Culture and Organization
Call for Papers

Simondon: Individuating New Links Between Technology, Culture and Organization

Organization studies scholars have researched the relations between technology and organization extensively, ranging from the technological imperative (Leavitt and Whisler 1958) through the social construction of technology (Bijker 1995; Law and Singleton 2005) to subtle interplays between technology, its uses and management strategies (Marcus and Robey, 1988; Zuboff 1988; Orlikowski 1992). Many have emphasized the control possibilities of technology over labour behaviours and worker subjectivities. Fifty years ago, Woodward (1958, 1965), Burns and Stalker (1961) and Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) were already posing questions about the relationships between organizational structures, identities and technologies. The themes of organizational complexity, technology and rates of change are truly classics in our field. The recent (re-)discovery of Gilbert Simondon (1924-1989), who heavily influenced philosophers such as Deleuze, Stiegler and Latour, provides challenging alternative ways of conceiving of technology in its relation to culture and organizations.

First, Simondon's thought enables us to think technology beyond social constructivism (Massumi 2009). According to him invention, and not mere innovation, is both possible and of profound significance and importance to what we might call organization. Simondon adds that the rejection of technology, on the grounds of its apparently repressive and dehumanizing uses, is a mistake and robs human society of some of its crucial creative possibilities. In developing these insights Simondon mined the metaphor of the crystal. For Simondon the crystal hovers between emergence and determinacy. It is neither alive nor static and just a small irritant, a minor 'difference', is needed to launch it into unlimited creativity. His point was that normal categories of dualism are inadequate for creating possibilities with and through technology. Individuations are always at the same time psychic, collective and technical (Stiegler 2003).

So we are interested in asking a series of questions specific to culture and organization in relation to these provocative proposals. Can Simondon's model of individuation and invention

help us better understand the entrepreneurship process (Styhre 2008), for example? Can the various modes of existence of technical objects (Simondon 1958) be echoed by different modes of existence in organization and society, of which the network (ANT) is for Latour (2013) now only one possibility?

Second, we want to ask a series of questions around subjectivity and identity. Simondon challenges our conception of these now well-worn tropes in organization studies as he leads us towards a thinking of the pre-organizational. Technologies do not just shape subjectivities and work identities; they pertain overall to processes of individuation. Simondon (1989) provides us with a veritable philosophy of individuation, where technologies, subjectivities and structures are processes. His key insight is that existence does not begin with individuals, but with pre-individual possibility able to generate identities, actions and possibilities. The pre-individual is the source of individuation in the human personality and in its products. Simondon calls upon us to explore the pre-individual grounds of organizing and to attend to the pre-organizational becoming of order. From what sources of possibility, relatedness and action does organizing actually emerge? How do the bits and pieces fall into some sort of order via organizing, or even become organization? Is there a link between the pre-organizational and technology-as-palimpsest (Jorges and Czarniawska 1998)?

Third, with Simondon technology does not just impact organization or the distribution of knowledge (Barley 1996; Black et al. 2004); it has its own trajectory (its own individuation) and is a source of (organizational) creativity. On the one hand, Simondon saw all too well that 'dead labour' can make work - including complex relatedness, dynamic processes and genuine creativity - impossible. He was not an uncritical and naïve servant of technology or of industry, but rather a spokesperson for work seen as an invaluable resource for human progress. On the other hand, Simondon saw technological reflexivity as a potential source of dynamism. To him, technology is not only the materialization of human potential – that is, firstly the re-making of human limbs as machines and subsequently the re-making of minds as IT. Technology entails the serendipitous combining of apparatus, aesthetics and materiality in new possibilities. Technology does not just steal our minds, converting them into machines; technology lets our minds combine with materials to do new things, generating alternative actions and launching us into new spaces.

What then can we can learn by looking at technologies not only as objects and systems but, as Simondon did, by looking at their genesis? Should we not refer back to the once famous materiology praised by Bergson, Simondon or Dagognet (Latour 2013)? For this special issue of *Culture and Organization*, we invite papers informed by Simondonian critical optimism and his process philosophy of technology. We welcome contributions offering insights into (and alternatives to):

- Individuation of self, other, and technology;
- Organizing as processes of (critical) self-creation;

- Creativity, from the pre-individual to the pre-organizational;
- New perspectives on an old theme: technology and organizational structure;
- Technologies of individuation: social, organizational and material;
- Humanism and materialism, work and labour, as complementary;
- Innovation and invention; repression, renewal and the generative;
- Simondon and his others: Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty, Stiegler, Rancière, Latour.

This list is intended to be indicative only. Innovative interpretations of the call are encouraged. With its long tradition of inter-disciplinary approaches, *Culture and Organization* invites papers that draw insights and approaches from across a range of social sciences and humanities. In addition to scholars working in management and organization studies we welcome contributions from anthropology, sociology, philosophy, politics, art history, communication, film, gender studies, cultural studies and so on.

We also welcome papers from any disciplinary, paradigmatic or methodological perspective as long as they directly address the theme of a Simondonian approach to the analysis of technology, culture and organization.

Submission and informal enquiries

Please ensure that all submissions to the special issue are made via the ScholarOne *Culture and Organization* site at http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/gsco. You will have to sign up for an account before you are able to submit a manuscript. Please ensure when you do submit that you select the relevant special issue (volume 23, issue 1) to direct your submission appropriately. If you experience any problems please contact the editors of this issue.

The deadline for manuscript submission is **6th November 2015.**

Style and other instructions on manuscript preparation can be found at the journal's website:http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/gsco20/current. Manuscript length should not exceed 8000 words, including appendices and supporting materials. Please also be aware that any images used in your submission must be your own, or where they are not you must already have permission to reproduce them in an academic journal. You should make this explicit in the submitted manuscript.

Please direct informal enquiries to the special issue editors, Hugo Letiche (hletiche@gmail.com) and Jean-Luc Moriceau (ioanes1@yahoo.fr).

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