

## Call for Papers

### Sixth Colloquium on Philosophy and Organization Studies (PHILOS)

Affiliated with the International Symposium on Process Organization Studies

[www.process-symposium.com](http://www.process-symposium.com)

#### Theme:

**Politics, Rationality and Organization**

#### General track:

**Submissions taking any philosophical lens to explore organizational phenomena are invited**

**22-24 June 2026**

Minoa Palace Resort, Chania, Crete, Greece (<https://www.minoapalace.gr/>)

#### Conveners:

**Alessia Contu**, University of Massachusetts, USA

**Mollie Painter**, Nottingham Business School, UK

**Jörgen Sandberg**, University of Queensland, Australia

**Haridimos Tsoukas**, University of Cyprus, Cyprus & University of Warwick, UK

**Mike Zundel**, University of Liverpool, UK

#### Thematic Conveners:

**Caleb Bernacchio**, University of Loyola, US

**Johan Gersel**, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

**Martyna Sliwa**, University of Bath, UK

**Morten S. Thaning**, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

#### Keynote Speakers:

**Paul S. Adler** is Professor of Management and Organization, of Sociology, and of Environmental Studies at the University of Southern California. He holds the Marshall Business School's Harold Quinton Chair in Business Policy. In 2021 he received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Academy of Management for his work in Organization and Management Theory.

**Yannis Stavrakakis** is Professor of Political Discourse Analysis at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His publications include *Lacan and the Political* (Routledge, 1999), *The Lacanian Left* (Edinburgh University Press/SUNY Press, 2007), and *Populist Discourse: Recasting Populism Research* (Routledge, 2024). He has also edited the *Routledge Handbook of Psychoanalytic Political Theory* (2020) and co-edited the *Research Handbook on Populism* (Edward Elgar, 2024).

**Nadia Urbinati** is The Kyriakos Tsakopoulos Professor of Political Theory, Columbia University, USA, former co-editor of *Constellations*, author of *Me The People: How Populism Transforms Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2019); *The Tyranny of the Moderns* (Yale University Press 2015); and *Democracy Disfigured: Opinion, Truth and the People* (Harvard University Press, 2014).

## **Rationale**

Although not always acknowledged, generating theories about organizational phenomena inevitably invokes philosophical questions. These are meta-questions that focus on - as well as critique - the frameworks, categories, and concepts that populate the ways of thinking about, researching, and justifying knowledge claims within organization studies (Mir, Willmott and Greenwood, 2016; Tsoukas and Chia, 2011; Van de Ven, 2007). Philosophical questions are thus stimulated by concerns within the scholarly practices that organizational scientists typically engage in, encouraging us to reflect on what we do and why we do it.

Scholars can carry out their research without ever having to address philosophical meta-questions. However, philosophical questions arise when researchers stumble in their efforts to make sense of the empirical world, when their theories are challenged, or when there are calls for conceptual clarity and integration of existing theories. During these times, accepted frameworks and concepts of organizational inquiry come under scrutiny (Powell, 2001; Tsoukas, 2019; Tsoukas and Chia, 2011). Philosophy also comes in helpful when it sets up stumbling blocks for theorists whose frameworks and logics start to look a bit too smooth, neat and clear in the face of inherently messy, unclear and problematic organizational realities. The influence of power disparities, histories of discrimination, and complex processes of subject formation, and the possibility of dissent and activism, also begs philosophical interrogation (Contu, 2020; Painter, Perezts, Deslandes, 2021). The insights of political philosophy, feminist and queer analyses, postcolonialism and critical race theory, also have a lot to offer organizational theorizing (Burchiellaro, 2021; Pullen, Rhodes and Thanem, 2017; Nkomo, 2021).

