

BEYOND AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS: REFRAMING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A RELATIONAL ORGANIZING CAPABILITY IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the most impactful developments of the modern businesses, management and coordination systems. Previous studies often conceptualize AI as a technological entity that has independent capabilities and impacts on organizational processes. This article proposes an alternative line of thinking that sees AI as a relational organization capacity that is produced from the interaction between human actors, algorithmic systems, data infrastructures, institutional arrangements, and sociotechnical practices. The paper develops a posthumanist perspective on ontology, a sociomaterial approach, a relational organization theory, and digital organizing literature to suggest that AI capacities are not only emergent in computational systems, but also in the continuous processes of human algorithmic interaction. It builds a capability centred framework, focusing on relational connectivity, distributed agency, sociotechnical co-production, performativity and continuous emergence as key dimensions of AI enabled organizing. The article adds to the ongoing discussions in today's organization studies, management and information systems literature by proposing an ontological shift from an entity based understanding of AI to a relational and process oriented understanding. The paper also gives some hints for further research on algorithmic management, organizational intelligence, digital transformation, human AI co-working, governance, ethics, and organizational redesign.

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1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is being integrated into today's organizational contexts and is impacting the way work is carried out, managerial decisions are made, coordination occurs, and knowledge is created (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Faraj et al., 2025; Amir et al., 2025). In industries ranging from healthcare, finance, and logistics, to education, manufacturing, and professional services, organizations are increasingly turning to machine learning systems, predictive analytics, generative AI, and algorithmic infrastructures to assist in their operational and strategic functions (Gregory et al., 2021; Vial, 2024; Shaukat et al., 2025). AI-powered technologies are now involved in various tasks, including customer engagement, employee scheduling, predictive forecasting, and automated decision-making. (Anthony et al., 2023; Zafar et al., 2025)

After the groundswell of large language models, the spread of generative AI has increased academic and managerial interest in the subject of how organizations change as a result of human-algorithm interaction (HWI) (Dell'Acqua et al., 2023; Krakowski, 2025; Ullah et al., 2025). Life-like and expert levels of comprehension and knowledge are increasingly emulated by AI systems, whether in the form of text, code, recommendations, visual content,

predictive insights, or strategic analysis (Hayles, 2024). This means that AI is often seen as a self-governing technological being that can reason, learn and act (Berente et al., 2021).

In the field of organization studies and information systems, the dominant view often frames AI as a technological object with human-like cognitive capacities (Benbya et al., 2021; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021; Ullah et al., 2025). These views tend to view AI as a device, an agent or a replacement for an existing part of an organization (Anthony et al., 2023). While these strategies have taken their work in digital transformation and algorithmic management to a new level, they can unconsciously perpetuate technologically deterministic assumptions that mask the relational and sociotechnical conditions in which AI works (Suchman, 2023).

These assumptions have been recently challenged by relational organization theory (Bailey et al., 2022), sociomateriality (Cecez-Kecmanovic et al., 2024; Karim et al., 2025), and posthumanist scholarship (Orlikowski & Scott, 2023), which highlight that technologies cannot be separated from organizational practices, human interpretation, data infrastructures, institutional norms, and sociotechnical arrangements. In this way, organizational phenomena arise from the continuous relationships, interconnections and entanglements among humans and

nonhumans, not from isolated technological systems (Gherardi et al., 2024; Ali et al., 2025; Ebrahim & Karim, 2025).

This article builds a relational reconceptualization of AI based on the posthumanist ontology and the sociomaterial organizing theory. The paper does not conceptualize AI as a confined technological object, but rather theorizes as an organizing capability that arises from the interactions between human actors, algorithmic systems, digital infrastructures, and organizational practices (Glaser et al., 2024; Khalid et al., 2025). This perspective is based on the idea that AI is not just a matter of computational systems. Rather, organizational intelligence is produced by the sociotechnical relations that allow analysing, learning, coordinating, interpreting and acting based on organizational needs and objectives (Faraj et al., 2025; Hashmi et al., 2025; Dek & Ibrahim, 2025).

