

# ORGANIZATION STUDIES

## Call for Papers for a Special Issue on **Spirituality, Symbolism and Storytelling**

### **Guest Editors:**

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**Deadline for paper submissions: November 30, 2016**

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### **Introduction**

The global crises of the past decade – economic, financial, food, energy, health, migration, security, and trust in the political systems – have called into question extant institutional and organizational configurations. These crises have also exposed the weaknesses of the dominant imaginaries underpinning such configurations and symbolic norms they come to represent. The necessity to mobilize collective abilities of organizations to pursue pathways challenging currently dominant modes of representation and meaning is more relevant than ever. The turn to ancestral visions, cultural myths and spiritual narratives, as well as to philosophy, theology and anthropology as foundation disciplines and to ethnography and storytelling as base methodologies, marks the search for new ways and approaches to re-think and re-imagine, re-write and re-examine the role of organizations, organizing and managing in society.

Different axial cultures, most profoundly Greek antiquity (Marini, 1992; Solomon, 2004), ancient Hebrew, Buddhist, Confucian (Bellah and Joas, 2012) heritages as well as native American (Julien, Wright and Zinni, 2010) and other oral traditions, have informed our worldviews in deep and lasting ways. The past carries with it a double potentiality: exemplary (positive) bearings on the present and future, as well as troubled and troubling (negative) warnings. Accounting for these traditions is particularly important given the diversity of the globalized workforce and the composition of the student body in our classrooms; and it could provide new valuable insights for organizational development, e.g. by promoting different and ‘other’ forms of leading, managing and organizing, drawing from the well of ancient wisdoms.

The objectives of this special issue are to critically and reflexively comment on these insights, with the aim to stimulate debates on how to rethink and rewrite ‘organizations’ through drawing on the spiritual, symbolic/imaginary and mythical to rediscover/devise old/new languages to think, imagine and create organizations.

At the same time we would also like to problematize the potential consequences of calls for an increased role of spirituality in management and leadership that are often heard, in terms of their harnessing and distortion for instrumental purposes (Case and Gosling, 2010), while being alert to the ensuing debate about faith in the workplace (e.g. Mittroff and Denton, 1999) or on Post-Secularism (Calhoun, Mendieta and VanAntwerpen, 2013) and searching for non-judgmental ways to engage with this important growing phenomenon (Lips-Wiersma and Mills, 2014).

Last, but not least, the turn to holistic narratives with their utopian aspirations yet all too often dystopian implications, raises once more the issue of the so-called ‘legitimacy’ of modernity

and of the conditions for a reflexive critical discourse capable to deconstruct the existing alienating institutional imaginaries (Wright et al. 2013; Komporozos-Athanasίου and Fotaki, 2015) while providing the means for enabling healing, growth, prosperity and well-being.

We seek high-quality papers that offer first and foremost theoretical contributions to organization theory (organization studies) and/or develop rigorous innovative methodologies with the aim to increase our knowledge and understanding of organizational processes and practices as well as of organizing and managing. We would give preference to cutting-edge ethnographic, anthropological, and/or historical contributions, but do not exclude any approach. Articles that critically examine both theoretically and empirically the various aspects of spirituality, imagination and symbolic activities in organizations and management are welcome.

We invite contributions on the following broad questions:

- What could be the role, function and meaning of spirituality in organizations in promoting sustainability, in explicating organizational practices, and in ethical decision-making processes?
- In which ways may past principles and ideologies of organizing and managing embedded in wisdom traditions, be meaningful for/to today's challenges (managerialism, VUCA<sup>1</sup>, precarity, institutional (in)justice,) in organizations?
- What are the spatial configurations, embodiment, expressive manifestations and symbolic representations of spirituality in/of organizing and managing?
- How can spiritual and symbolic imaginaries as expressed in stories and/or through storytelling offer alternative discourses to address new and different organizational configurations as well as critical assessments on the themes of performance, survival and legitimacy in present-day organizations?

## Submissions

Please submit papers through the journal's online submission system, SAGE track at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies>, create your user account (if you have not done so already), and for "Manuscript Type" please choose the corresponding Special Issue. All papers that enter the reviewing process will be double-blind reviewed following the journal's normal review process and criteria.

You will be able to submit your paper for this Special Issue **between November 1 and 30, 2016**. Because of the intervening holidays, initial editorial decisions will be relayed to author(s) by January 30, 2017. Please note that participation in the workshop is highly recommended (but not a prerequisite) if you intend to submit a paper to the Special Issue.

## Administrative support and general queries

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<sup>1</sup> Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity.

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