



Call for Papers on a Special Issue in *Organization Studies* on  
**Enhancing Organizations Research Involving Meaning and Culture  
Using Computational Text and Image Analyses**

**Guest Editors:**

Jan Goldenstein, Dennis Jancsary, Stine Grodal, Bernard Forgues, P. Devereaux Jennings

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**Summary**

Over the past decade, organization scholars have approached meaning, materiality, identity, and cultural situatedness from a variety of theoretical perspectives. These endeavors have led to a much better understanding of the micro- and macro-dynamics within and across these domains, as well as more contextualized organization theories and refined inductive research approaches. Yet, the study of meaning and culture poses methodological challenges as meanings and culture are complex, multifaceted, and dynamic. Luckily, recent advances in our ability to curate and tame large and/or complex data with computational text and image analysis have opened new possibilities for enhancing our understanding of these domains. These advances afford organization scholars new opportunities to explore the depths of organizational life and to capture it on a wider scale. They offer powerful techniques for detailing and analyzing textual and visual artifacts with inductive, abductive, *and* deductive research strategies to enhance novel theorizations. In this Special Issue call, we invite organization scholars interested in meaning, materiality, identity, and/or cultural situatedness to submit qualitative and quantitative empirical papers showcasing how computational analytics with large and/or complex data push organization theories forward in these areas. We are open for submissions which expand the boundary of current applications to showcase how computational text and image analyses can be used to both analyze and display data in novel ways.

**The Call: Theoretical and Methodological Threads**

Different threads of research and conversation underpin this Special Issue call. A long tradition in intellectual fields, such as management and organization science, communication studies, political

science and sociology, has examined organizational life through texts and images (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Höllerer et al., 2019; Mohr & Duquenne, 1997; Pollach, 2012; Roberts, 1997). This Special Issue call follows the spirit of sociologist John Mohr, who passed away far too early, but who motivated a generation of social scientists to conceive methodological innovations that allow formal ways of listening to unstructured data and provide ground for new theory building (*Measure Mohr Culture*, Special Issue in *Poetics* 2021).

These texts and images can be considered to be symbolic manifestations, for example, of organizational identities and practices, of social relations and interactions, and of institutional and cultural processes (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014; Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Goldberg, Srivastava, Manian, Monroe, & Potts, 2016; Hannigan, Briggs, Valadao, Seidel, & Jennings, 2021; Höllerer, Jancsary, Barberio, & Meyer, 2020; Kahl & Grodal, 2016; Mohr et al., 2020). Recently, we also observe efforts of organizational theorists to use texts and images to reconsider meaning and cultural situatedness through the lens of materiality in organizational life, such as around boundary objects, place, and material expression (Boxenbaum, Jones, Meyer, & Svejenova, 2018; Langley et al., 2019; Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Quattrone, 2015; Quattrone, Ronzani, Jancsary, & Höllerer, 2021; Zuzul, 2019). Examples of such text and image data are provided below.



Media data (Wikimedia Commons / CC BY-SA 4.0)

Logo data (Wikimedia Commons, public domain)

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At the same time, through computational analytics, we now have the opportunity to gain access to and mastery of larger, more complex collections of data than before. Organizations release their communicative traces in the form of websites, annual reports, shareholder letters and calls, internal emails, organizational logos, etc. Large amounts of complex data are also produced and disseminated in organizational environments in the form of newspaper articles, interviews, social media, or photographs, among other forms. How might organization theories be meaningfully advanced by analyzing these data? Computational techniques promise in-depth analyses of texts and images that are valuable for inductive, abductive, and deductive research designs: natural language processing (NLP) provides techniques, such as parsing, topic modelling, sentiment analysis, or word embeddings (Evans & Aceves, 2016; Goldberg et al., 2016; Goldenstein & Poschmann, 2019; Hannigan et al., 2019; Nelson, 2017; Wagner-Pacifici, Mohr, & Breiger, 2015), which uncover grammatical structures, emotionality, thematic orientations, or word semantics in texts. Digital image processing (DIP) techniques, in turn, allows us to answer novel theoretical questions by assessing visual angles, image semantics, image structures, and graphical renditions holistically or in partially disaggregated form (Boxenbaum et al., 2018; Chan, Mihm, & Sosa,

2017; Quattrone et al., 2021). When combined with current theory, these computational techniques promise to provide new theoretical insights that will advance our understanding of meaning, materiality, identity, and cultural situatedness.

