



Call for Papers

Organization Theory – Special Themed Section: *Catalysing & Crystallizing*

‘Temporal Fabrics’: Theorizing the Multiplicities and Interdependencies of Time in Organizations and Organizing

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Background

Implicitly or explicitly, theoretical accounts of process typically foreground a single narrative, sequence, line, flow, thread, trajectory, history, or path. Processual theories focus on the temporal progression, or becoming, of people, organizations, technologies, nation-states, institutions, ideas, cultures, conflicts, collaborations, genres, practices, actor-networks or other assemblages. However, even sophisticated accounts of change, stability, and transformation tend to center on one path at a time. For example, widely used concepts like path dependence (Schreyögg & Sydow, 2011; Sydow, Schreyögg, & Koch, 2020) and path creation (Garud, Kumaraswamy, & Karnøe, 2010) direct theoretical attention to what happens within a focal path. Although multiplicity has been acknowledged (e.g., Blagoev & Schreyögg, 2025; Feuls, Hernes & Schultz, 2025; Simon & Tamm, 2023; Felt, 2025; Schneiberg, 2007; Djelic & Quack, 2007; Pentland, Mahringer, Dittrich, Feldman & Wolf, 2020; Pentland, Kremser, & Goh, 2025), the interrelations between multiple processes, paths and trajectories remain underexplored.

In this call for papers, we invite scholars to explore and contextualize multiple, intersecting and interdependent temporal lines, narratives, and trajectories, in order to move beyond singularity.

Rallying around and invoking the metaphor of *temporal fabric*, we invite contributions that foreground and theorize temporal multiplicity and interdependencies of time as foundational features of organization and organizing. As a metaphor, temporal fabric suggests that organizing is better understood as a dynamic, multi-stranded weave of intersecting and interdependent temporal developments whose encounters generate the opportunities, constraints, stability and transformations that single-path or single-process thinking cannot account for.

While single-path theory has deepened our understanding of temporality, it tends to suppress the multiplicity of concurrent paths and temporalities (Pentland, Kremser, & Goh, 2025). This is problematic because some of the most vexing problems (and potential solutions to those problems) involve interdependent paths. For example, algorithmic and intelligent technologies are constituted through intersecting technical, organizational, legal, and social paths whose rhythms range from real-time computation to the slow accretion of institutional order. Climate trajectories unfolding over decades continually intersect with shorter-term paths of disaster response, migration, organizational adaptation and infrastructure investment. Different paths have different temporalities but may also differ in other ways, such as legitimacy, scale, inertia or visibility.

Our goal is to *catalyse and crystallize* a next step in temporal theorizing: an explicit shift from single progressions (lines, processes, paths, narratives, threads, etc.) to a temporal fabric. This includes contributions from disciplines ranging from organization theory, sociology, feminism, innovation studies, evolutionary economics, and institutional theory. For example, we see promising avenues of theorizing temporal fabrics in history, outlining the interrelations and interactions of multiple temporalities in technological and ecological change (Simon & Tamm, 2023). Related concepts such as path nets (Pentland et al., 2025), temporal folds (Hernes & Feuls, 2024), temporal complexity (Blagoev and Schreyögg, 2025) or temporal conflict (Antoni, Reinecke & Fotaki 2023; Omidvar, Hadjimichael, Burke, Pyrko, & Chia, 2025; Reinecke & Ansari, 2015) similarly explore how multiple temporalities intersect and interact.

Such theoretical explorations may provide a new perspective on path dependence, which has been a foundational idea in a wide range of fields, including historical institutionalism (Sorensen, 2015; Pierson, 2004), evolutionary economics (Martin & Sunley, 2010), organization theory (Sydow et al., 2020) and innovation studies (Thrane, Blaabjerg, & Møller, 2010). While these theoretical traditions generally adopt a single-path lens whereby institutions, organizations and technologies advance along a single dominant trajectory (Geels, 2010), a temporal fabric perspective, for example, shifts attention to the emergence of a particular technology as an outcome of intersecting and intervening paths whose combination produces outcomes that no single trajectory could have generated alone (Omidvar, Safavi, & Glaser, 2023).

A temporal fabric may also shift our attention to questions of power and politics (Plotnikof & Mumby, 2024), showing whose paths and temporalities are privileged or dominant, as discussed, for instance, in critical time studies (Adam, 1998; Felt, 2025; Freeman, 2010). When multiple paths intersect and a multiplicity of possible paths proceed, power imbalances may occur (Feuls et al., 2025), and the potential for conflict comes to the forefront (Reinecke & Ansari, 2015; Antoni et al., 2023). The metaphor also invites questions about how paths may be used as a resource or political means to gain legitimacy or discredit change, and how actors “power” time (Feuls, Lüthy, & Svejenova, 2023) to reimagine desirable or alternative futures (Gümüşay & Reinecke, 2024) or shape long-term trajectories (Hernes & Feuls, 2024) and temporal patterns (Omidvar et al. 2025).

