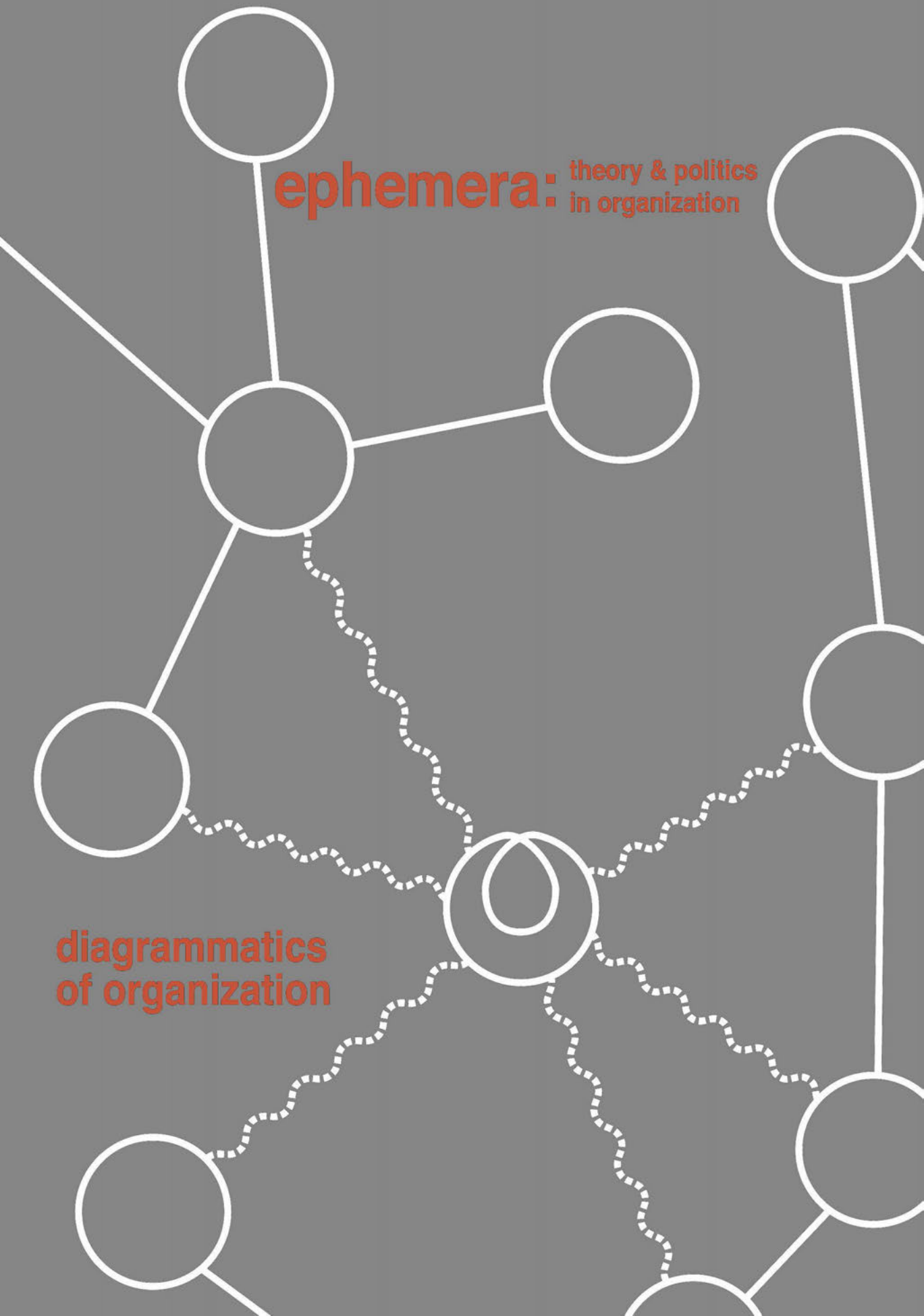
ephemera: theory & politics in organization

diagrammatics of organization



What is *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*?

