

Proposed Special Issue on Storytelling and Change in Organizations

Organization: The critical journal of organization, theory & society

Guest Editors

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Deadline: To be confirmed

Rationale

Research on stories in organizations, together with cognate terms such as narratives, anecdotes, accounts, tales, myths, fantasies, and sagas has burgeoned in recent years as the linguistic turn has played out in organization studies. Concomitantly, theoretical and empirical investigations of issues centred on stability/change at levels ranging from the individual to the group, institution, industry and society have continued to be significant preoccupations. This special issue focuses on the confluence of these two streams of research.

In particular, we aim to draw out in a reflexive manner the ways in which storytelling

1. Assists in studying phenomena of organizational change
2. Helps construct phenomena as representing change, and
3. Sustains or inhibits change through different constructions.

In line with Organization's critical agenda, contributors to this special issue are expected to problematize the concept of story – not all narratives are stories but neither can story be viewed unquestioningly as an invariant genre that transcends ages and discourses. More importantly, contributors are expected to problematize the concept of change that all too often becomes a cliché or a given in managerialist discourses. Contributors to this special issue will be expected to engage critically with discourses of change, examining how change is constructed through different types of narrative as renewal, managed, contested, superficial or indeed fictitious and phoney.

Core issues and themes of the special issue

Building on a shared interest in research assumptions that favour pluralism, relativism and subjectivity interest in storytelling has evolved from a focused concern with stories as *in vivo* artefacts to an understanding that stories are implicated in all aspects of organizational life. Today, stories or narratives are recognized to be not only a form of data, but a theoretical lens, a methodological approach, and various combinations of these. Change, in its many guises, is one major domain of organizational inquiry to which the attention of the storytelling community has occasionally been turned.

At the same time, this literature is far from monolithic. There is, for instance, a distinction to be made between those who see stories as means for accomplishing change (often in a crassly performative manner, where stories serve as techniques for managing meaning and manipulating people), and those who understand 'change' to be constituted by alterations in the storylines that contest the narrative space of

organizations. There are considerable variations in the extent to which such studies are reflexively told, the degree of agency ascribed to actors, and the level of sophistication with which these tales of change are sensitive to issues of hegemony, surveillance, control, and resistance. It is for these reasons that a critical engagement with both the storytelling and the change literature promises to open up new opportunities for theoretical breakthroughs.

Submissions that build upon this work are invited for a Special Issue of *Organization* that explores storytelling and change. The focus of this issue lies firmly on stories and storytelling rather than more widely on narratives and discourse, both of which have provided in the past fecund frameworks for studying change.

We are open to multiple inquiry frames and agnostic about specific methods, as long as each contribution provides critical insights into storytelling and change. We are open equally to empirical and theoretical pieces, and hope to attract submissions from a wide range of empirical settings and critical theoretical perspectives. The following themes reflect (but do not exhaust) the kinds of submissions we are inviting:

- Organizational change involving positive and negative experiences (from rebirth and regeneration to destruction and decay) as experienced by different participants
- Resistance to and contestation of such change
- Personal change, and correspondingly reflections on identity and subjectivity
- Wider social and organizational transformation, intermeshed with personal narratives
- Planned and unplanned change, possibly following crises or unexpected wider social developments
- Changes following restructuring, the introduction of new technologies or the arrivals of new significant figures in organizations

Submission: Papers must be sent electronically to organization@wbs.ac.uk before 31 January 2008 as Word e-mail attachments, indicating **Storytelling and Change** in the subject line of the email. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in every issue of *Organization* and also available on the journal's website: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journalsProdManSub.nav?prodId=Journal200981>.

Papers should be between 5000 and 8000 words and will be blind reviewed following the journal's standard process. For further information contact the Guest Editors: Andrew D. Brown (A.D.Brown@Bath.ac.uk), Yiannis Gabriel (y.gabriel@rhul.ac.uk) or Silvia Gherardi (silvia.gherardi@soc.unitn.it).