

Organization manifesto

Organization

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journals.sagepub.com/home/org**Patrizia Zanoni** 

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Abstract

The Organization Manifesto celebrates 30 years of Organization as a vital force in critical management and organization studies. It reaffirms the journal's commitment to radical pluralism, within a non-hegemonic mode that avoids reproducing relations of dominance and subordination. Central to scholarship published and welcomed in Organization are five performative forms of critical scholarship that engage with power in different ways: revealing hidden power dynamics, reconnecting fragmented relations, reimagining post-capitalist futures, rehearsing equitable practices, and rebelling against oppressive systems. These forms encourage a dynamic intellectual space that resists canonical constraints and aligns critique with evolving socio-political realities. As a living intellectual project, the manifesto stresses self-reflective engagement with the journal's legacy and its contemporary role. It calls for action to foster community renewal through supporting diverse scholars, enacting caring practices in academia, promoting critical methodologies, and advancing scholarly activism. By emphasizing inclusivity, transdisciplinarity, and political engagement, the Organization Manifesto aims to sustain the journal as a leading platform for transformative critical scholarship. Looking ahead, it invites collective contributions to reimagine and co-construct practices that promote justice and equity in academia and beyond.

Keywords

Critical organization studies, manifesto, organization journal

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Introduction

This manifesto marks a decisive moment in the history of *Organization* and of the broader critical management and organization studies community. Over the past 30 years, *Organization* has been an important generative force in the birth and the development of critical scholarship in management and organization studies towards what it is today. It has proactively shaped the field and nourished its growth into, dare we say, maturity. This maturity comes on the one hand with a higher awareness of the specific perspectives and contributions of our field amidst the broader critically oriented scholarship in the social sciences. On the other hand, it enables us to take a more capacious stance on critical management and organization scholarship than ever before.

As a living intellectual project, *Organization* has repeatedly called, over the years, for more radical forms of pluralism in critical management and organization studies: pluralism of scientific paradigms, ontologies, methodologies, genres, traditions of thought, geographies, positionalities, and of the social practices that make academia, including those related to making a journal. While we have the explicit commitment to walk the critical talk and handle *Organization* and its community with care, it is within this pluralism that we are able to self-reflectively evaluate our successes and failures.

Pluralism is not only a measure of how inclusive we are, as we often hold. It also more fundamentally reflects the degree to which we are able to function, as a scholarly community, in a non-hegemonic mode, that is, a form of organizing whereby we avoid reproducing relations of dominance and subordination. Pluralism is thus essential to how we organize *Organization* to keep it a “big tent.” It informs many of our everyday decisions, such as whom we encourage to play a more active role, which manuscripts enter peer-review and who is going to guide authors, the content and the formats of the activities we fund, and the public statements we write at pivotal moments for our community and global society more widely. Not only are decisions taken collectively and informed by multiple perspectives and positionalities, they are also taken with the explicit purpose of preserving and increasing pluralism. Maturity calls for spaces where diverse forms of critical scholarship can emerge, flourish, coexist, and sometimes even intellectually clash. We want to be one of those spaces, and even the preferred one for scholars that identify as doing “critical” work.

We honor and draw inspiration from the critical insights of the past, recognizing their foundational role in shaping where we stand today. However, our focus is not on evaluating contemporary *Organization* against a fixed “canon of criticality” from the past. Instead, we seek to allow critique to evolve in step with the changing historical and material conditions of domination and subjugation, ensuring its relevance and resonance in the present. As a matter of fact, radical pluralism minimally entails suspicion toward any canon, and maximally requires its overt rejection. In our view, *Organization*’s critical intellectual project should be evaluated for its capacity to build upon its roots in ways that enable it to speak to the present predicament, marked by deepening social and economic cleavages, ecological catastrophe and rising mass violence, in a distinctively critical organizational voice, and to maintain its capacity to do so in the future.

We believe that the value of any type of knowledge, as measured in terms of journal rankings, citations, prestigious roles in renowned institutions etc. is never intrinsic or absolute. Rather, it reflects the position of its authorship within a given field of power at a given historical time. This awareness logically entails that any critical intellectual project, to remain such, needs to carefully and self-reflectively engage with its legacies, and especially those aspects that, in hindsight, point to its own blind spots, internal power dynamics, and failures. Also, at some time in the future, our present imperfect efforts, stances and decisions—well-meant and forward-looking as they might be—will become part of that legacy and come under scrutiny. The dynamic and changing nature of this project is not a weakness. On the contrary, it is an essential condition for its existence, vibrancy and regeneration.

Doing critical organizational scholarship today

This manifesto renews and extends what critical scholarship in and around *Organization* entails in 2024. It celebrates our collective achievements, delineates a new horizon of this intellectual project, and inaugurates an open debate. It invites our critical community to do scholarship that matters by setting out a repertoire of what critical research can do: reveal, (re)imagine, (re)connect, rehearse, and rebel. This repertoire reflects the vast and heterogeneous research that authors have trusted us with in recent and less recent years, confiding in our collective support to develop it and make it visible to a wide organizational readership. It is obviously provisional, purposefully kept open to invite additional modes, perhaps—who knows?—repairing, rejecting, resisting, reaffirming, and even resurrecting. Importantly, these modes point to what critical scholarship does, performatively, rather than defining what it is in terms of theoretical traditions, topics or methodologies, indeed by a canon. After all, the first 30 volumes of *Organization* show that critical scholarship is heterogeneous and, luckily, has greatly evolved over time.