The paper makes three main contributions. The first is suggesting an ontological transition from 'entity based' understandings of AI to a relational capability perspective (Braidotti 2022; Audi et al., 2022). Second, it brings contemporary discussions on sociomateriality and digital organizing to the forefront, by focusing on human-algorithm relations as the first place where AI comes into being (Leonardi, 2023). Third, it has implications for research in organizational

intelligence, algorithmic management, human-AI collaboration, digital transformation and organizational redesign (Jarrahi et al., 2023; Amirulloh, 2025).

2. Digital Transformation and the Evolution of AI Research

2.1. From Information Technology to Intelligent Organizing

Historically, research on organizational technology has explored the contributions of information systems to the enhancement of efficiency, communication, coordination and decision making. Early theories saw technology as mainly an instrumental tool to facilitate the current organizational activities. Technologies were perceived as passive artefacts which could be manipulated by people to enhance task performance and information processing.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the focus of management information systems research was on themes of technology acceptance, communication richness, decision support systems, and task-technology fit. These methods relied on the assumption that there were broadly consistent differences between the human actors and technological systems. Technologies were used in support or augmentation of human intelligence and centers of organizational intelligence remained human. Digital platforms, machine learning and data intensive technologies

changed all that. There was an increasing trend toward organizations using predictive systems that learn from data and produce outputs independently. The passive role of infrastructures in organizational coordination gradually began to be replaced by the active part of AI systems. Today, AI is used in various modern operations including predictive maintenance, fraud detection, recruitment screening, inventory management, customer service automation, strategic forecasting, and operational optimization in contemporary organizations. Such developments have sparked much discussion about the dynamic between human and algorithmic actors, and the implications for the control of organizations.

2.2. Algorithmic Management and Organizational Control

Algorithmic management is a key research development of the modern era. Algorithmic management is the management system in which algorithms are involved in supervising, evaluating, allocating and coordinating work activities. Platforms like Uber, Amazon, Deliveroo and Upwork have a lot to rely on algorithmic infrastructures to coordinate labor processes. Algorithms distribute work, track how workers perform, optimize routes, figure out incentives and influence worker behavior expectations. The findings show that these systems create new managerial

organisation forms and shift the power balances towards redistribution of authority and new digital surveillance mechanisms. Simultaneously, algorithms don't work alone. Algorithmic governance mechanisms are constantly read, defied, negotiated and changed by workers. Thus, organizational outcomes are by-products of the interaction of human workers and managers, algorithms, customers, and infrastructures.

2.3. Generative AI and Organisational Knowledge

Organizations are undergoing further transformation as a result of the emergence of generative AI. Today, large language models and multimodal AI systems are involved in writing, communication, coding, strategic analysis and content generation. The use of generative AI in knowledge intensive tasks that are traditionally thought of as professional skills is increasing in organizations. These changes bring to light critical issues about organization intelligence, knowledge, and the decision-making power. How do we need to rethink the concept of intelligence and agency in the context of more and more AI systems engaging in creative and analytical tasks? Current understandings of AI as an entity might not be adequate to account for the sociotechnical complexities of current organizing.



3. Theoretical Foundations: Posthumanism and Relational Organizing

3.1. Posthumanist Ontology

Posthumanist scholarship arises in opposition to anthropocentric assumptions which assign humans the agency, cognition and intentionality of organizations Braidotti (2022) and Hayles (2024). Posthumanism does not see humans and technologies as distinct from one another but as interwoven, connected, and entangled in relation to other humans, machines, infrastructures, environments, and material systems (Gherardi et al., 2024). A posthumanist way of thinking describes organizational realities as a result of interactions between the heterogeneous actors that are part of a sociotechnical assemblage (Introna, 2022). There is thus no agency, but agency is distributed. This is especially important in the case of AI since more and more of the cognitive activities traditionally performed by human beings are now being carried out by machine learning systems (Dwivedi et al., 2023). But posthumanism warns that one should not assign independent agency to the technology systems (Suchman, 2023). Rather, the capacities of the AI are viewed as emergent things achieved in the interplay of socio-technical relations (Glaser et al., 2024).

