



## Considering Genocide in Relation to Organization and Management – Choices, Actions and Consequences

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of *ephemera: theory & politics in organization* (www.ephemeraweb.org) to be edited by

**Peter Stokes & Yiannis Gabriel**

Genocide has been a recurrent and extremely disturbing event in human history, epitomised by the mass-exterminations committed during the Twentieth Century. Although nascent, the 21st Century, suggests that the potential for this form of atrocity continues. The term genocide was coined by the Polish scholar Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) and is derived from the roots *genos* (meaning tribe or race) and *-cide* (to kill, to massacre). Definitions, by their inherent inclusive and exclusive nature, are prone to being problematic, as victims of atrocities are eager to claim the label of genocide for their sufferings while perpetrators seek to deny it. Attempts to define genocide have proved perplexingly difficult and controversial but, nevertheless, one such definition states genocide as acts “committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group” (Article Two, United Nations Convention on Genocide January 1951).

Genocide presents a challenge for theorists of organization that has not been adequately taken up. In the past, theorists of organization, with some notable exceptions, have approached genocide as a marginal, exceptional phenomenon and have failed to address it in a systematic way. Every genocide requires at least a degree of planning, coordination and control, in short management. Resources must be made available, actions must be co-ordinated, information must be shared and individuals must be motivated to perform different tasks. Thus, genocide, whether in Armenia, the Holocaust, Stalin’s purges, Mao’s Cultural Revolution or, more recently, Rwanda or ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the Balkan conflict requires extensive and sustained efforts by individuals and collectives to organise and manage physical, informational and symbolic resources. Following a genocide, organization is vital for ‘mopping up’ humanitarian operations as well as for setting up war crimes trials or truth and reconciliation hearings.

This special issue grows from a deep conviction of the editors that genocide is not a phenomenon at the margins of organization and management, but raises core issues and concerns. It aims at generating discussions and commentaries on many different facets of genocide. Killing on a large-scale inevitably forces theorists to address issues that are common to other mass-produced and mass-administered projects. Power, structure, bureaucracy, hierarchy, goals, logistics, record-keeping, identity construction, resistance, control, morality, motivation, ideology, are all concepts from organizational theory that acquire new meanings and new articulations within ‘a business of genocide’. The special issue aims at stimulating discussions that will enhance our scholarly understanding of such phenomena. The special issue also wants to encourage the exploration of genocide as a symbolic complex at the heart of many contemporary organizations and societies, where it can assume forms such as massive downsizing and layoffs, dramatic deskilling and alienation, destruction of reputation and systematic oppression, exploitation and marginalization of individuals on the basis of gender, age, race, sexual preference, religion and other qualities.

Genocide has been extensively discussed in a range of literature genres including novels, factual historical accounts, inmate and guard diaries, survivors’ stories and

autobiographies to name a few. In academic spheres, historians, psychologists and sociologists, have provided many accounts which seek to explain the intertwining of individual and group thoughts, behaviours and actions in genocidal atrocities and their relationships with organizational forms (Levi, 1963; Bauman, 1989; Chalk and Jonassohn, 1990; Rees, 2005; Balakien, 2005) In the sphere of organization and management, there has been a recognition of the need to scrutinise, cast light on and develop analyses in relation to genocidal episodes (frequently drawing primarily on Zygmunt Bauman's influential work *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989) but there is also an acknowledgement that such analyses have not gone far enough (Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis, 2005: 178-179; Grey, 2005: 25). Howard F. Stein has explored the exportation of a mass extermination symbolic into corporate America in the form of mass downsizing and dismissals. This special issue seeks to promote the development of more profound and more encompassing theory in relation to individual, organizational and social dimensions of genocide.