Philosophical questions are essentially conceptual in character (Uygur, 1964): they are concerned with the nature (or meaning) of the concepts we use to describe, interpret, understand, and explain organizations (including the concepts ‘describe’, ‘interpret’, ‘understand’, ‘explain’ and ‘organizations’). For example, questions such as how we should think about organizational change, routines, strategy, learning, decision-making, leadership, organizational ethics or aesthetics are not empirical but conceptual. They, therefore, invite us to think more clearly, systematically and/or creatively about the conceptual categories we habitually use to make sense of phenomena of interest. A philosophical approach to organization studies aims to scrutinize, critique, and elucidate key concepts, modes of thinking and researching, as well as ways of justifying knowledge claims commonly used in the scholarly practice of organization studies (Tsoukas, 2019; Tsoukas, Sandberg, Fayard and Zundel, 2024). How we create, formulate, translate and communicate meaning in organizations make hermeneutic analyses of both concepts and practices an urgent requirement.

As issues and contentions on organizational values, purpose, responsibility and their practices and impact become paramount in managerial and societal concerns, philosophical scrutiny emerges as a crucial endeavour prompting questions related to ethics, freedom, truth, dignity, care, rights, and reason to develop new knowledge and enhance comprehension, aiding, thus, discernment, decision making, and responsible action.

Similar to other institutionalized practices, organizational research legitimates and takes for granted particular ways of engaging with, observing, and talking about the world. Insofar as this is the case, some closure of meaning is inevitably brought about. Philosophical inquiry helps to counter such closure by questioning commonly accepted meanings underlying research practices, as well as cultivating an inquisitive disposition and openness. As Foucault (1985: 9) eloquently put it: philosophical inquiry is first and foremost an “endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimizing what is already known.”

This is exactly what PHILOS aims to achieve: encouraging researchers to conduct philosophically informed explorations of organizational phenomena that problematize existing conceptual categories and frameworks, and advancing new ones. By doing so, it seeks to make fresh distinctions, create new concepts, and open up new inquiry spaces that lead to the development of novel and impactful theories.

### **Purpose, Venue, and Organization**

The aim of the PHILOS Colloquium is to consolidate and further develop ongoing efforts to advance a philosophical approach to organization studies. The aim is *not* to contribute to philosophy itself, but to advance a more philosophically oriented organization studies that will pursue both critique and new conceptual advancements in the field.

PHILOS is affiliated with the International Symposium on Process Organization Studies (PROS). It is an annual event that takes place immediately before or after, and at the same venue as PROS. A reduced fee will be offered to those who take part in both.

The Sixth PHILOS Colloquium will take place on **22-24 June 2026**, at the Minoa Palace Resort, Chania, Crete. (<https://www.minoapalace.gr/>). The Symposium venue, comfortable, relaxing, and situated by the sea in one of the most beautiful Greek islands, will provide an ideal setting for participants to relax and engage in creative dialogues. Similar to PROS, the PHILOS Colloquium is organized in two tracks – a **General Track** and a **Thematic Track**. Each is described below.

1. The *General Track* it includes papers that draw on any kind of philosophy to explore organizational phenomena

The general track invites papers from researchers who, drawing from any philosophy, wish to critique and/or further develop current understandings about any organizational topic or type of theorizing in organization studies (e.g., routines, sensemaking, leadership, improvisation, organizational knowledge and learning, institutions, change, innovation, decision making, strategy, etc.). The intention with the General Track is to be as broad as possible, not to favour any particular philosophical perspective or theme.

The *Thematic Track* includes contributions addressing the particular theme of the Colloquium every year.

For **2026** the theme is:

### **Politics, Rationality and Organization**

The political stakes of management and organization are becoming all too vivid. Societal institutions are currently facing fundamental deep-seated political conflicts about the values and aims of communal life. We suggest that organization studies takes a step back to illuminate the political dimension of organizations from a philosophical perspective. The sixth PHILOS symposium proposes to use philosophical thought as medium for analyzing themes such as the role of reason in organizing, the nature of community in organizations, the political ideals of organizing, and the new forms of authoritarian and autocratic power structures that organizations must increasingly reckon with.