3.2. Sociomateriality and Organizational Practice.

A second important theoretical basis for AI enabled organizing (AEO) is the concept of sociomateriality (Orlikowski & Scott, 2023). The sociomaterial perspective denies the dichotomy between the social and material aspects and adopts the view of sociomaterial achievement of organizational practices (Cecce Kecmanovic et al., 2024). In the context of organizations, technologies are not objects that simply act on unsuspecting social systems. Instead, technologies co-constitute patterns of organizational routines, communication, decision making processes, and modes of expertise (Leonardi, 2023). To grasp the nature of an AI system, it is thus essential to consider the practices in which it is applied. Sociotechnical arrangements are those in which organizational intelligence is produced by the interaction of human actors, algorithms, interfaces, datasets, infrastructures and organizational routines.

3.3. Relational Organizational Theory

In relational organizational theory, the emphasis is on relationships and the organization is seen as a collection of relationships, rather than a sum of its individual members (Bailey et al., 2022). Organizational outcomes are, therefore, relational achievements that occur over time, through interactions among the participants (Anthony et al., 2023). Relational



thinking about AI moves the focus from the technological object of AI to the relational interactions in which organizational capabilities emerge (Waardenburg & Márton, 2024). AI is no longer an entity but a relational process that is performed in a sociotechnical collaboration (Scott & Orlikowski, 2025).

4.Reconceptualizing AI as an Organizing Capability

4.1.Moving Beyond the Entity Perspective

AI is frequently treated as a technology object with independent thinking, reasoning and cognitive powers (Berente et al., 2021; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). These methods often discuss AI in terms of replacing, augmenting, or competing with human workers (Kellogg et al., 2020). But empirical evidence has shown that AI systems are still very much dependent on human involvement, organizational structures, data ecosystems, governance systems, and contextual interpretation (Lebovitz et al., 2022; Stelmaszak et al., 2025). Algorithms need human-generated data, organization agendas, institutional legitimacy and constant supervision (Asatiani et al., 2021). AI is not just a tech artifact, then, but a symbol of a different kind of technology. Rather, AI is produced through sociotechnical relations involving humans, computing systems, organizational processes and institutional configurations (Gherardi et al., 2024).

4.2.The definition of AI as an Organizing Capability

In this article, AI is understood as an emergent organizing process, created by the interaction of human actors, algorithmic systems, data infrastructures and organizational practices (Faraj et al., 2025).

Organizing capability is defined as the group's ability to coordinate actions, produce knowledge, understand environments, learn from experience and achieve the goals of the organization (Gregory et al., 2021). When human and algorithmic actors interact in a manner that allows for an organization to analyse, learn, predict, coordinate, and act, then AI becomes an organising ability. This ability is not limited to algorithms. Instead, it manifests as dynamic interactions between computational systems and organizational practices and human judgment (Glaser et al., 2024). The role of humans in the process of enabling organizing with AI. Human role in the process of enabling organising with AI. Human actors play a role in AI enabled organizing by interpreting the context, reasoning ethically, knowing the ins and outs of an institution, making strategic decisions, being creative, emotionally intelligent, and sensemaking (Hillebrand et al., 2025). Humans set out organizational objectives, make sense of unclear situations, manage institutional shortcomings, and assess the results



(Leonardi, 2023). They also develop, manage, train and govern algorithmic systems (Jarrahi et al., 2023). Importantly, human interactions with algorithms are not the only way in which humans contribute. Human involvement can be found in the asynchronous way that the system is designed, the way the data is labelled, decisions made at governance level, and oversight of the system by the organisation (Pachidi et al., 2021).

