




From the Editors

An Open and Inclusive Space for Theorizing: Introducing *Organization Theory*

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If an organizational scholar, hailing from anywhere in the world, was to have the time to travel around the globe to sit in on all kinds of seminars and workshops, and take the time to talk to and discuss with colleagues during these events, she would be amazed by the sheer variety and intellectual breadth of theoretical work that is being carried out in our domain of scholarly inquiry. On one day she may hear about a post-colonial deconstruction of gender inequality in the global workplace; on the next day about the role of paradoxes and dialectics in strategy processes; and on yet another day about reconceiving institutions through a philosophy of time perspective. The field of organization studies is indeed a rich and intellectually thriving area of scholarship, with scholars addressing a broad range of topics from a multitude of theoretical and paradigmatic perspectives.

It is fair to say, however, that when reading through the contents of the leading journals in our field, we do not see such a multiplicity of perspectives reflected in what is being published.

Most journals that currently publish theory papers limit themselves to ‘scientific articles’ that build, or elaborate, theory. This is the case as, in many instances, the mission and review processes of those journals inevitably push authors to limit their papers to ‘formal’ contributions such as defining constructs or formulating a set of ‘testable’ propositions. While these are perfectly legitimate theoretical contributions in themselves, it is important to recognize that they are far from the only type of theorizing that is possible and valuable. Thus, current published work does not reflect the wide range of theorizing that is happening – let alone the possibilities – in our field of scholarly inquiry; nor do the review processes at many journals support and promote the development of such theoretical contributions.

Scope and Mission

In response to the increasing specialization of what ‘counts’ as theory, *Organization Theory*

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(*OT*) aims to cover in its pages the intellectual breadth of theoretical work on organizations and organizing that is carried out around the world. As the incoming editors of *OT*, we see it as our mission to not only publish the best theoretical work in our field, but to broaden the remit of theorizing as well, so that we recognize to a far greater extent than before that theory in our field comes in different shapes and sizes. What counts as theory is not restricted to a set of propositions or construct definitions alone, as important though those elements may be for some papers. Consider, for instance, meta-theoretical inquiries that dig into the underlying assumptions of our theories, such as the paper on sensemaking in the current issue (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2020). These kinds of inquiries do not deliver a set of propositions as such, but are nonetheless a form of theorizing that has direct and profound implications for how we study and understand organizational subjects. Similarly, different forms of critique, such as the critical essay on contexts of theorizing in this issue (Hamann, Luiz, Ramaboa, Khan, & Dhlamini, 2020) that problematizes our existing ways of treating non-Western contexts, provoke alternative ways of theorizing about and researching institutional contexts in ways that genuinely foster a more globally inclusive scholarly community.

Reflecting such a broader understanding of theory, the mission of *OT* is to be a truly open and inclusive space for theory development across the entire breadth of our field – crossing paradigms, subject areas, disciplines and geographical communities. With this inclusive, pluralistic stance, the idea is that the journal will stretch theory development beyond existing journals that publish theory, and consequently will both broaden and deepen theoretical work in our field. The increased breadth will come from the journal's openness to papers based on different styles of theorizing, including more philosophically informed essays, process theorizing, perspective pieces and critical essays, among various others.

This openness to different forms of theorizing and kinds of theoretical contributions will also imply an openness to different genres of writing (Cornelissen, 2017). Beyond scientific

articles that build on an existing literature and elaborate novel theoretical claims around a model or a set of propositions, we are also open to various genres of essays – provided they make a solid theoretical contribution on subjects related to organizations, processes of organizing, or the organized. Such openness will, we believe, ensure the journal's global relevance, allowing it as a theory journal to span across intellectual traditions and geographies. And it will at the same time provide new opportunities to increase the relevance and impact of theory work. The essay format in particular offers the potential for more problem-driven theoretical work around contemporary problems and societal challenges, such as the automatization of labour, new forms of work, or novel organizational forms.