The special issue call for papers builds on the very successful work conducted at the 23rd EGOS colloquium at the Wirtschaftsuniversitat, Vienna (Austria) and invites papers which consider some of the following issues raised by genocide for theorists of organization:

- Cultural and social perspectives on genocide in relation to management and organization
- Management and organization of the economic and logistical aspects of genocide
- Ethical issues raised by genocide for perpetrators, victims, neutrals and others
- The deployment of different social technologies of genocide, including Taylorist, Fordist and Post-Fordist variants
- The politics of genocide including discussions of control, resistance, complicity, compliance, collaboration and deception in genocide
- Individual and organizational resistance to genocide in part or whole association with issues of autobiography, engagement and the (non) separation of professional and private identities
- Psychodynamics of genocide, including distance, otherness and identity construction
- The exportation of a symbolic of genocide into the corporate world through the routinization of mass dismissals and downsizings
- Discursive approaches to genocide, including the rhetorics of genocide and metaphorical uses of genocide vocabulary for non-war situations, including work exploitation and oppression, systemic industrial accidents and lay-offs of staff
- The politics of identifying something as genocide
- The semiotics of genocide, notably in relation identifying different classes of people as victims, perpetrators, etc.
- The lessons of genocidal episodes for everyday organizational and management settings and politics

We envisage a wide range of approaches in seeking to develop fresh contemporary understanding and theory of this dark phenomenon in relation to contemporary organizational life.

**Deadline for submissions: 1 February 2009**

All contributions should be submitted to the special issue editors via email. Please note that three categories of contributions are invited: articles, notes and reviews. Information can be found at: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/call.htm>. Articles and notes will undergo a double blind review process.

All submissions should follow *ephemera's* submission guidelines, available at: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/submit.htm>.

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**About the special issue editors:**

Peter Stokes is Principal Lecturer/Division Leader in the Lancashire Business School, University of Central Lancashire. His main research interests critically explore marginal and obscured areas of management studies. With colleagues from the National University of Singapore, he has recently published a co-edited special issue on themes of militarization in organization and business in the *Journal Critical Perspectives on International Business*. This has been accompanied by forthcoming papers in the *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* and *Philosophy of Management* and he is writing an introductory text for critical management studies. He has reviewed for *Journal of Management Studies*, *Organization* and *Human Relations* and is a member of the steering group of the Research Methodology Special Interest Group of the British Academy of Management. He has also published in the field of postgraduate studies (inter alia: *Journal of Graduate Education*, and *Studies in Higher Education*) and holds editorial board positions on the *International Journal of Postgraduate Studies* and *The Society for Research into Higher Education Postgraduate Guide Series*.

Yiannis Gabriel is Professor of Organizational Theory at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Imperial College London, where he also carried out post-graduate studies in industrial sociology. He has a PhD in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley. Yiannis is well known for his work into organizational storytelling and narratives, management learning and the culture and politics of contemporary consumption. He has used stories as a way of studying numerous social and organizational phenomena including leader-follower relations, group dynamics and fantasies, nostalgia, insults and apologies. Yiannis is currently researching the darker side of organizational life and, in particular, a phenomenon to which he refers as 'organizational miasma'. This is a concept that describes a contagious state of pollution, material, psychological and spiritual, that affects all who work in particular organizations. Members of such organizations experience a paralysis of resistance, an experience of uncleanliness, and feelings of worthlessness and corruption. In such organizations, all critical faculties are directed towards the individual rather than the system. Yiannis has made his own contribution to pedagogy as author and co-author of several textbooks on organizations. He is the author of *Freud and Society*, *Working Lives in Catering* (both Routledge), *Organizations in Depth* (Sage), and *Storytelling in Organizations* (OUP) and co-author of *Organizing and Organizations*, *The Unmanageable Consumer: Contemporary Consumption and Its Fragmentation*, *Experiencing Organizations* (all Sage). Recent publications include the edited collection *Myths, Stories and Organizations* (OUP, 2004) and articles on the effects of PowerPoint in higher education, resistance and control in late capitalism, learning shock among MBA students and the phenomenon of organizational miasma.