

**11th Organization Studies Summer Workshop & Special Issue
Spirituality, Symbolism, and Storytelling
19-21 May 2016, Mykonos, Greece**

www.os-workshop.com

St John Hotel Resort, Mykonos, Greece

<http://www.saintjohn.gr/>



Conveners:

Marianna Fotaki, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick
Yochanan Altman, Kedge Business School, Middlesex University Business School
and Teesside University
Juliette Koning, Business School, Oxford Brookes University

Confirmed keynote speakers

His Eminence Gabriel,
Bishop of Nea Ionia, Athens Greece

Dr Ann Jordan, Professor of Anthropology
University of North Texas, USA
<https://anthropology.unt.edu/facultybio-jordan.php>

Dr Monika Kostera
Professor and Chair in Management, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland
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About Organization Studies Workshops

The Organization Studies Workshop is an annual activity, originally launched in June 2005, to facilitate high-quality scholarship in organization studies. Its primary aim is to advance cutting-edge research on important topics in the field by bringing together a small and competitively selected group of scholars, who will have the opportunity to interact in depth and share insights in a stimulating and scenic environment. Since 2010 the OS Workshop has been sponsored by Sage in order to help attract talented scholars from diverse regions of the world, consistent with the editorial mission of *Organization Studies*. The OS Workshops are usually linked to a special issue of *Organization Studies* on the same topic.

Introduction

The global crises of the past decade – economic, financial, food, energy, health, migration and security – 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 ecological 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 - past, present and future.

The objectives of this workshop are to critically and reflexively appraise and spearhead some of these developments, with an aim to stimulate debates around a variety of topics while offering alternative, radical and creative ways forward. The questions we pose are how can we rethink and rewrite 'organizations' through drawing on the spiritual, symbolic/imaginary and mythical to rediscover/devise old/new languages to think, imagine and create in organizations?

Different axial cultures, most profoundly the Greek antiquity (Marini, 1992; Solomon, 2004), but also ancient Hebrew, Buddhist, Confucian (Bellah and Joas, 2012) heritage have informed our worldviews in deep and lasting ways. 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 new forms of leading, managing and organizing, drawing from the well of ancient wisdoms; or evoking the distinction between 'sacred and profane' (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989) in everyday contexts (Harvey, 2013).

This raises the question to what extent organization studies recognizes and acknowledges that people from different life worlds can, and often have, quite different ways of 'seeing' the world and being in the organization. New beliefs and religious movements led to the upsurge of the meaning of 'faith' and 'religion' in everyday life that has not as yet been registered in research on organizations and organizing (King, 2008; Tracey, 2012).

Besides mapping and registering all these developments, 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. Mitroff 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).

In the management literature, vision is defined as a strong belief about the right course of action, particularly when operating under situations of uncertainty and ambiguity (van Den Steen, 2005). But institutional rules often function as myths that organizations incorporate in order to gain legitimacy, resources, stability, and enhance their survival prospects (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), which are then reproduced through organizational metaphors (Tsoukas, 1991), and organizational storytelling (Czarniawska, 1997; Gabriel, 2000; Boje, 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-Athanasiou and Fotaki, 2015) while providing the means for enabling healing, growth, prosperity and well-being.

We argue it is time to explicitly engage with these issues in the context of contemporary organizations. Some potential topics and/or areas of interest might include the following indicative (not exclusive) questions:

- How could we draw on the broad range of spiritual traditions and cultural myths to provide insights and guidance during times of uncertainty and crisis? How could they be used in practice by organizational actors in times of uncertainty?
- What language, imaging and frameworks of the wisdom traditions of axial civilizations may inform current debates on managing and organizing?
- How can we evoke the sacred, קדוש (kadósh) in its historical biblical meaning: whole, separate, above and beyond (in addition to its contemporary meaning of 'holy' or 'Saint') to engage with everyday organizational lived experience (sacred vs. profane) as well as key issues of mission, strategy and ethics?
- What are the opportunities, challenges and risks of elevating spirituality in management and organization studies? How can critical discourse help us avoid these dangers?
- What options of organizing and managing that existed in the past but have been forgotten or sidelined, and/or that we can draw on from 'classical' anthropological studies on reciprocity, kinship, taboo, exchange, symbols and cultural systems, rites of passage may offer us solutions to contemporary problems including the challenges emerging within the context of the global financial crisis and its current management in Europe and beyond?
- How can the gap between distant past and present be bridged and the parallax between pre-modern and modern (and post-modern and hyper-modern) be reflexively rethought and recast? Are the effects of such moves a priori positive or could they involve the danger of reintroducing appealing but deeply problematic pre-modern constructs to resolve modern or post-modern deadlocks?
- What is the role of stories in organizational settings? How do stories organize and who is doing the telling?

Submissions

The **11th Organization Studies Workshop** will take place on **19th-21st May 2016, in Mykonos, Greece**. Interested participants must submit an abstract through the following link: **<http://os-workshop.com/abstractsubmitform.html>**. The abstract should be of no more than 1,000 words for their proposed contribution by **December 7th, 2015**.

Authors will be notified of acceptance or otherwise by **January 15th, 2016**. Full papers must be submitted by April 30, 2016. The venue of the workshop is St. John Hotel Resort, Mykonos, Greece (**<http://www.saintjohn.gr/>**). The Workshop venue, comfortable, beautiful, and situated by the sea, will provide an ideal setting for participants to relax and engage in authentic and creative dialogues. Further details on the logistics of the workshop will be published through the OS Workshop Website (**www.os-workshop.com**).

Following the workshop, a Special Issue will be announced in *Organization Studies*. To be considered for publication, papers must be submitted via the OS website at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies> by **November 30, 2016**. There you can also find guidelines for submission and information on the review procedures. 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.

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