In Plato's dialogue *The Statesman*, we learn that, for Socrates, the art of politics is first and foremost the capacity for rational mediation that can bring conflictual or even opposing societal forces into a meaningful and fruitful tension. The 'weaving' of human community is the image used by Socrates to designate this primary task of the politician (Plato, 1995: 277 A). In this foundational perspective of Western philosophy on politics, individual and collective, actors are assumed to be guided by values that are never

immediately in agreement. Therefore, the social bond must continually be rewoven; it must be organized. Plato's most famous student, Aristotle established a conception of politics as the most fundamental element within the branch of practical philosophy, since politics concerns the institutional foundations for the good life (Aristotle, 2019, 1996).

If politics is the weaving together of a human community, then a pressing question is what threads the tapestry is woven out of. According to a dominant economic conception, the tapestry of community is solely woven out of the personal preferences and convictions of individualized subjects (Jensen & Meckling, 1998). According to this view, there is nothing in common that we as human beings essentially share commitment to, beyond our minimal shared occupation with satisfying our personal goals. On this Humean (Hume, 1978; Schroeder, 2007) view, rationality is exclusively instrumental rationality, and politics becomes the goal of showing why the pursuit of a form community is in fact in everyone's personal interest.

The *logos*-tradition in Western philosophy, stretching from Plato and Aristotle over Aquinas to Kant and Hegel and beyond endorses a stronger conception of rationality and shared human commitment. According to this tradition, it is inherent to judgement that it aims at objective truth (Shah & Velleman, 2005; Williams, 1973), and inherent to political action that it strives towards justification in terms of the public good or the just (Dancy, 2000; Korsgaard, 1996; Plato, 1995; Rawls, 1999; Scanlon, 1998). This allows for a substantive notion of rationality, where we can legitimately demand that people justify their actions and convictions by showing how they accord with publicly acceptable criteria. Mere internal coherence and efficiency are no longer adequate conditions for rationality. A judgement must also be true and an action good or just for them to be rational.

In the tradition of virtue ethics, this view emphasizes the intrinsic link between ethics and politics (Bernacchio, Foss & Lindenberg, 2024; MacIntyre, Bernacchio & Couch, 2015). On this stronger philosophical conception of rationality, commitments to the pursuit of truth and public goodness function as the very core of what it is to be self-conscious rational subject (Korsgaard, 2009a). In the perspective, a post-truth society is an aberrant form of community beset with internal contradictions. The post-truth form of collective organization is a conceptualization of our community which we can at best pretend to exist in, but only because we tactically or unconsciously ignore the many places where truth retains its guiding function in communal interaction. Similarly, a conception of politics as structured around mere power or self-interest becomes a masquerade, pretending to understand the philosophical political tradition, while having abandoned the core political ideals of justice and collective flourishing, which are the guiding concepts this tradition has tried to articulate.

If we allow room for this stronger notion of rationality, then politics become more than mere exercises of power or the pursuit of individual satisfaction within a collective. Rather, it allows for a form of non-authoritarian subjugation, where the better argument demands us to freely acknowledge that our beliefs need revision and that, despite their effectiveness, our forms of organizing are socially unacceptable (Habermas, 1996; Steiner, 2012). While rationality and politics can thus be studied individually, they both alter their character once politics is conceived as having an inherent obligation to rational deliberation and rationality is conceived substantially as having objectivity as its aim.

Since its Ancient beginnings, political philosophy has – on the basis of radically different cultural and intellectual assumptions – debated how best to weave the institutional foundations of justice and the good life. A number of these positions in political philosophy from Thomas Aquinas to Judith Butler, have found their way into organization studies. They have been used to reconceptualize central questions of organizational research, ranging from the degradation of work (Braverman, 1998; Knights & Willmott, 1990) and the nature of the

firm (Sison & Fotradana, 2012) to the possibilities of intellectual activism (Contu, 2020), and the relation between power and the public sphere (Jørgensen, 2020). Such studies demonstrate the potential for bringing nuanced and updated interpretations of important classical and contemporary political philosophies to bear on important discussions within organization studies.