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theory
ephemera encourages contributions that explicitly engage with theoretical and conceptual understandings of organizational issues, organizational processes and organizational life. This does not preclude empirical studies or commentaries on contemporary issues, but such contributions consider how theory and practice intersect in these cases. We especially publish articles that apply or develop theoretical insights that are not part of the established canon of organization studies. e*phemera* counters the current hegemonization of social theory and operates at the borders of organization studies in that it continuously seeks to question what organization studies is and what it can become.

politics
ephemera encourages the amplification of the political problematics of organization within academic debate, which today is being actively de-politized by the current organization of thought within and without universities and business schools. We welcome papers that engage the political in a variety of ways as required by the organizational forms being interrogated in a given instance.

organization
Articles published in *ephemera* are concerned with theoretical and political aspects of organizations, organization and organizing. We refrain from imposing a narrow definition of organization, which would unnecessarily halt debate. Eager to avoid the charge of 'anything goes' however, we do invite our authors to state how their contributions connect to questions of organization and organizing, both theoretical and practical.

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Diagrammatics of organization

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Diagrammatics of organization

Nick Butler, Emma Jeanes and Birke Otto

In this open issue of *ephemera*, we bring together a series of papers that engage with the diagrammatics of organization in various ways. Specifically, each contribution examines the production of a particular subject within a network of power relations: the entrepreneur within enterprise culture (Hanlon), the compulsive buyer within consumer society (Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg), the spectator within the world of art (Rodda), the cognitive labourer within the knowledge economy (Armano) and the good citizen within advanced liberalism (Barratt). Inspired by one of the articles of this open issue, which draws on the use of diagrams in the world of art, this editorial deploys the notion of diagrammatics to explore how the themes of the contributions are situated within a wider social and political context and how diagrams shape particular subject positions.

One of the most well-known organizational diagrams is Bentham's model of the Panopticon, sketched out in a series of letters and pamphlets (Bentham, 2011). For Foucault (1991: 205), the Panopticon is:

> *the diagram of a mechanism of power* reduced to its ideal form; it functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use. (emphasis added)

The Panopticon – a circular, multi-tiered, inward-facing structure with a watchtower at its centre – is a diagram insofar as it maps out a way of organizing space and bodies at the level of abstraction, disconnected from any particular institutional context. As Miller (1987: 3) puts it, the Panopticon is a 'general principle of construction' based on permanent visibility that can be applied to many different domains such as prisons, workshops and schools to induce penitence among prisoners, order among workers, obedience among

schoolchildren, etc. While the Panopticon has been much discussed in management and organization studies (see McKinlay and Starkey, 1998; McKinlay, Carter and Pezet, 2012), it is the *diagram* that provides an important key for understanding how effects of power and forms of knowledge serve to produce particular kinds of subjects (the docile prisoner, the disciplined labourer, the well-trained child, etc.) (Munro, 2000).

This point was emphasized by Deleuze (1988) who, in his eponymous book on Foucault, elaborates on the method of diagrammatics – that is, 'the cartography of strategies of power' (Rodowick, 2001: 52). Diagrams function as abstract machines that give rise to particular concrete assemblages of power (the prison, the workshop, the school, etc.). Focusing on the diagrammatic level provides insight into the ideal functioning of power, how it operates without 'obstacle, resistance or friction'. The diagram is not a visual representation of existing reality (De Landa, 2000), but on the contrary brings into being new modes of truth (Deleuze, 1988: 35). As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2013: 164), the diagram 'does not function to represent...but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality'. While the diagram is 'blind and mute', it has the effect of making others see and speak in particular ways (Deleuze, 1988: 34). The diagram is therefore both discursive and non-discursive, rendering aspects of the world around us seeable and sayable, visible and articulable (Hetherington, 2011). To this extent, diagrams play a 'piloting role' in guiding potential interactions with ourselves and others (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 164). This is precisely how the panoptic diagram operates: as an abstract 'map of power' (Rodowick, 2001: 52) that is characterized by functional polyvalence for use in a variety of social and organizational settings (e.g. to reform criminals, to increase productivity, to educate).

