

# WOA 2024, Università degli studi di Milano-Bicocca, July 3 - 2024



## Crossroads for Organizations: Time, Space and People

### PRESENTATION

The purpose of the WOA 2024 and of the 40th EGOS Colloquium 2024 – hosted by the University of Milan-Bicocca – is to investigate what elements represent the crucial crossroads for organizations of the present and the next future. The concept of “Crossroad” can refer to a place where one road crosses another, an intersection that has the potential to connect people traveling from different sites and moving in different directions. It can be seen both as a central meeting space and as a location “between worlds”, vibrant of vital energy, where people can melt together or assimilate into a harmonious whole with a common culture. At the same time, a crossroad symbolizes a crucial point in time when a decision becomes inevitable: going on the same way, along a straight path, is no longer suitable, and the traveler has to look for new directions to not remain stuck. In this sense, crossroads may also be emblematic of a time of uncertainty, for people not being able to clearly see where to turn to face new incoming issues. Contemporary organizations are at the crossroads in both these connotations: in time, because the potentially pervasive transformations led by digital innovation, massive data, and artificial intelligence call for new strategies of action to be fully and sustainably exploited; in space, since they are dealing with the governance of major humanity challenges (e.g., climate change, migrations, pandemics) in an increasingly interconnected world, and this requires new forms of coordination to achieve effective cooperation, oftentimes at the global level and including heterogeneous institutions (e.g., governments, large corporations, associations, and so forth).

These organizational transformations might be driven by commercial and political interests favouring practices that increase social inequality and make more people experience precariousness and exclusion, not feeling able to depict a future for themselves and their families. As a reaction, populism, protectionism, nationalism, and autarchy might raise in the political debate and undermine trust in social institutions. It is then urgent that organizational scholars take their stand critically redirecting the ongoing discussion towards a serious consideration of the social and societal responsibilities of organizations and searching for alternative solutions that might better encounter the expectation of people – who are at the same time workforce, customers, clients, and citizens – for a positive impact on their lives.

In this perspective, it can be very generative to think of organizations as being at crossroads that break the myth of roads’ continuity embedded in linear decision-making processes and organizational routines.

## AIM, TRACKS AND TOPICS

We encourage organizational scholars participating to the 2024 WOA in Milan to contribute with new empirical evidence and theoretical perspectives on all the themes presented above that may lead us to ask some of the following questions, provided as examples:

- What are the crossroads between organizational policies, public discourses, and everyday practices for intercultural integration? How to put intercultural dialogue and integration into practice within organizations?
- How multicultural social networks can promote ideas flow, creativity, and societal innovation?
- How should we change our decision making when uncertainty increases? What is the new normal of managing in extreme uncertainty when nothing is normal anymore?
- What is the importance of forecasting in times of extreme uncertainty?
- Which new forms of coordination are emerging to achieve effective cooperation at global level and/or including heterogeneous institutions (for example, governments, large corporations, associations, and so forth)?
- How are the relationship among people and among people and organizations taking shape in the “infosphere” (see above: Floridi, 2014), since they become seamlessly connected to each other and surrounded by smart, responsive objects?
- How can organizations be redesigned to enable and empower people “digital happiness” in their “onlife” world?
- How can people in organizations be perceived not only as actors who change the world through technology, but also subjects who are transformed by technology itself?
- How can organizations enhance people’s willingness to experiment with new forms of structuring and routines and generate their own evolution?
- How can crossroads be managed as flux spaces where actors from different industrial sectors, public institutions, associations, and communities can get together allowing the shaping of new evolving ecosystems?
- How can organization studies carry out an effort to reveal basic principles of the complex adaptive systems embedded at the crossroads between different kinds of organizations?
- How to integrate approaches from different disciplines and mix methods from network dynamics and sociology, as well as geography and urban studies to better address the challenge of designing organizations that foster a sustainable evolution for our society?

To guide researchers in framing their potential contributions, in the following table we present some preliminary ideas concerning topics and tracks for the WOA conference. It should be noted that the following represents just some examples, but do not exclude contributions on other topics in the spirit of this conference. Thus, the research community is strongly encouraged, but not limited to making contributions that relate to the following topics:

<b>ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing with More-than-Humans;</li> <li>• Organizing and Collaborating for Shared Value;</li> <li>• Emerging Forms of Organizing;</li> <li>• The Impact of Organizational Practices on Workplace Diversity and Inequality.</li> </ul>
<b>PEOPLE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Hidden Role of Emotions;</li> <li>• Rethinking Organizational Knowledge: People and Technology;</li> <li>• Exploring the Role of Time, Space, and People in Tackling Societal Challenges</li> </ul>
<b>PROCESSES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance at the Crossroad between Structures, Processes, and Leadership;</li> <li>• Organizations for Societal Challenges from a Practice and Process Perspective</li> <li>• Investigating the Processes of Sustainable Organizations</li> </ul>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancing Qualitative Methods: Strengthening Alignment of Theory and Methods in Empirical Organization Studies</li> <li>• Visual Possibilities in Organizational Research</li> <li>• Methodological Crossroads: new interdisciplinary perspectives.</li> </ul>

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS

### **Sessions**

In order to account for the shorter lasting time of this call for paper, with respect to previous years, the Workshop Program will mix up past and recent approaches. We are keeping the distinction between papers and work-in-progress contributions, but the final upload of the full paper (for the paper session) is not mandatory (even if it is strongly encouraged to have the possibility to present and discuss completed research). Thus, we kindly invite scholars to submit to:

1. **Paper sessions (short paper → full paper on a voluntary base):** Short papers presenting completed research - including theoretical, methodological, findings, and discussion and contributions sections – may be submitted in such a session. Authors of short papers accepted to present in a paper session, are invited – but not obliged to- upload a full version of the paper, possibly addressing reviewers' indications, so that the track chairs can circulate them among the authors presenting in the same session.

2. **Work in progress sessions (abstract → poster):** Abstracts about work in progress, research ideas or early-stage works eliciting feedback, must be addressed in this session. Indeed, this session is suitable for idea exchange and open discussion of research projects and ideas in an early phase of development. Authors of abstracts, accepted to be presented in a *work in progress* session, are invited to produce a printed copy of a poster that presents the research in progress. Posters will be on display during the whole conference and there will be dedicated sessions to present and discuss.

### **Submission**

Short papers (Paper session) and abstracts (Work in progress session) must be submitted electronically via EasyChair by the deadline April 15, 2024. Contributions will be double-blind reviewed.

Short papers should comprise 3000 words including graphs, figures, tables, and references. The submission must include a Title page and a Main document, to be uploaded as separated files. Documents should be uploaded in a pdf format.

Structured abstracts should comprise 300 words and should include:

- Purpose
- Design/Methodology /Approach/Intervention
- Results
- Limitations
- Research/Practical Implications
- Originality/Value

Notification of acceptance will be communicated by May 15, 2024.

***Guidelines and criteria for posters***

Work in progress session: Posters are short, printed presentations displayed on large boards (100 h x 70 w centimeters; portrait format). Individual posters will be clustered in thematic work in progress sessions lasting 45-60 minutes each. Since the aim of this session is to generate a dynamic discussion among presenters and the audience, at the beginning a facilitator will lead an introductory round in which each presenter introduces her/his poster with a brief statement about objectives and (expected) results (approx. 3 minutes each). It follows a brief informal discussion (questions, comments, etc.) and then the audience members will have the possibility to go through posters and interact with presenters.

Presenters of the posters are kindly asked to bring handouts of their poster to the session for interested visitors.