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Special issue Call for Papers:

Thinking Organization Studies from the Standpoint of the Reality of its Object of Study

Guest editors

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Background

Organization Studies (OS) has developed into a space for research and education without there being a consensus on its definition or disciplinary boundaries. One of the few agreements is that since its inception, OS has had interdisciplinarity as its hallmark: the various disciplines of the Social and Human Sciences share an interest in studying organizations and organizational processes. Faria (2014) points out that “disciplinary studies (sociology of organizations, organizational psychology, industrial economics, organizational management, etc.) tend to address very particular aspects of the phenomenon” (p. 58). The potential of OS lies precisely in producing knowledge about the organizational reality in an ongoing interdisciplinary dialogue.

Beyond this agreement, all attempts to define OS are partial readings that generally lean towards generality and superficiality. For example, OS has been defined as “a discourse constituted by a matrix of texts, theories, concepts, practices, and institutional forms and arrangements, [...] a discursive space linked to the signifier of organizations [...] or] a capacity to talk about organizations [...] authoritatively” (Westwood & Clegg, 2003, p. 1). Another definition suggests that OS is “a sustained analysis of the generic organisational impulses shaping contemporary modes of analysis, codes of behaviour, social mannerisms, dress, gestures, postures, rules of law, disciplines of knowledge and so on” (Chia, 2003, p. 98). And the well-known proposition by Nord *et al.* (1996) states that “[i]n fact, we conceptualized organization studies as a series of multiple, overlapping conversations that reflect, reproduce, and refute earlier conversations.” (p. 1)

From this lack of precision or clear-cut disciplinary boundaries, the inference arises that OS encompasses many topics regardless of epistemological position or perspective. One might irreverently say that OS is anything –it is everything– and, therefore, might as well be nothing. However, there are several proposals that seek to delimit the field and, thus, differentiate it from a broad and ambiguous view. Such efforts always start by defining OS from the standpoint of its object of study: organizations. For example, Ramírez-Martínez *et al.* (2011), among other authors, assert that OS attempts “to explain the complexity [...] of the organizational phenomenon in its wide diversity” (p. 23). Faria (2014), in turn, claims that OS should “consider organizations as an object of research in its materiality” (p. 58).

One issue on which there is no consensus is the relation between OS, administration, and management. It is a historical controversy, especially considering that OS is genetically related to administration in its origins. In recent decades, under the rule of managerialism, there has been a growing trend to consider OS subordinate to management. A case in point is the term “Management and Organization Studies,” repeatedly found in different academic spaces. Under this approach, the object of study of OS is management—in line with the object of study of managerialism—and, accordingly, the research aims to improve management (either in the pragmatic sense of efficiency or in the sense of humanizing it). Such a narrow delimitation of OS leaves out of the scope of the field both organizations and organizational processes unrelated to management, as well as the activities that control productivity and social groups.

We are presented with an invitation to reflect on and problematize the aspects of our field of inquiry that are either too generic or overly specific. To this end, we must begin by problematizing the very sense of *organization*. As an everyday word, *organization* has a generic meaning with a positive connotation. In OS, it is no different. Take, for example, the moral dimension of *good* that Barnard (1971) attributes to the organization when leaders manage to have the persons in their team communicate with each other and be willing to contribute action to accomplish a common purpose in which they believe. *Organization* also has a more specific meaning as synonymous with *formal organization* or, more specifically, with *company*. Additionally, other meanings refer to different types of social spaces and activities.

As a consequence of not thinking OS from the standpoint of its object of study, not considering *organization* drawing on its manifest forms, and not aiming at the alignment of theory and the reality to be depicted, we end up making up realities, as remarked by Zemelman (2005). The challenge we present in this new special issue on OS is inspired by Zemelman’s (2005) proposition on epistemic thinking: to theorize OS from the standpoint of the socio-historical reality of organizations and organizational processes situated in specific realities. Therefore, this is also an invitation to not remain trapped in or conditioned by concepts we take from texts with no discussion or reflection as if reality were homogeneous across different countries and socio-historical contexts. We must avoid the imposition of methodological armors that pigeonhole OS into specific theoretical models or preconceived methodological processes. This is, therefore, an opportunity to explore categories as content hubs or silos; to dare to pose problems stepping out of the comfort of the mechanical reproduction of legitimized literature, which ultimately replicates itself, failing to propose its own constructions.

Scope of the Special Issue

We invite participants to submit papers that contribute to the enrichment of OS beyond vacuous generalities or specificities oriented by the principle of manipulation for immediate usability and application in practice. All contributions must be based on socio-historical reality and organizations and organizational processes socially produced in specific contexts and relationships. We are making a call to continue building OS starting from the problematization of an object of study in the actual local context of society’s problems. To this end, we invite theoretical and applied research papers to address (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Specificities of OS in the different socio-historical contexts of the American continent.

- Onto-epistemological and methodological contributions that guide the development of research and theories-categories in the production of knowledge about organizations or organizational processes.
- The object of study of OS: Theorizing from the standpoint of the reality of organizations or organizational processes.
- The relationship between OS and management: Implications for the theoretical-empirical development of the field.

Languages for submissions

Spanish, Portuguese, and English.

Submission requirements

Submissions should meet all the criteria in terms of structure, extension, citation, and bibliographic standards established by *Innovar Journal* in its guidelines for authors, available at <https://revistas.unal.edu.co/index.php/innovar/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

A limited number of articles will be selected by the Guest Editors for publication in this special issue.

Important dates

- Call for submissions: September 2022.
- Paper submission deadline: February 1, 2023.
- Publication: October 2023.

References

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Summary of Guest Editors curricula vitae

Professor **Diego René Gonzales Miranda** holds a Bachelor in Business Administration from Universidad de Los Andes (Colombia); an MBA and a Ph. D. Summa Cum Laude in Administration from Universidad EAFIT (Colombia), where he obtained the *Summa Cum Laude*, and a Ph. D. in Organizational Studies from Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Mexico), for which he was awarded the “Medalla al Mérito Universitario.” He is recognized as a Senior Researcher by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation of Colombia. He is currently a full-time professor and researcher at the Administration School at Universidad EAFIT, in both the unit of Top Management and the undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the area of Organizations. Professor Gonzales-Miranda is also a visiting professor in the Doctorate in Strategic Management of *Consorcio de Universidades del Perú*. He is a member of the Chamber of Law and Business Administration of the National Intersectoral Commission for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (CONACES); a member of the Technical Committee for the Management of Organizations of the Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education (ICFES), and an academic peer for the National Accreditation Council of Colombia (CNA). He also acts as Chairman of the Latin American Organizational Studies Network (REOL) and Coordinator of the Colombian Organizational Studies Network (REOC). He has authored books and articles on human resources management, organizations, organizational studies, organizational identity, and generations for national and international publications. His professional activity centers in his academic interests and concerns aimed at studying organizations and their phenomena.

Professor **Maria Ceci Misockzy** is a medical doctor, and holds an MSc in Urban and Regional Planning and a Ph.D. in Administration from Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). She is a full-time professor at the School of Administration at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) and its Postgraduate Program (PPGA) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Professor Misockzy acts as Co-Chair of the Critical Management Studies International Board and Secretary of the Latin American Organizational Studies Network (REOL). She is a co-founder and member of the *Organização e Práxis Libertadora* research group. Her professional activity revolves around the study of organizational processes of popular and workers’ social movements and struggles, criticism of the political economy of the organization, contributions of Latin American critical thinking to study organizational processes of popular and workers’ social movements and struggles, and social production of public policies.