The increased depth, in turn, will come from a greater appreciation of forms of critique and from fostering theoretical work that interrogates the foundational assumptions of our theories and prods us into new ways of conceptualizing and understanding organizations and management (cf. Abend, 2008). Problematizing and reflecting on the roots of our theories, or what is sometimes called meta-theorizing, has the potential to change conversations in our field and kickstart new lines of research or redirect existing ones. As a form of theorizing, it may be an answer to the critique that organizational researchers have been mining the usual stalwarts such as institutional theory and behavioural theory (Davis, 2010) for too long and with too little reflection. Our aim is thus to encourage and support bold theoretical thought experiments through in-depth critique and reflection. This does not mean that every paper needs to have such an orientation, but simply that we offer the space for such contributions alongside publishing high-quality papers on topics that build off an established theoretical lens.

Encouraging Different Styles and Genres

With this mission, *OT* will offer an inclusive platform for theory development and theory-related discussions that extend and deepen our

understanding of organizations and of organizing processes, critiquing or deepening received views, and identifying significantly new ways of studying and understanding the world of organizations. We seek to publish articles in all disciplinary areas of organizational research, covering both 'micro' and 'macro' theoretical approaches and topics.

Given the inclusive and pluralistic ethos of the journal, papers that are written on a subject can take a variety of forms and lengths. Whatever the format and style in which papers are written, the expectation for publication in the journal is that papers offer a theoretical contribution with clear implications for how we understand or study the world of organizations. In other words, meaningful new implications or insights for organization theory must be present in all articles published in the journal, regardless of whether such implications or insights are derived from the development of novel ideas into new theory, from a critique of received theory, or from a conceptual synthesis of recent advances. This in turn implies that submissions should clearly signal and communicate the nature of their theoretical contribution in relation to the existing literature and our current understanding of a topic.

Submissions to the journal can be targeted at three standard features, each reflected by specific sections in the journal: (a) regular full-length submissions (what we have labelled a regular 'theory article') which will be the bulk of submissions; (b) review papers that provide a comprehensive and theory-driven review of a particular research field (labelled 'review article'); and (c) shorter, essay-style invited contributions to a debate or conversation regarding a theoretical problem or issue (labelled 'controversies and conversations'). All regular theory and review submissions will be double-blind peer-reviewed; papers will be sent out for review to experts in the field so that authors receive high-quality feedback on their manuscripts. For a 'controversies and conversations' contribution, authors can submit an informal proposal to a member of the editorial team. On receiving such a proposal, the editorial team will evaluate the proposal and, if it sees potential, will ask for

a more formal proposal which describes the relevance, scope and contribution of the essay, including the different positions of the respective authors on the issue or topic as well as the proposed outcome of the conversation or debate. For all of these features, we encourage prospective authors to have a look at our website for details on how to prepare their manuscripts for *OT*.

As a dedicated theory journal, some papers of course fall outside the scope of the journal's mission. Review papers that only present a summative review of prior work without any form of theoretical synthesis, critique or development do not match with the journal's mission. Similarly, papers that directly draw on empirical data or empirical material to form theoretical arguments fall outside the scope. Authors may instead wish to submit their empirical papers to *Organization Studies (OS)* – the flagship generalist journal also under the auspices of the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS).

There will also be papers across different genres that, while they fall within the scope of *OT*'s mission, fall short of our expectations towards a strong and significant theoretical contribution. Papers that are published in the first couple of issues of the journal already give a good sense of the magnitude of the contribution that we are looking for. In addition, we will be publishing in the first two volumes of *OT* a number of 'From the Editors' pieces that will help prospective authors get a sense of how to develop strong contributions when they are, for example, writing an essay, when they engage in meta-theorizing, or when they write a review paper for *OT*. The first editorial that will appear shortly as part of this series is one on 'what theory is', which in a comprehensive manner will describe the different styles and genres of writing theory papers in our field.

Through writing these editorials, we aim to help prospective authors grasp much better how they can write theory papers in different genres and for *OT*. We wish to decrease any risk that our authors perceive in relation to writing theory papers, as well as to give them the insights and the confidence that they need to turn their

ideas into quality manuscripts. Our editorials will play a role in this, as will the organization of an annual *OT* winter workshop, and the delivery of dedicated theory writing workshops at institutions and conferences around the world by the editorial team. These events are meant to help scholars in our global community develop a better understanding of how to write theory and to give them practical hands-on advice on further developing their papers for *OT*.