4.3. Contribute To the Organization By Algorithmic Means

Algorithmic systems are involved in large scale information processing, predictive modelling, pattern recognition, statistical optimisation and computational speed (Fügener et al., 2022). In the present scenario, machine learning systems are used to discover correlations and make predictions from past data (Dwivedi et al., 2023). A generative AI system can use patterns that it has learned to create new patterns (Krakowski, 2025). Algorithmic inputs are, however, limited by the data used for training, by the purposes of the organization, by the design of its computational architectures, and by the constraints of the organization (Suchman, 2023). The algorithms are hence not the intelligence of the organization, rather they are part of it (Faraj et al., 2025). There are 5 dimensions of AI Enabled Organizing.

4.4. Relational Connectivity

AI capabilities arise from the interactions between different actors in an organization, digital infrastructures, and computational systems. Connectivity is the interaction between which organizational intelligence manifests itself.

These interactions are necessary for algorithms to become organisational coordinators, otherwise they are just isolated computational systems. In this sense, connectivity is integral to the organizing process and a prerequisite for the development of AI-powered organizing. This is why connectivity is an essential condition for AI-powered organizing.

4.5. Distributed Agency

Agency in the AI is spread throughout networks of human and algorithmic actors. The outcomes of the organisations are the result of the involvement of a group of people and not a single person. This view calls into question simplistic notions of the autonomy of technology. AI systems facilitate organizational action but do not stand on their own; they are dependent on human interpretations, institutional governance and organizational routines.

4.6. Sociotechnical Co-Production

AI does not exist on its own, but is co-produced as a result of the interaction between humans, algorithms, infrastructures and organizational practices. Both human actors learning to work with AI systems and algorithmic outputs

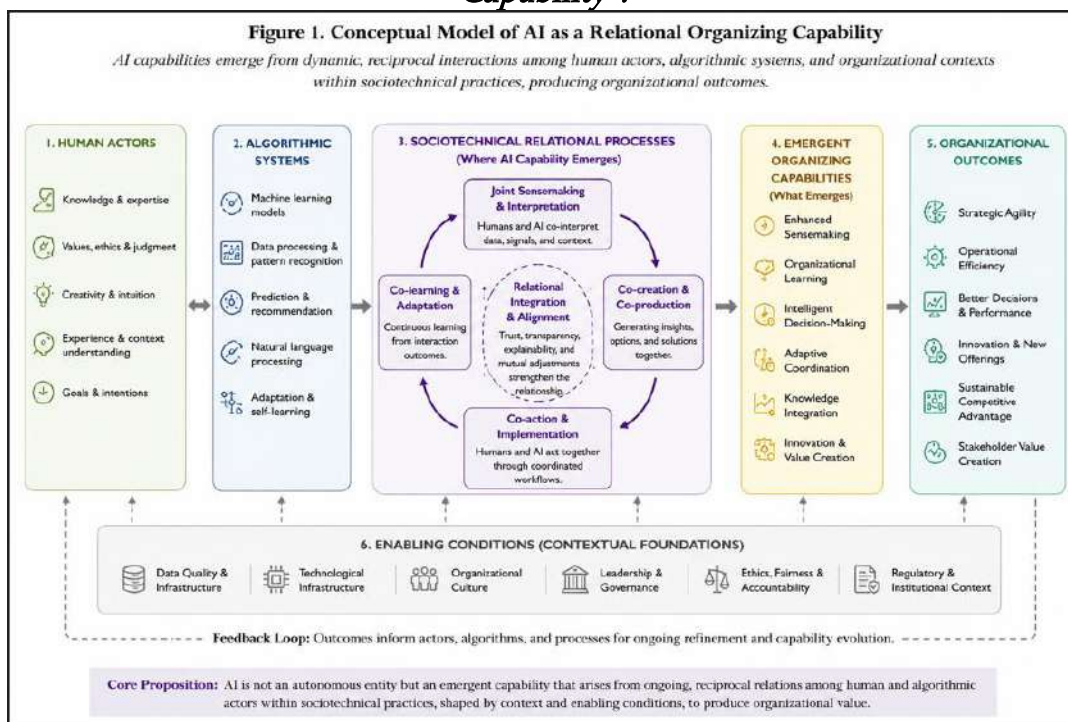
change as new data is fed into the system and as the algorithms are tested through the people who use them. Algorithmic outputs change as a result of new data inputs and feedback loops; human actors change as they learn to work with AI systems. Organizational intelligence is thus a process of mutual adaptation.