A temporal fabric also invites views of understanding organizations and organizing as interwoven in a tapestry of lines, a meshwork of human and non-human relations that continuously shape one another (Ingold, 2007). This becomes, for instance, apparent in algorithms and AI systems that process data at granular levels across temporal spans, reconstruct the past in particular ways, and project particular futures in a performative rather than merely predictive manner (Nowotny, 2020; Leonardi & Leavell, 2025).

Objectives and Scope of the Special Themed Section

This envisaged *Catalysing & Crystallizing* section explicitly seeks to bring in voices from the outside and the margins of our scholarly community. Rather than seeking to foster a unified, singular theoretical approach, it looks to advance the field through in-depth engagement among a plurality of approaches in search of provocative and generative new theoretical avenues (see also Höllerer, Quack, & Delbridge, 2026).

Consistent with this vision, this call seeks to meet two goals: to catalyse new directions in processual organization theory, and to crystallize novel theoretical avenues that bring a variety of theoretical traditions into conversation with one another at the multiplicities, intersections and interdependencies of organizational time. The metaphor of temporal fabric functions as a shared conceptual reference point for future theorizing, opening new conversations about temporality, power, innovation, and societal transformation. We encourage bold, reflexive, and generative contributions that push the boundaries of how time, history, and organizing are understood.

The section welcomes theory papers, generative scholarly essays, agenda-setting provocations, and cross-disciplinary syntheses. Empirical illustrations are welcome where they advance theory, but as for all papers published in *Organization Theory* there should be no data-driven theorizing.

Themes and Topics

With this aim in mind, we invite theoretical contributions from organizational studies (and adjacent disciplines) that engage with, extend, or challenge existing perspectives, and we encourage dialogue between disciplines to enhance our understanding of the relational and temporal dynamics of the temporal fabric in organizations and organizing by addressing topics such as the following.

- **Temporal fabric and multiplicity across scales:** how rhythms, routines, project temporalities, institutional time, and historical epochs encounter and condition one another within and across organizations, organizational fields and larger scales. This involves reframing organizations and organizing as emerging from the intersection, interaction, and co-evolution of multiple trajectories rather than unfolding along a single dominant path or pattern; rethinking institutions, technologies, and innovations as products of intersecting and intervening temporal patterns; applying a multiple temporalities perspective to sustainability transitions, resilience, future making, and post-capitalist organizing.
- **Temporal fabric and path dependence:** how heterogeneous social and technical paths interact in organizing processes. This involves reconceptualizing path dependence as an emergent property of interdependent paths rather than linear lock-in along one trajectory;

investigating how algorithmic technologies actively reconstruct pasts, prefigure futures, generate new paths, and foreclose others.

- **Temporal fabric and assemblages, folds, and holdings-together:** how heterogeneous temporal paths are bound, layered, and held in tension. This involves bridging theories of directionality with perspectives emphasizing recurrence, patterning, rhythms, and entrainment; exploring what assemblage theory, actor–network theory, ecological thinking and process philosophy contribute when their temporal commitments are made explicit.
- **Temporal fabric and computation:** how algorithms and AI restructure and rearchitect temporal fabrics in and around organizations. This involves examining how technologies participate in the constitution of temporal fabric by generating new paths, and foreclosing others in ways that single-path thinking cannot accommodate.
- **Temporal fabric and institutions, history and innovation:** how actors mobilize, contest, or “power” temporal trajectories and paths to gain legitimacy, discredit alternatives, or shape long-term futures. This involves thinking through innovation, institutions, and historical institutionalism beyond a linear, single temporal pattern; exploring how power operates through the visibility, suppression, or orchestration of particular paths and temporalities.

Submissions need not adopt a single framework; what unites them is a commitment to moving beyond single-path process models and encouraging dialogue across theoretical traditions.

Submission Process

Manuscripts should be submitted through Organization Theory’s online submission system, with the appropriate Special Themed Section selected at the “Manuscript Type” option, by January 31, 2027. Authors should follow the journal’s submission guidelines (<https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/OTT>). For administrative support and general queries, please contact Sophia Tzagaraki, Managing Editor of Organization Theory, at orgtheoryjournal@gmail.com.

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