Among philosophical disciplines, political philosophy is one of the most obviously applicable to organization studies. It can support the insistence on the irreducible role of values, goals and ends in organizations to enable actors to orient their actions and judgements. What aims or ends should we organize for – and how should we best organize to achieve our common aims? Are there shared aims that we are all rationally obliged to acknowledge, such as, potentially, the pursuit of freedom, equality, or sustainability. These fundamentally political questions have animated the writings of philosophers for millennia. Philosophical attention to the teleological dimension of organizations can critically clarify unquestioned assumptions about the nature of organizational ends and help us conceive a more adequate relation between means and common ends (Ghoshal, 2005; Korsgaard, 2009b). While the normative status of aims is obviously an important question of ethics, business ethicists argue that this question can be more adequately addressed by a political philosophy of the firm. However, views on what tradition of political thought should orient such a project differ substantially (Adler, 2019; Heath et al., 2010; Singer, 2019;). Philosophy can also help to re-evaluate the concepts that have figured as the ends of organization since the inception of organization studies, notions such as reason (Thaning et al., 2020), humanity (Gasparin et al., 2020; Johnsen et al., 2021; Kogut et al., 2020) and justice (Lechterman & Mair, 2024).

Under the thematic heading of ‘Politics, Rationality and Organization’ we invite contributions on themes including, but not limited to:

**Reason, governance and the status of truth.** How should we conceive of governance so that it can take multiple values, beyond the maximization of profit, into account? Recently the economistic assumptions that have heavily influenced CSR (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and business ethics (Heath, 2014) have been challenged. Criticizing the static view that rational reflection in governance must take interests as given and preferences as fixed, scholars have developed transformative theories of rational deliberation in governance (Gersel & Johnsen, 2020; Linden & Freeman, 2017). In the wake of ‘alternative facts’ and the phenomenon of post-truth politics, the pragmatist critique of objective truth appears in a new light (Rorty, 1979). Should management and organization studies embrace or reject the idea that language can be used to refer to a mind-independent world and that judgements can express objective facts (Knight & Tsoukas, 2018)?

**DEI matters.** Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is an established research topic in organization studies (Bendl, 2015; Just et al., 2021). The term refers to the ways organizations work to ensure fair treatment, full involvement and a sense of belonging for everyone, especially members of historically disadvantaged groups and people who have been left out or treated unfairly in the past because of their identity or disability. In recent years, and in particular since the reelection of Donald Trump in 2024, the DEI agenda has suffered considerable backlash both at the corporate and government level (Prasad & Śliwa, 2024). What is the status of different conceptions of reason and rationality in the field of DEI? How can political philosophy help us understand the political conflicts about DEI both within organizations and in the broader public (Butler, 1990; Butler, 2024; Rawls, 2005)? What are the preconditions for pursuing the aims of the DEI agenda in different political contexts (Eger, 2025)? What is the prospect of cultivating political emotions such as compassion to create a more decent political sphere (Nussbaum, 2013; Srinivasan, 2022)?

**Instrumental rationality and the politics of algorithms.** Occluding the discussion of aims and values in organizational theory and practice can help to maintain the comfortable illusion of a merely neutral focus on organizational efficiency. Indeed, political philosophers have diagnosed the focus on purely instrumental forms of rationality as the main political pitfall of modern organizations (Heidegger, 1959; 1977; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2015). How can the philosophical critique of technocracy be reinvigorated, for example to analyze the political implications of basing organizational decision-making on algorithms (Zuboff, 2019)? How should we conceive of technocracy in organizations in the age of generative AI? Whose interests do current regimes of technocratic governance serve? (Chandler & Fuchs, 2019).

**The ontology of the corporation.** At the institutional level, political theorists and organizational scholars have in recent years investigated the ontological question about the nature of the business corporation (Ciepley, 2013, 2023; Classen, 2022; Veldman & Willmott, 2022). These scholars thereby challenge the long dominant view within mainstream organization studies that the corporation is reducible to ‘nexus of contracts’ (Jensen, 1976) and have begun to articulate new theories of corporate governance on the basis of their revision of corporate ontology. What possibilities of rethinking justice in corporate governance does the debate on corporate ontology open? How can the history of the corporation as a political entity help us reevaluate the political ontology of corporations (Ireland, 2010)?