And yet, when asked, most would argue that the scholarship that appears in *Organization* is distinctive in that it is an overtly “political” and engaged scholarship. It addresses power in multiple ways, including how organizations, economies, and societies are structured and run, how knowledge about them is produced, circulated, and made legitimate, who is allowed to speak and who is heard, how new non-hegemonic imaginaries are developed to create alternatives or recuperate to trump them, and how different communities and voices resist and rebel against exploitation and oppression. To participate in these debates, we invite critical scholarship that does one or more of the following:

Revealing

We invite research that denaturalizes and deconstructs taken-for-granted and ideological understandings of social reality, unveils domination and oppression, power inequalities and their dynamics, to show, denounce, raise awareness, and provide a theoretical and political grammar for seeing what is too often neglected, glossed over, or proactively mystified and covered up. We mobilize critical approaches to expose language, affect and social practices that serve to support and even strengthen capitalism, patriarchy, supremacy, and coloniality. In doing this, we recognize our responsibility to interrogate our own potentially complicit roles as scholars, educators, university administrators as well as gatekeepers in our editorial roles in the journal.

(Re)connecting

We hope to receive studies that bring (back) together what has been divided, repairing and re forging solidarity in relations and between individuals and communities, which have been cannibalized, colonized, and co-opted, or otherwise broken. Through our openness to decolonizing efforts of decentering the west and our strong tradition of multidisciplinarity, we particularly recognize, value, and bridge different geographical and disciplinary epistemes. We reconnect with “the field,” ideas and practice, theory and action. So doing, we self-reflexively consider how we, as scholars, researchers and educators, can work through more engaged and more radically inclusive methodologies, ethnography, action-oriented research, co-production, and performative research.

(Re)imagining

We welcome research that, while grounded in the past, envisions anti-and post-capitalist alternatives and utopias, and which shows how better futures emerge through current struggles, nurturing

a politics of hope. To rethink current regimes of organizing relations and sociality, we privilege the perspectives of historically subordinated and marginalized subjects, whose voices and experiences have been dismissed and devalued. We reaffirm our commitment to decenter humans on the planet, in favor of non-humans, in order to reimagine the Anthropocene. And we embrace more capacious and enabling writing genres and formats that help us (re)imagine.

Rehearsing

We are interested in scholarship on the prefiguration of and experimenting with novel, more just and inclusive practices to organize our work, economy and social reproduction. We welcome accounts of rehearsing more caring and equitable academic practices, through critical pedagogies, alliance-building and ethico-political narratives that unsettle current social relations and subjectivities. We reaffirm our commitment to activist efforts to enact alternatives and draw inspiration on the plural ontologies and lifeworlds and the sustainable livelihoods of indigenous communities.

Rebelling

We are sympathetic to texts that analyze, critically reflect on, and learn from radical organizational forms, in their many guises, and multiple strategies and modalities of resistance, refusal, opposition, struggle, and antagonism. We consider them key to understanding how unjust organizing practices and outcomes can be countered, sabotaged and eroded. In these efforts, we name violence and war as weapons of domination and put resisting bodies and subjectivities front and center. We contest global capitalism and dispel the neoliberal myth of the market as a “better” mode of organizing, rejecting the imperative of capital accumulation, and reclaiming an economy of human and ecological care.

We hope that the performative emphasis of these five core modes of doing critical scholarship can guide those interested in becoming part of this community to meaningfully engage with Organization. We consider this multiplicity essential to any critical intellectual project, and see these modes not in contradiction or competition with each other. As a matter of fact, they appear in various combinations. They reflect different takes on power and politics rooted in multiple critical traditions historically layered in our pages. Most importantly, they offer authors multiple possibilities to develop their own critical voice.

A call for action

As manifestos often do, we too end with a call for action. This call pertains to how we would like members of the community of Organization—our associate editors, editorial board members, advisory board members, reviewers, and authors—to contribute to making this journal and take care of its community, with the aim to promote socially just organizations, including academic ones, and society as a whole. These proposals re-affirm some of our main values and goals. In the editorial celebrating Organization’s 30-year anniversary published 1 year ago, we committed to epistemic pluralism including critical perspectives and voices from different groups and geographies, building a supportive transnational and inclusive community, and enacting a politics of hope. At the same time, these proposals reflect the conversations with participants of the virtual workshop held for the anniversary of Organization in December 2023, as well as on-going conversations with the broad editorial team over the past few years. They name actions and initiatives that we consider priority at current times, yet which we expect to evolve, and be revisited and reimaged, as historical conditions change and new members of this community take the reins of our journal in the future.