4.7. Emergence and Temporality

The ways in which AI is used to organize change with time. Humans learn to communicate with algorithms, and algorithms learn from new data and from feedback from the organization. Thus, AI is not a static, timeless attribute of technologies, but rather a dynamic, historically contingent attribute.

4.8. Conceptual Model of AI as a Relational Organizing Capability

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework is "AI as a Relational Organizing Capability".



The conceptual framework does not present AI as a separate technological solution, but rather as a relational form of organization that is generated over time as a result of ongoing relationships between human actors, algorithmic systems, organizational infrastructures, and sociotechnical practices. In the context of AI-driven tools, human

actors play a crucial role in providing contextual interpretation, ethical considerations, creativity, and strategic judgment, whereas algorithmic systems are essential for predictive analytics, automation, machine learning, and computational power (Faraj et al., 2025; Leonardi, 2023).

The model illustrates how organizational intelligence is cultivated through relational processes that are sociotechnical in nature, including: collaboration, organizational learning, knowledge co creation, adaptive coordination and distributed decision making (Anthony et al., 2023; Orlikowski & Scott, 2023). All of these interactions combine to create emergent organizing capabilities that help facilitate strategic agility, innovation, and digital transformation. This framework focuses on relational connections, distributed agency, sociomaterial entanglement, and continuous emergence as the basis of AI enabled organizing rather than entity based perspectives of AI.

Core Components of the Conceptual Model

1. Human Actors

- Managerial judgment
- Contextual interpretation
- Ethical reasoning
- Organizational sensemaking
- Strategic decision making
- Emotional and social intelligence

2. Algorithmic Systems

- Machine learning systems
- Generative AI models
- Predictive analytics
- Pattern recognition systems
- Automation infrastructures
- Data processing capabilities

3. Organizational

Infrastructures

- Digital platforms
- Data ecosystems
- Governance systems
- Institutional structures
- Organizational routines
- Communication networks

4. Relational Processes

- Human-AI collaboration
- Knowledge co creation
- Distributed decision making
- Organizational learning
- Adaptive coordination
- Sociotechnical interaction

5. Emergent Outcomes

- Organizational intelligence
- Innovation capability
- Strategic adaptability
- Dynamic coordination
- Digital transformation
- Organizing capability with the aid of AI

4.9. Relational Flow of the Model

Human Actors ↔ Algorithmic Systems ↔ Organizational Infrastructures → Relational Processes → Emergent Organizing Capability

The emphasis of the model is on the fact that AI ability is not a standalone, embedded feature in computational systems. Rather, intelligence is a recursive process that occurs between organizational actors, technological systems, institutional structures, and sociotechnical practices (Faraj et al., 2025; Orlikowski & Scott, 2023).



Table 1
Evolution of Technology Perspectives in Organization Studies

Perspective	Dominant View of Technology	Role of Humans	Role of Technology	Key Limitation
Traditional IT Perspective	Technology as tool	Central decision maker	Passive support system	Underestimate s sociotechnical complexity
Sociotechnical Perspective	Technology as work system component	Collaborative actor	Coordination mechanism	Limited focus on distributed agency
Algorithmic Perspective	Technology as autonomous system	Supervisor or user	Intelligent decision maker	Risks technological determinism
Relational Capability Perspective	Technology as emergent organizing capability	Co-producer of intelligence	Sociotechnical participant	Requires process oriented analysis

