

Website Research Committee: <https://www.sgs-sss.ch/organization-and-society>

Conference Website: <https://orgsoc25.sciencesconf.org>

Call for Position Papers to the Inaugural Workshop of the Research Committee “Organization and Society” (SSA)

Lucerne, November 13/14, 2025

Submission deadline: August 15, 2025

There are several reasons why we have decided to create this new “Organization and Society” Research Committee (RC) under the auspices of the Swiss Sociological Association. The first, and sufficient, is that no such group exists in Switzerland. Given the importance of organizations in everyone's social life, our argument could end there.

More fundamentally, a genuine revival in studies concerning the links between organizations and society is more than palpable. This is evidenced by the creation in 2023 of a new journal, the *Journal of Organizational Sociology*, by the Research Committee 17 Organizational Sociology of the International Sociological Association (ISA). The Journal committee's position paper indicates a dual focus on (1) the sociology of organizations, but also (2) the organizational aspects of forms of social life more generally. A dual focus that inspires us and that we share.

Let's briefly recall that some twenty years ago, substantial questions were raised about the decline of work in organizational sociology, its inability to grasp societal debates, its difficulty in providing a well-equipped critique of how contemporary organizations function, and its growing weakness in naturally irrigating general sociology (cf. Grothe-Hammer & Jungmann, 2023). At the same time, related fields such as management studies and workplace studies maintained their dynamism and appeal.

And yet, as several recent books and special issues have shown (Arnold et al. 2022; Borraz et al. 2020; Bergeron & Castel, 2024), it is quite simply impossible to ignore organizations. Their forms, their dysfunctions, their hold, their interrelations, their productions (economic, material, symbolic, imaginary) run right through societal change, and always have (Perrow, 1991). Of course, we live in a society of organizations, saturated with organizations, over-organized, at the risk of unprecedented complexity. Organizations have not been diluted by decentralization, digitalization and platformization or endeavors toward governing through networks and communities, as we have often envisioned – quite the contrary it seems. This RC therefore wishes to contribute to this renewal and engage in a dialogue with the initiatives of colleagues and international learned societies already in place.

In doing so, the RC also has another, complementary objective: to propose a genuine sociology of organizations based in Switzerland. Switzerland is home to organizations of global importance: numerous international organizations (40), notably in Geneva, international sport federations (Gibel et al., 2024), a banking sector central to its economy, secular multinationals (e.g., Nestlé), a dense sector of private companies, notably in the high-tech mechanical and pharmaceutical industries (e.g., Novartis, Roche, Sandoz), a hub of major commodity trading firms, a high concentration of philanthropic foundations, as well as a very important network of non-governmental organizations (476 in Geneva alone), spearheading Swiss diplomatic soft power. As natural disasters intensify, major insurance and reinsurance companies (e.g., SwissRe) are gaining relevance (Jarzabkowski et al. 2023). At the same time, Switzerland hosts organizations that are culturally important and focus on the creation of novelty and creativity

(Nyfeler, 2024) as well as those with long-standing traditions, such as the world-renowned luxury watch-making sector. Locally influential organizations from the agricultural domain and a plurality of SMEs further shape the country's economic landscape, leading to Switzerland being widely regarded as a country of SMEs.

In short, Switzerland deserves a closer look at its own organizational sociology. Recent studies have demonstrated that Switzerland represents fertile ground for a fresh look at the workings of the UN system and multilateralism, particularly in the study of international organizations and their ecosystems, taking very seriously the contributions of organizational sociology (Kimber, 2025). A new dynamism in methodological approaches to the study of multilateral processes has also emerged from initiatives by Swiss-based researchers (Badache, Kimber, Maertens, 2023). These efforts should be carried forward and expanded within the Research Committee, accounting for organizational plurality and actively working toward integration into international debates and exchanges.

It's time to join forces to help place Swiss organizations and institutions at the heart of the debates that run through the workings of all organizations today (e.g., decarbonization, aging of the workforce, flattening of processes, technological innovation). Organizations are the essential link for observing and documenting the current upheavals in the worlds of work and geo-political tensions. The political, social and economic choices required to reform the current capitalist model will be made at the level of the work collectives that populate existing organizations. Just as there is no planet B, there are no organizations B, in the sense that it is by starting from what already exists - and it is very varied – that the responses to the challenges of the times will be built. To document, understand, analyze and anticipate organizational phenomena, and to avoid being overwhelmed by their complexity, we need to be able to investigate them, to guarantee ourselves practicable access, and to place questions of collective action and power back at the center (Bourrier, 2024).

In this call, we are bringing to life a desire to create as broad and inclusive a community of young and not-so-young researchers as possible. It aims to publicize and share existing work, and to strengthen solidarity, exchange and collaboration opportunities between teams in Switzerland.

To do so, the RC holds an inaugural workshop to discuss together with international guests the latest organizational sociological research conducted in Switzerland and on developing and deciding the future pathway of the RC in a participatory manner. The goal of the RC board is to develop activities in collaboration with members to ensure that the RC's initiatives will resonate with its membership.

Keynote Speakers

Michael Grothe-Hammer, President ISA RC17 Organizational Sociology and Chief-editor *Journal of Organizational Sociology*, NTNU, Norway

Henri Bergeron, Director of Research at CNRS, Dean of the School of Public Affairs, Sciences Po, France and **Patrick Castel**, Director of Research at FNSP, Sciences Po, Centre de sociologie des organisations, France

Practical Details

The inaugural workshop will take place on 13 and 14 November 2025 at the University of Lucerne and will run from midday to midday (starting at noon on the first day and ending at noon on the following day). Researchers interested in participating are kindly asked to submit a 2–3-page position paper to the [conference website](#) by August 15, 2025. The position paper could address questions such as:

- *What role do organizations play in Swiss politics, economy and more broadly Swiss society?*
- *What particularities and current trends can we observe in the Swiss organizational landscape?*
- *Do we need a specifically Swiss organizational sociology – and if so, what would that entail?*
- *How do you approach the study of organizations in your own work?*

To upload your position paper, it will be necessary to create an account on the website. In addition to uploading the required position paper, the submission system will allow you to upload supplementary documents such as working papers or relevant published work that offer further insight into your ongoing research. While submitting additional materials is not mandatory, such contributions are encouraged and warmly welcomed. The goal during the workshop will be to jointly reflect the richness of the Swiss research community engaged in the effort to deepen the links between organizations and society.

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