**(Post)Neoliberal political rationality and ‘family values.’** Political theories of neoliberalism have helped scholars to describe the contemporary organization of work and its modes of power (Crowley, 2014; Fleming, 2014; Gersel & Thaning, 2022). What are the political preconditions and implications of precarious forms of employment that continue to proliferate (Standing, 2011, 2023)? Inspired by the conception of liberalism and neoliberalism as a form of political rationality (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 2008), or as a *dispositive* (Raffnsøe et al., 2014; Villadsen, 2019), subject formation has been analyzed in terms of the commitment to relentlessly develop one’s human capital (Fleming, 2017). Political theorists have argued that neoliberal governmentality has led to the erosion of education, civic values and the hollowing out of democratic culture (Brown, 2015). Should right wing populist governmental strategies be understood as break with neoliberal governmentality? (Barratt & Śliwa, 2025; Kerr et al. 2024). The compatibility between neoliberalism and the social conservative agenda of ‘family values’ has been emphasized (Cooper, 2017). How can we analyze the (unstable) alliance between social conservatism and economic neoliberalism in contemporary organizations?

**Authoritarianism and democracy.** Recently, attention has been drawn to a strand of neoliberal thought that has inspired attempts across the world to organize capitalist zones of exception from Hong Kong and Singapore to Silicon Valley and Dubai where corporations can rule unfettered by liberal rule of law and the constraints of democracy (Fredona & Reinert, 2024; Slobodian, 2023;)? How should we understand the ideological foundations of the authoritarian strand of neoliberalism and its implications for power and freedom in organization (Biebricher, 2020; Brown, 2019; Slobodian, 2025)? Can we conceive the democratic theories of work organization and corporate governance as points of departure for countering the authoritarian tendencies in work organizations (Anderson, 2017; Ferreras, 2017; Frega et al., 2019)?

**Entrepreneurship and innovation between dark enlightenment and the common good.** Entrepreneurship and innovation have been the focus of attention for decades both in the public debate and in management education and research. However, an authoritarian self-

conception among some Silicon Valley tech-entrepreneurs has recently become more vocal (Andreesen, 2024). This strand of thought connects the idea of capitalism as a process of creative destruction facilitated by extraordinary individuals (Schumpeter, 2010) with anti-egalitarian and non-democratic conceptions of authority and government; a philosophy of ‘dark enlightenment’ in the rhetoric of one of its proponents (Land, 2022). How can anti-egalitarian (Nietzsche, 2022) and authoritarian (Schmitt, 2015; 2021) philosophies help us analyze such contemporary trends in tech-entrepreneurship? Conversely, how can new approaches to innovation provide us with an alternative conception of innovation and the role of entrepreneurs centered around public value and the common good (Mazzucato, 2013, 2022; Mazzucato et al., 2023)?

**Community and identity.** How do political communities depend on hope (Lear, 2006)? How should we conceive of community (Adler, 2015) and freedom (Thaning et al., 2024) in work organizations? Fundamentally, the perspective of political philosophy raises the question whether organizational theory and practice should invoke a communal identity in its attempt to orient the efforts of governance to make organizations more just (Bernacchio, 2020; Thaning & Gersel, 2025). Or did post-structuralist philosophers have a point when they argued that every notion of substantial rationality or communal identity is problematic, because it ignores the belonging of all human beings to a ‘community without identity’ (Agamben, 1993; Nancy, 1991; ten Bos, 2005; Thaning et al., 2016)?

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## Submissions

Interested participants must submit an extended abstract of about 1000 words for their proposed contribution by **February 9th, 2026** through our main website: [www.process-symposium.com](http://www.process-symposium.com)

The submission file should contain authors' names, institutional affiliations, email and postal addresses, and indicate the Track for which the submission is made (General or Thematic). Authors will be notified of acceptance or otherwise by **March 2nd, 2026**. Full contributions/papers must be submitted by **June 8th<sup>h</sup>, 2026**.