Call for papers

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Anchoring International Organizations in the Study of Organizational Sociology

Guest editors :

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This Special Issue of the Swiss Journal of Sociology (SJS) aims to bring together scholars who adopt a sociological perspective to the study of international organizations (IOs). IOs have historically been studied by jurists and later by political scientists through the prism of theories in international relations (IR). In the past two decades, growing scholarship in IR has shifted the focus to analyzing IOs as actors in their own right. To this end, scholars have not only developed new methodologies, traditionally used by anthropologists and organizational sociologists, but have also embraced sociology as a discipline and more precisely the fields of organizational sociology and organization theory. More specifically, IR scholars have shifted their focus from studying IOs through the prism of Member States in an intergovernmental perspective to one centered around the concept of organization building on Weber's definition of bureaucracy (Ness and Brechin 1988, Brechin and Ness 2013, Barnett and Finnemore 1999). This approach has led scholars to understand IOs as organizations composed of various actors, namely IO staff, IO member states and IO civil society (Weiss, Carayannis, and Jolly 2009) the latter conceptualized as temporary organizations in intergovernmental negotiations more specifically (Kimber 2020).

A sociological approach thus allows to study IOs as organizations within which various actors compete, develop strategies and perform routines and practices, which in turn comply and produce norms and values with the inherent target to have impact on a global scale. On a theoretical level, the sociology of organizations allows – among others – to go beyond rigid categories such as governmental/non-governmental (Nay 2021) and to understand how IOs adapt to their environment (Schemeil 2013). These nuances resonate with earlier shifts in the past century starting with Merton in the 1940s who challenged the rationalist paradigm – inherited by Taylor and Ford's scientific work – to analyze organizations. In particular he began questioning not only the effect of structure on individuals and the dysfunctions within the system, but also organizations in their environment.

Nowadays, and based on seminal work from the 1960s, organizational sociology provides a fascinating basis to study IOs. With contingency theory, researchers may study IOs in their environment and their reliance on resources and technical information which vary and in turn impact the organization structure (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967, Scott 2004, Dairon and Badache forthcoming). Going further institutional theory allows to grasp the cultural features of IO environments (Worrall forthcoming), whereby technical and institutional environments come hand in hand to shed light on regulative, normative and cultural features (Scott 2004). From an interactionist perspective, IOs may be conceived as a set of ongoing interactions and emerging

relationships (Kimber and Maertens forthcoming) whereby hierarchy and domination as concepts are rejected to the benefit of anaylzing power dynamics (Crozier and Friedberg 1977). In this way, "society is not a structure, but a process" (Godwyn and Gittell 2012: 262), which echoes the dynamics of "organizing" (Weick 1993) rather than "organization".

Whether it be studying the 'explicit', the 'objective', the 'formal rules' or the importance of the 'implicit', the 'subjective' such as the chaotic, non-rational features of organizational life with informal patterns of cooperation, shared norms, conflicts between and among managers and workers (Ouchi and Wilkins 1985), organizational sociologists hold powerful methods and perspectives to contribute to the study of IOs. The objective of this Special Issue is twofold. On the one hand, the aim is to gather original contributions that offer an empirical examination of IOs through the lens of organization sociology. On the other, our endeavor is not only to inscribe IO studies as a legitimate object of research for sociologists, but more importantly so, to set a gateway for sociologists, or scholars drawn to organizational sociology to contribute to IR scholarship so far essentially safeguarded by political scientists.

Scholars interested in contributing to this Special Issue in the Swiss Journal of Sociology should submit an abstract of no more than 500 words to the guest editors (leah.kimber@unige.ch and fanny.badache@graduateinstitute.ch). The journal publishes articles in English, French and German. The abstract should clearly state which sociological theories and perspectives are used for the study of IOs. We welcome contributions that adopt a broad range of theoretical and methodological approaches.

Indicative timeline:

- 01 September 2021: Deadline for abstracts
- 20 September 2021: Selection decisions sent to authors
- 15 February 2022: Submission of the full paper to journal
- 01 March 2023: Publication of the special issue 49(1)

References

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*Please submit your proposal for a contribution to the three guest editors by **1 September 2021**: fanny.badache@graduateinstitute.ch or leah.kimber@unige.ch*

Your submission for the special issue should include the following:

- *name, email address, and affiliations of all the authors*
- *title of the paper*
- *abstract of around 500 words, structured as follows: topic, aim, methods, results, discussion, conclusion.*

*The guest editors will decide on the acceptance or rejection of the abstract until **20 September 2021**.*

*Selected authors will be invited to submit their manuscript (max. 8,000 words, 50,000 characters including tables, figures and references) by **15 February 2022**. The manuscripts will go through the usual peer-review process of the Swiss Journal of Sociology. Accepted languages are English, German or French. More information about the Swiss Journal of Sociology and the submission process are available in www.sgs-sss.ch/sociojournal.*

*Publication is planned for **March 2023**.*

For any queries, please contact the guest editors at the e-mail addresses mentioned above.