Table 2
Comparison Between Entity View and Capability View of AI

Dimension	Entity Based AI Perspective	Relational Capability Perspective
Ontological Assumption	AI as autonomous technological object	AI as emergent sociotechnical capability
Source of Intelligence	Embedded within algorithms	Produced through human-algorithm relations
Human Role	User or supervisor	Co creator and collaborator
Agency	Located in technology	Distributed across sociotechnical networks
Organizational Focus	Automation and replacement	Collaboration and co production
Research Emphasis	Technical functionality	Relational organizing processes
View of Decision Making	Algorithmic autonomy	Collective sociotechnical accomplishment



Table 3

Core Dimensions of AI Enabled Organizing

Dimension	Description	Organizational Implications
Relational Connectivity	Interactions among humans, algorithms, and infrastructures	Enhanced coordination and integration
Distributed Agency	Shared participation in organizational action	Redefinition of authority and responsibility
Sociotechnical Co Production	Joint creation of intelligence and outcomes	Hybrid organizational capabilities
Emergence	Continuous adaptation and learning	Dynamic organizational transformation
Performative Organizing	Organizational realities enacted through practice	Fluid and evolving work structures

Table 4

Human and Algorithmic Contributions to Organizing

Human Contributions	Algorithmic Contributions
Ethical reasoning	Pattern recognition
Contextual interpretation	Predictive analytics
Strategic judgment	Data processing speed
Creativity and innovation	Large scale optimization
Emotional intelligence	Statistical modelling
Institutional understanding	Automation capabilities
Sensemaking	Recommendation generation

Table 5

Implications of AI for Organizational Functions

Organizational Function	AI Enabled Transformation
Human Resource Management	Algorithmic recruitment and workforce analytics
Strategic Management	Predictive decision support and forecasting
Knowledge Management	AI assisted knowledge creation and sharing
Operations Management	Intelligent automation and optimization
Customer Relationship Management	Personalized AI driven interaction
Innovation Management	Generative AI assisted creativity
Governance and Compliance	Automated monitoring and risk



assessment

Table 6

Methodological Approaches for Studying AI in Organizations

Methodological Approach	Research Focus	Contribution
Relational Ethnography	Human–algorithm interactions	Captures evolving sociotechnical relations
Process Research	Organizational transformation over time	Explains emergence and adaptation
Sociomaterial Analysis	Entanglement of humans and technologies	Reveals distributed agency
Practice Based Studies	Everyday organizational routines	Examines AI in action
Multi Level Analysis	Organizational ecosystems	Connects micro and macro dynamics

Table 7

Ethical Challenges in AI Enabled Organizations

Ethical Challenge	Organizational Risk	Required Response
Algorithmic Bias	Discrimination and inequality	Inclusive governance frameworks
Lack of Transparency	Reduced trust and legitimacy	Explainable AI systems
Accountability Gaps	Unclear responsibility	Distributed accountability mechanisms
Data Privacy Concerns	Misuse of organizational data	Strong data governance
Workforce Displacement	Employee resistance and insecurity	Reskilling and augmentation strategies

5. Human-AI collaboration in modern workplaces: In the modern workplace, human-AI collaboration

5.1 Collaborative Intelligence

Today, more and more organisations are utilizing collaborative intelligence, where human intelligence and algorithms work together to make decisions and solve problems. Research shows that human-AI systems often outperform human or algorithmic-only systems. The human adds context, ethics, and

common sense, and the algorithm adds efficiency and predictive capabilities.

5.2 The nation's ability to learn and adapt

AI spurred collaboration changes organizational learning processes. Employees are educating themselves with algorithms, and following algorithms' feedback and suggestions. Meanwhile, machine learning systems adapt over time as they are exposed to human-



generated data and interactions within the organization.