### **Potential Themes and Scope-Related Criteria**

The main objectives of this Special Issue are twofold: first, to showcase how large, complex data and computational analytics can enhance organizational research on meaning, materiality, identity and/or cultural situatedness and, second, to continue building and strengthening the community of scholars engaged in that work.

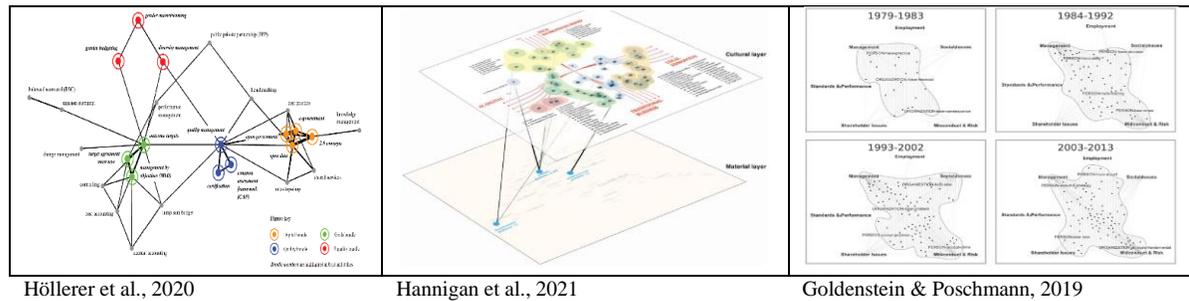
In terms of potential themes and scope-related criteria, we invite organizational researchers from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives to submit work that:

- 1) Is empirical and uses computational text and/or image analysis with large and/or complex data in some way—perhaps as the paper’s core analytic method or perhaps as a construct or algorithm to be assessed from some interpretive angle;
- 2) Provides theoretical contributions in the domains of meaning, materiality, identity, and/or cultural situatedness in organizational life;
- 3) Considers responsibly, transparently, and critically the (potential) epistemological and methodological challenges when applying large complex data and computational techniques (Edelmann & Mohr, 2018; Lindebaum & Ashraf, 2021; Tonidandel, King, & Cortina, 2018).

We can envision a variety of ways in which empirical papers can showcase the use of large complex data and the application of computational analytics around meaning-related topics. Below we sketch several avenues that organizational scholars may wish to explore, though possible ways of showcasing are by no means limited to these.

- 1) Papers could discuss the key data curation choices and methods and the (iterative) uses of computational analytics for their empirics and theorizing in more detail (e.g., Aranda, Sele, Etchanchu, Guyt, & Vaara, 2021; Hannigan et al., 2021; Nelson, 2017; Nelson, Burk, Knudsen, & McCall, 2018; Poschmann & Goldenstein, 2019; Tonidandel et al., 2018);
- 2) Papers could introduce refined or novel inductive, abductive, deductive, *or* mixed-method research designs to analyze texts and images in ways that consider the complexity and nuance in meaning, materiality, identity and/or cultural situatedness (Croidieu & Kim, 2018; Fligstein, Brundage, & Schultz, 2017; Goldenstein & Poschmann, 2019; Hannigan et al., 2019; Kahl & Grodal, 2016; Mohr, Wagner-Pacifici, Breiger, & Bogdanov, 2013; Rule, Cointet, & Bearman, 2015; Wang, Wezel, & Forgues, 2016);
- 3) Papers could showcase the development of (innovative) textual, visual, and numerical artifacts in form of (multidimensional) *quantitative measures* or *displays from visualization software* (e.g., LDavis or Gephi), being deployed in novel ways as, for example, part of establishing similarities or capturing multi-level meanings (e.g., Bail, 2016; Goldenstein, Poschmann, Händschke, & Walgenbach, 2019; Haans, 2019; Kaplan & Vakili, 2015; Kozlowski, Taddy,

& Evans, 2019; Oberg, Korff, & Powell, 2017). Some examples of visualizations are provided below.



- 4) Papers might take “strong” multimodal approaches (Zilber, 2018) by combining the analysis of texts, images, and numbers, or by building innovative measures considering multiple textual and/or visual layers of meaning at once (Boxenbaum et al., 2018; Goldenstein & Poschmann, 2019).
- 5) Papers might also turn numbers and visualizations themselves into theoretical artifacts, much like depictions of disruptions in diagrams have become research objects (Bower & Christensen, 2005; Boxenbaum et al., 2019; Hannigan et al., 2019; Quattrone, 2017).

