and betwixt fields of study, or of the disdained and ignored *potentials* of organization studies. Rather than calling for papers on the marginalized issues of organization studies, a position that by now has become well-visited, we wish to call attention to the spaces that fall neither in what is established as the centre and periphery, the domestic and foreign, etc., but in those strange times and places of organizing that happens outside of clear institutional demarcations. This is also a call for engagements that work from the outside in (from the perspective of organization studies), i.e. to invite those geographers, urban sociologists, games researchers, and media theorists who are, in effect, already doing organization studies in everything but name. As such this call fits the aim

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of *Organization Studies* to broaden the study of organization when it comes to audiences, approaches, and fellow travellers.

Examples of areas that could be explored include:

- ‘Non-places’ (as Augé (1995) calls them), those spaces of transition and movement that define so much of modern commercial life: the airport, the roadside gas-station, the hotel and the motel, the parking lot, the café with free Wi-Fi where weary consultants check up on their mails. These have organizational importance but have thus far mainly been studied by researchers in geography and urban studies (see e.g. Clarke et al. 2009, Stewart 2007).
- Forgotten and abandoned sites: Ghost-towns, dead malls, regions in decline, depopulated rural areas, companies dying slowly, the sidewalk where panhandlers are systematically ignored, the indescribable boredom of the failed office park. In rural studies (Amato 1993, Kunstler 1994), urban sociology (Duneier 2000, Venkatesh 2009) and in anthropology (see e.g. Stewart 1996) we have seen numerous engagements with such matters, but these have rarely had the impact they deserve on organization theory.
- Novel and as-of-yet under-theorized organizational forms and engagements: Online games such as World of Warcraft and COD: Modern Warfare 2, the redefinition of the urban space by parkour and skateboarding, Facebook, Twitter and social media. Cultural studies (Wark 2007, Highmore 2009), game studies (Bogost 2007, Mäyrä 2008), media theory (Burgess & Green 2009), sociology (Atkinson & Young 2008, Rojas 2007) and even philosophy (Wittkower 2010) have all already engaged with these new organizational phenomena and organization studies has the potential to be enriched by elaboration of this work.

This special issue thus wants to elicit a new kind of empiricism by inviting potential contributors to propose ways of exploring the ‘white spaces’ of organizing: those regions that, at least in our field, are currently unmapped, unplanned, or ignored – residing in the absence and interstices of representation. For example, recent developments in the social sciences and humanities associated with what Patricia Clough (2007) has called the ‘affective turn’ encourage us to extend the parameters of organization in ways that allow us to map organizations according to associations of ‘emotional binding’ or intensities of ‘affect’. We are interested in the organizational properties of these often overlooked sites of organization, yet we are also keen to explore the relations they form with one another and with the more conventional forms of administrative science and formal organization.

In short, we seek to attract papers that are interested in new sights/sites of organization where the play of absence/presence is generative of complex twists and folds. We are not interested, however, in adding to the collection of “organization and ... (fill in the latest intellectual fad or theorist)”. Instead we invite scholars to consider the ways in which new sites/sight of organization may re-pose some of the traditional problems of social scientific enquiry: economic co-operation, societal distribution of wealth, social despair and exclusion, and so on. We also wish to invite people to challenge the disciplinary structure of organization studies, and show how the questions we ask and the fields in which we ask them can be fruitfully extended and multiplied. In this context, between and betwixt, we invite papers that, for example:

- Study spaces/events normally not seen as organizations but which have organizational properties associated with affective bonding, emotional sociality, temporary associations, and passionate bindings within which violent energies might fester and conflagrate.
- Open up novel empirical fields in the ‘badlands’, wastelands and borderlands of organization studies. These could include: the media-spectacle, ‘simulated’ communities, rural desolation, corporate museums, and ‘non-places’.
- Explore the ways in which ‘normality’ is constructed in organization studies, and how the ‘abnormal’ (everything which is at odds with the ideological homogeneity among organizational scholars) is written out of it.
- Address social topics emerging out of new sites/sights in organization that allow us to highlight social and economic inequalities, exploring new forms of exclusion and marginalization, inquiring into the kind of social passions and unrest that exists in forgotten organizational spaces.

- Bring to the fore (almost) invisible groups in organization studies, such as children, the queer, people defined by colour, the poor, and the super-rich.
- Explore the interfaces and crossing points between organization studies and 'nearby' fields which pay particular attention to emerging societal phenomena, such as urban and rural studies, criminology, social anthropology, et cetera.

Submissions

Please submit papers as email attachments (MicrosoftWord files only) to the Editorial Office osofficer@gmail.com, indicating in the e-mail the title of the Special Issue. Please prepare manuscripts according to the guidelines shown at www.egosnet.org). All papers will be double-blindly reviewed following the journal's normal review process and criteria. Any papers which may be accepted but will not be included in the Special Issue will be published in an ordinary issue at a later point in time. For further information please contact any of the Guest Editors for this Special Issue: Damian O'Doherty@mbs.ac.uk; alfrehn@mac.com; C.De-Cock@swansea.ac.uk; Karen.Ashcraft@Colorado.EDU.

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