Diagrams have the potential to cover the entire social field (Deleuze, 1988: 34). Diagrams can intervene at the microphysical level, taking hold of the minutiae of individual conduct as we find in the disciplinary diagram of the Panopticon. But diagrams can also operate on a meso-level, making a series of spatial divisions and segmentations in the manner we find in measures proposed for the plague-stricken town at the end of the seventeenth century (Foucault, 1991). Finally, diagrams can function at the macro-level on the basis of exclusion and expulsion from the social body as we find in the response to leprosy in the Middle Ages (Foucault, 2006). This bears testament to the fact that 'every society has its own diagram(s)' (Deleuze, 1988: 35).

Recent discussion has focused on the notion of a 'neoliberal diagram' (Tiessen and Elmer, 2013) in contemporary capitalist society. The purpose of the neoliberal diagram, according to Tiessen and Elmer (2013: 3), is 'to monetize

what once had no price: friendship, curiosity, culture, communication' via concrete assemblages such as social media, intelligence agencies, the entertainment industry, financial institutions and government structures. In so doing, the neoliberal diagram extends ceaselessly into new realms of activity in order to create particular modes of life and integrate them as nodes within its relational network (see also Hoedemaekers, Loacker and Pedersen, 2012: 378). As we will see, this issue of *ephemera* contains various iterations of – and possible lines of flight from – this neoliberal diagram.

Diagrams are never fixed but always in flux; they involve a 'practice of figuring, defiguring, refiguring, and prefiguring' (Knoespel, 2001: 147). Put simply, diagrams are both ordering and disordering with respect to the network of power relations that they map out and set in motion. In this respect, we might look towards diagrams not only for insights into modes of control but also forms of resistance – indeed, these aspects are necessarily interlocking (Foucault, 1998: 95). Diagrams are not therefore closed systems but evolving networks of relations. For this reason, 'there is no diagram that does not also include, besides the points which it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance' (Deleuze, 1988: 44).

The potentially subversive effect of architectural diagrams is apparent from the work of dissident architects Enzmann and Ettel in the former German Democratic Republic, who entered a competition in 1984 to redesign Bersarinplatz, a large square in the East Berlin district of Friedrichshain. Their fantastical plans for the inner-city junction included a subversive art-piece comprised of a raised platform from which individuals could launch themselves into 'freedom' and a laser-canon – symbolizing state power and repression – that shot them down into an enclosed cylinder surrounded by water (http://www.enzmann-ettel.de/seite01.html). The radical design, entitled 'Flight of Icarus', was of course never built and earned the architects twenty months imprisonment by making a mockery of 'actually existing socialism'. But their plans made sayable and seeable that which otherwise remained visually absent and verbally silent in centralized urban planning – the *modus operandi* shared by other proponents of heterotopian 'paper architecture' in the former Soviet bloc in the 1980s (Weizman, 2009). Following Deleuze (1988: 44), this leads us to conclude that 'from one diagram to the next, new maps are drawn', layered virtually upon the actual like invisible palimpsests.

If diagrammatics are to be understood as 'cartographies of strategies of power', then the contributions in this issue attempt to map the field of forces in particular domains – economics, consumption, labour, government, aesthetics – with the intention of tracing how these diagrams 'integrate the subjects they

constitute with functions of power' (Hetherington, 2011: 459). While four of the contributions in this issue – two articles (Hanlon; Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg) and two notes (Armano; Barratt) – deal primarily with the effects of diagrammatic figuring, Matt Rodda's article on 'The diagrammatic spectator' is concerned with the potential for defiguring and refiguring, sketching out potential lines of flight within an existing diagram through aesthetic practice.