Our Special Issue Call is open to and agnostic about: levels of analysis; choice of organization theories; specific research topics within the four related domains of meaning, identity, materiality, and culture; types of symbolic systems (verbal, visual etc.) and texts—including the languages in which they are expressed, so long as the submission itself is written following *Organization Studies*’ guidelines—; research methods (e.g., grounded theory, structural analysis, network analysis, or regression analysis), and specific data sets and computational techniques.

## Submission

Your manuscript is to be submitted through the journal’s online submission system (<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies>). You will need to create a user account if you do not already have one, and you must select the appropriate Special Issue at the “Manuscript Type” option. The Guest Editors handle all manuscripts in accordance with the journal’s policies and procedures; we expect that the authors will follow the journal’s submission guidelines (<http://journals.sagepub.com/home/oss>). Submissions to this Special Issue will be possible between 15<sup>th</sup> May and 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022. Informal substantive questions can be addressed to **Jan Goldenstein** ([jan.goldenstein@uni-jena.de](mailto:jan.goldenstein@uni-jena.de)) or, as stand-in, **Dev Jennings** ([dev.jennings@ualberta.ca](mailto:dev.jennings@ualberta.ca)). For administrative support and general queries, please contact **Sophia Tzagaraki**, Managing Editor of Organization Studies, at [osofficer@gmail.com](mailto:osofficer@gmail.com).

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## Guest Editors

**Jan Goldenstein** is research associate at the Chair of Organization, Leadership, and Human Resource Management at Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany. He is also co-founder of the Group for Jena Computational Organizational Research Applications (JenCORA). His research interests include institutional theory, category research, social evaluation, market entry decisions, glocalization, comparative international studies, and methodological research. Jan is author of articles in scientific journals and books like *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Organization Theory*, *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, *Sociological Methodology*, and *Sociological Methods & Research*. Among the published chapters is a contribution to the *Cambridge Handbook of Open Strategy*. Jan serves as ad-hoc reviewer for several international academic journals like *American Sociological Review*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, and *Organization Studies*.

**Dennis Jancsary** is Assistant Professor at the Institute for Organization Studies at WU Vienna University of Economics and Business. His current research focuses on institutionalist approaches in organization theory, particularly the diffusion and theorization of management ideas, practices, and structures. Conceptually and methodologically, he is primarily interested in verbal, visual, and multimodal forms of rhetoric, narrative, and symbolism, as well as in the role of silences in the construction and institutionalization of meaning. Together with his co-authors, he has published,

for instance, in the *Academy of Management Review*, the *Academy of Management Annals*, *Organization Studies*, and *Organization Science*. He serves on the editorial review boards of *Organization Studies* and *Organization Theory*.

**Stine Grodal** is Distinguished Professor for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at Northeastern University. Her main streams of research focus the evolution of technology, industries, and markets. Her work is interdisciplinary and builds on insights from sociology and psychology to address novel questions in technology, entrepreneurship, and strategy research. She is deeply committed to field methods, interviews, ethnography, and in-depth archival research, which she combines with quantitative analyses and online experiments when appropriate. She has published, for instance, in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *American Sociological Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *Organization Science*. She serves on the editorial review boards of *Academy of Management Review* and *American Sociological Review*.

**Bernard Forgues** is a professor of organization theory at emlyon business school, and heads STORM, its research center in strategy and organization. His current research interests include materiality, institutions, valuation, and grand challenges. He likes both qualitative and quantitative methods, and loves to play with R. His research has appeared in *Organization Studies*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Organization Science*, *Human Resource Management*, *Academy of Management Discoveries*, *Strategic Organization*, and other outlets. Bernard is the current Chair of EGOS, and serves as a senior editor for *Organization Studies*. He was the founding editor of *M@n@gement*, the first open access journal in our field.

**P. Devereaux (Dev) Jennings** is a professor of strategy, entrepreneurship and management at the Alberta School of Business, a current the Co-Coordinator of Interpretive Data Science (IDeaS) group, and recent Coordinator of the Canadian Center for CSR.. Dev has long puzzled over the nature of meaning and power in organizational field dynamics—particularly in institutionalization—and employed mixed methods to study form adoption, narrative use, nano and cleantech startups, and environmental regulation in fields. He and his co-authors have published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, the *Academy of Management Journal*, the *Academy of Management Review*, *Organization Science*, the *Journal of Business Venturing*, and *Organization and Environment*. Dev has extensive editing experience, including work as an associate or co-editor at *Academy of Management Review*, *Strategic Organization*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, and *Administrative Science Quarterly*.