5.3 Power and Asymmetry

Human AI collaboration is not necessarily symmetrical. The way power is organized in the organization determines who knows what is recorded in the algorithms and who the algorithms serve. In the context of AI-driven organizing, it is crucial to explore governance models, employee relations, and the dynamics of institutional power. Functional Skills (Numeracy, Literacy, ICT)

5.4 Rethinking Organizational Intelligence

The traditional views tended to see organizational intelligence as a human capacity that is a part of managerial knowledge and institutional learning. AI, on the other hand, empowers organizations to defy this notion by integrating algorithmic systems that can engage in analysis, prediction, and strategic reasoning.

Organizational intelligence shouldn't be made simply about computational efficiency, however. Intelligence is relational and emerges from the interactions between humans, algorithms, data infrastructures, and organisational practices.

Make strategic decisions using AI. Take strategic decisions with the help of AI.

AI systems are being widely adopted for predictive analytics, risk assessment, and strategic planning in organizations. AI systems are

being leveraged by organizations for predictive analytics, risk assessment, and strategic planning. These systems shape managerial focus and organizational agendas. However, strategic choices are still made based on institutional interpretation, political negotiation and contextual understanding. Thus, AI adds to, but is not the sole basis for organizational strategy.

5.5 Professional identity and expertise

The use of AI also transforms professional knowledge. In sectors like healthcare, finance, and law, the integration of professionals with algorithmic systems is a growing trend. This new development brings a change in the way the expertise is built, assessed, and applied. The professionals are required to increasingly interpret algorithmic recommendations and take accountability and ethical responsibility.

6. Ethical and Governance

Implications

6.1 Accountability in AI Enabled Organizations

The relational nature of AI understanding of responsibility presents a challenge to conventional notions of responsibility. If organizational outcomes are produced in distributed sociotechnical systems, then no one is solely responsible for the algorithms or individual actors. Governance structures are needed to

deal with the dispersed responsibilities of an organization.

6.2 Bias and Inequality

AI algorithms often perpetuate the same social and institutional inequalities found in their training data and systems. Addressing algorithmic bias then goes beyond the technical, and necessitates the consideration of wider sociotechnical systems.

6.3 Transparency and Explain ability

With the growing adoption of complex machine learning systems, transparency has grown into a cornerstone to ensure trust and legitimacy. In addition to technical transparency, however, there is organizational communication, governance practices and institutional accountability that are important to explain ability.

6.4 Methodological implications for future research

Students will learn how to utilize relational and process-based methodologies in their work.

For research into organizing, methodologies should be developed that are able to capture changing sociotechnical relations. There are several methods that are well suited to exploring human-algorithm collaboration, such as: longitudinal studies; relational ethnography; process research and multimodal analysis.

6.5 Studying AI in Practice

Looking forward, future studies should look at the way AI capabilities develop in the day-to-

day working routines of organizations. Scholars should not only look at individual technologies but also at interactions among workers and managers, algorithms and infrastructures, and institutional arrangements.

6.6 Multi-Level Analysis

Organizing with AI happens on a variety of scales -- individual, team, company, industry and institutional. Further study, then, should address the linkages between local practices and the wider political, economic and technological networks.

7. Conclusion

In this article, the author proposed a new relational interpretation of AI as an emergent organizing capability, rather than a technological entity. The paper explored the different lenses of posthumanist ontology, sociomateriality and relational organisation theory to explain the materialisation of AI capabilities as a relational process between human actors, algorithmic systems, organisational routines and digital infrastructures. This approach is more about sociotechnical relations than about isolated technologies, offering a deeper understanding of the emergence of organizational intelligence in AI-enabled settings. By highlighting the rationality, distributed agency, co-production, and emergence as key dimensions of AI-enabled organising, the article brings aspects of the relational, distributed, co-productive, and emergent to the forefront of the



contemporary debates on digital organizing, human-AI collaboration, organizational intelligence, and algorithmic management.

Research needs to continue to examine how organizations continue to negotiate power, accountability, expertise, governance, and ethics in increasingly AI mediated environments. The notion of AI as an organizing capability provides a better theoretical basis for analyzing the developing human-algorithm-organizational transformation nexus.

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