In the first contribution in this issue, 'The entrepreneurial function and the capture of value', Gerard Hanlon focuses on the diagram of entrepreneurial value production. Drawing particularly on the work of Kirzner, Hanlon contrasts what he calls a 'finders-keepers' model of entrepreneurship with the more traditional idea(l) of the entrepreneur as value-producer. The entrepreneurial subject with whom we are more familiar is that of the risk-taker, innovator, the creator of jobs and wealth – in other words, 'the ideal of what capitalist subjectivity should look like' (p, 177). However, Hanlon argues that the entrepreneurial subject is better understood as one who discovers, captures and harvests value, rather than creating it. This suggests a more parasitical role whereby value is extracted from the labour of others (see also Hardt and Negri, 2009; Murtola and Jones, 2012), which inevitably raises the question: who is the producer? Hanlon points to the increasing tendency for value creation to occur outside the organization (e.g. the development of open-source software by disparate intellectual communities) and in the use of property rights by entrepreneurs to capture this value. Hanlon's entrepreneurial subject territorializes and thus restricts the possibilities of knowledge exchange and innovation as a consequence, much like a modern day form of 'enclosure'. By sketching out the diagrammatics of contemporary entrepreneurship, Hanlon seeks to demonstrate how changes in the capitalist economy – notably the shift to financialization (Teixeira and Rotta, 2012) – are linked to conditions of value capture and rent-seeking activity, rather than the productive capabilities of individuals.

In the second contribution to this issue, Thomas Presskorn-Thygesen and Ole Bjerg explore the relationship between consumer capitalism and Compulsive Buying Disorder (CBD). It is well known that consumption plays a role in the constitution of identity through its symbolic value. Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg argue that for this to be accomplished the consumer must enjoy its use-value. Those who suffer from CBD, however, lack this ability to enjoy their acquisitions. The process of compulsive buying leads to feelings of guilt and anxiety shortly after the euphoria of the purchase, and oftentimes the purchased commodities remain unused. This suggests that, with CBD, consumption is largely limited to the act of purchase itself, raising questions about the efficacy of symbolic value that is normally attached to consumer goods.

With reference to Baudrillard and Lacan, Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg argue that CBD is not qualitatively different from ordinary consumption; rather, CBD serves as an excessive illustration of the character of consumption as such. Like Hanlon's contribution, Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg's paper accordingly raises important questions about the changing modalities of value production under conditions of contemporary capitalism. In the case of CBD, the value appears not to be located in the use-value or in the sign-value, but in the act of purchase itself. CBD is thus symptomatic of the broader shift within the capitalist economy from production to consumption, in which needs are not simply 'met' by the market but are 'stimulated' – or 'symbolically structured' (p. 200) – by networks of capitalist exchange. By mapping out this diagram of consumption, Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg shed light on the way in which new subjects (and their associated disorders) are brought into being by trends within consumer society.

In the third and final article, 'The diagrammatic spectator', artist and scholar Matt Rodda presents an optimistic deliberation on the diagram in the field of art. The diagram as a visual information device – like a map, line or graph – is a mode of presenting and handling information. As noted earlier in this editorial, the dynamic potential of diagrams has been extensively examined in philosophy and art. Rodda follows this line of thought and presents diagrams as 'discursive machines that show abstract relationships' (p. 222) rather than presenting literal representations of reality. He contributes to existing debates on diagrams in the field of art by focusing on the relationship between diagram and reader. Rodda builds on the work of artist Sher Doruff, who describes the diagrammatic relationship as one of collaboration rather than linear information transmission from author to reader. Here, he criticizes the still prevalent partition between creator and consumer and consequently the author-centric assumptions in her work. Inspired by Rancière's figure of the spectator, he hence proposes to explore the 'autonomous reader' of diagrams. This requires a starting point of 'intellectual equality' (Rancière, cited in Rodda, *ibid.*) that acknowledges an equal position of learning. Rodda suggests that 'the spectator first and foremost engages with the practice of their own labour, which is in every way equal to that of the artist' (p. 229). This position highlights that the spectator produces his/her own experience of thought and interpretation of the diagram, independent from the aims of the author. This is important to Rodda because it sheds light on the possibilities of human agency through aesthetic work in today's information society (see also Montenegro Rosero, 2013).