This call for action makes our pledges actionable, through initiatives that foster critical scholars' growth and community renewal, enacting caring practices of scholarship and journal-making, encourage critical and alternative writing, and support scholarly activism.

Fostering critical scholars' growth and community renewal

Organization has historically developed initiatives to sponsor best critical dissertation awards for the critical management studies community and has recently begun holding workshops to further assist awardees in developing their work. Today, we are particularly keen on extending our support to junior scholars interested in critical scholarship, especially those that belong to historically subordinated groups and/or are located in historically neglected geographies. In recent years, we have also reached out to new (and old) intellectual communities across the globe. We want to keep investing in new collaborations in respect of their own different epistemic traditions and call those who are interested in learning about and engaging with critical organizational scholarship to join us. As we build this safe space for critical research within our journal, we also acknowledge the painful attacks on and the marginalizing of critical scholars and will work with members of our community to organize safe spaces for collectively finding ways to heal, renew and grow.

Enacting caring practices of scholarship and journal-making

An ethics of care throughout the editorial process has been at the heart of Organization and remains particularly important to mitigate the harmful effects of the intensification of work in global neo-liberal academia. As a central piece of our call to action, we commit to keep deconstructing, debating, and self-reflecting on our own editorial processes to reimagine them in more caring ways. We plan to organize author and reviewer workshops not only to explain and discuss the main practices, but also to strengthen the spirit of camaraderie, to nurture developmental and collaborative practices among our critical community as we co-construct each other's scholarship. As editors, editorial board members, authors, and reviewers of the journal, we call you to join us on these occasions and to share with us your ideas on how we can best enact care and inclusion.

Encouraging critical and alternative methods and writing

Organization was born to question traditional forms of scientific knowledge and establish an engagement with research that challenges orthodoxy and promotes social justice and change. Over the years, our community has admirably developed a profound critique and alternative perspectives on research and writing. In order to further advance these explorations beyond existing conventions of making science and attend to the loud and diffuse demands to decolonize not only the content of science, but also the dominant forms of knowledge-making and publishing, our journal will soon be adding a new section on "critical methodologies." In this section, authors are encouraged to present new critical ways of engaging with the field, challenging traditional research, writing differently about their work, and questioning the research process itself. We invite authors to take up our invitation to engage with methodological innovation in meaningful creative ways.

Supporting scholarly activism

In the last decade, Organization has encouraged academic activism through the creation of the Acting Up and Speaking Out sections. As part of our call for action, we will organize spaces to further these efforts to create social, political, cultural, economic, and ecological change.

Organization's first virtual conference, in December 2024, puts scholarly activism front and center, through the keynotes, papers, symposia and open format sessions in which scholars discuss both their experiences and their activism under enduring war and genocide. To renew our commitment, we will organize Acting Up workshops to support, recognize, value, and give voice to those who engage in scholarly activism and want to share their reflections, strategies, theorizations with the whole community.

This Manifesto emerged from the work of the editorial team and was discussed and integrated based on the input provided by participants at the first Organization Virtual Conference held in December 2024. It is an open document that intends to mark a long-term engagement of Organization. It also invites the whole critical MOS community to join the editorial team in envisioning, developing, and enacting initiatives that support its scholars and scholarship. Indeed, a call for action.

In solidarity, in thought, and in action,

Patrizia, Marcos, and Ghazal

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Author biographies

Patrizia Zanoni is a Full Professor at the School of Social Sciences of Hasselt University, Belgium, of which she is one of the founders. Drawing on critical theories including contemporary strands of Marxism, her research investigates difference, work and value under capitalism and beyond. She has written extensively on difference as a principle of organizing, 'diversity' as the unequal fragmentation of labour, social reproduction, how digital technologies and platform companies reshape work, employment and the composition of labour, control and resistance, and organizing the economy and society more equally. In 2022 she received an Emma Goldman award from the Flax Foundation for her work on inequality. From 2020 to 2025 she served as co-Editor-in-chief of *Organization*, first with Raza Mir and then with Marcos Barros. She is grateful to them and to the whole Organization community for this amazing human and professional journey, and wishes the incoming co-EiC Ghazal Mir Zulfiqar a wonderful time leading the journal onwards with Marcos.

Marcos Barros is a Full Professor at Grenoble École de Management (France). His research interests include alternative forms of organization, decolonial studies, technology, and critical perspectives on identity and resistance. Marcos has been co-Editor-in-Chief of *Organization* with Patrizia Zanoni for the last two years and will remain for two more working alongside Ghazal Zulfiqar. He hopes that the Manifesto becomes another tool for open and permanent dialogue among the critical community.

Ghazal Zulfiqar is Associate Professor at the Suleman Dawood School of Business at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). She has a PhD in public policy from the University of Massachusetts Boston, USA, an MSc in Development Finance from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London and an MBA from the Institute of Business Administration, Pakistan. Her research focuses on the political economy of global development and financialization, informal economy workers and their transnational advocacy networks, and critical pedagogy. She is co-chair of the Critical Management Studies (CMS) Division at the American Academy of Management.