Editorial Team, Editorial Review Board, and Review and Publishing Process

In line with these ambitions and goals for *OT*, we are very pleased to introduce a team of extraordinary Associate Editors, who are not only themselves exceptional for the quality and breadth of their scholarship, but are also committed to developing the best theorizing in our field, and are capable of supporting authors throughout the review process. The Associate Editors on the first editorial team for *OT* are, in alphabetic order: Eva Boxenbaum (Copenhagen Business School), Penny Dick (University of Sheffield), Joel Gehman (University of Alberta), Juliane Reinecke (King's College London) and David Seidl (University of Zurich). The team will be supported by Sophia Tzagaraki, our experienced Managing Editor, who will run the editorial office and will be the first point of call for authors when they have questions about their manuscripts or our ManuscriptCentral site.

Besides the composition of the editorial team, we have proactively ensured that there is an inclusive and balanced representation in terms of sub-disciplines, gender and geographies across our Editorial Review Board as well. We are very grateful to all the scholars who have kindly agreed to serve in this capacity. Together with them, we will work hard to make the review process a developmental one, giving authors constructive and actionable feedback on their manuscript, and one as well that, given the journal's pluralistic ethos, ultimately supports the integrity of a manuscript's theoretical position

and the voice of its authors. The review process might sometimes vary in length, but our aim is to make a first decision on a manuscript within two months. We expect that, typically, manuscripts will have to be revised once or twice before acceptance. The acting editor assigned to a manuscript will make a final publication decision whenever it is feasible to do so; she or he will aim to do so within two rounds of review although, in some instances, manuscripts may need additional revision before an acceptance decision can be reached.

Once a paper is accepted it will, after copy-editing, appear directly online. A unique feature of *OT* and one that we are particularly proud of is that *OT* is an open access journal that enables unlimited and immediate access from anywhere in the world to papers published in the journal. And these advantages for authors and for our readers come at no cost to submitting authors; the actual costs of processing accepted manuscripts (the so-called individual article processing charges) will be waived by our publishing partner SAGE for the first five years; after this period, EGOS will work on a solution, together with SAGE, to avoid article processing charges for authors. Through this arrangement we are in a position to ensure that authors – regardless of their respective institutional support – receive the full benefit from publishing in a top-quality, peer-reviewed, open access journal with a global readership.

Positioning Within the EGOS Journal Portfolio

At EGOS, the idea of a second journal devoted to theoretical work alongside the association's generalist journal *Organization Studies* (*OS*) had been entertained for some time in order to cater to the demand for publishing theory in a different style and manner. The idea further materialized in 2018 with the approval of the EGOS Executive Board and in particular building on an initiative of its current Chair, Markus Höllerer, who, as the Consulting Editor of *OT*, will for the first years also liaise between the editorial team and the EGOS Executive Board to

ensure the journal's steady progress, as well as to balance the various interests across the EGOS journal portfolio. As a more specialized and dedicated theory journal, *OT* sits alongside *OS* and complements what *OS* offers. *OS* will continue to be the flagship generalist journal of EGOS, with a dedicated focus on empirical studies of all sorts and styles, and will also publish conceptual articles for the foreseeable future as well. *OT*, however, will be fully devoted to theory, with the aspiration of becoming a premier, globally recognized and inclusive outlet for theoretical work in our field.

In closing, we are proud to present this first issue of *OT* to you and, with this, start the journal's very first volume (2020). We hope that you are as excited as we are by the prospects of *OT* and will get involved in the journal by submitting your best manuscripts, by signing up as a reviewer, or simply by reading and sharing published *OT* articles.

Joep Cornelissen
Editor-in-Chief of *Organization Theory (OT)*

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Consulting Editor of *Organization Theory (OT)* and Chair of the European Group for Organizational Studies (EGOS)

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