Rodda's article provides an inspiring perspective to think about some of the bleak diagnoses presented in the other contributions in this issue. As we noted, they explore how – in Tiessen and Elmer's terms – the neoliberal diagram operates in the fields of economics, consumption, knowledge work and politics. Read

critically, here the subject is either a passive recipient of power or an active collaborator (inadvertently) intertwined with and mobilized by neoliberal diagrammatics. Focusing on the autonomous reader offers a complementary reading of these processes of power by taking into 'account the aesthetic potential for spectators to reorganize for themselves what can be perceived, said and done' (p.240). It is a reminder of the multiple virtualities of contemporary worlds of work and organization that point to the possibilities for maneuvering, reconfiguring or subverting power configurations. Through figures like the spectator, we are reminded to explore those details that show the obstacles, frictions and points of resistance created by the diagram.

In the first note in this issue, Emiliana Armano explores the conditions of work in the contemporary knowledge-based economy in Turin. Drawing on interviews with a range of highly skilled cognitive labourers – including IT programmers and developers, web designers, journalists and other media workers – Armano seeks to highlight the impact of new forms of employment, such as temporary project-based work, on workers' subjectivities. Rejecting the crude either-or duality between creative self-expression and oppressive net-slavery, Armano's central thesis is that these new modes of work result in a fundamental oscillation between autonomy and exploitation, between self-realization and precarity. In other words, alienation is necessarily intermingled with self-realization among cognitive labourers. For Armano, the knowledge-based economy reconstructs the individual worker as a 'hub', defined by the network of relations in which they must situate themselves in order to secure continued employment. This radically reconfigures the identity of workers: they no longer see themselves as employees tied to a single organization, but as a node in a broader network (or diagram) of relations comprised of other cognitive labourers. In the words of Gorz, 'the individual becomes an enterprise' (cited in Armano, p. 255). The consequences of this are troubling: the basic antagonism between capital and labour is internalized within each worker as well as running through the social fabric as a whole (see also Adamson, 2009). As formal employment protections recede, workers become reliant on their own capacities – not only in terms of professional expertise, but also in terms of their ability to connect and cooperate with others. This underscores the importance, for Armano, of understanding the role of the relational network as a basic modality of contemporary capitalism.

In the second note in this issue, Edward Barratt also discusses the recodification of the individual, focusing on the level of political discourse and practice – specifically, the set of programmes devised and implemented by New Labour government in the UK. Barratt argues that the 'modernizing bureaucracy' of New Labour in the late 1990s and early 2000s was an attempt to shape the relation between subjects and the state under conditions of advanced liberalism in

specific ways. In particular, Barratt suggests that New Labour sought to forge an ideal model of the 'good citizen' through various technologies of rule. This situates the New Labour project firmly within the framework of governmentality, whereby forms of expertise and practices of power are brought to bear on individuals who, in turn, are encouraged to engage in participatory modes of citizenship. These were manifested in programmes such as the 'People's Panel' and the 'Citizen's Jury', which aimed to stimulate a dialogue between citizens and the state in order to inform the direction of policy. Like the Turin-based knowledge workers in Armano's note, the 'good citizen' under advanced liberalism is expected to take responsibility for their own health, wealth and happiness; in both cases, individuals are called upon to turn themselves into enterprising selves. Indeed, self-government is coming to be increasingly mobilized as the mode of advanced liberal government *par excellence*, internalizing the conflict between ruler and ruled in the same way that cognitive capitalism produces class antagonism (i.e. the division between autonomy and exploitation, freedom and alienation) at the level of subjectivity as well as society. The two notes thus approach the same question in different but complementary ways in the sphere of work and civil society respectively.

We conclude the editorial by pointing to our front cover, which has been designed by Matt Rodda, one of the authors in this open issue of *ephemera*. It is a diagram comprised of a series of interconnected nodes. Each contribution in this issue could be mapped, along with its specific field of forces, on to a diagram of this type: the entrepreneur, the compulsive buyer, the cognitive labourer, the good citizen and the spectator may be plotted as a series of nodal relations and lines of forces. Rodda has used the motif of the Möbius fold to change one node into a folded nodal point. This indicates that the lines of forces that determine one's relation to the rest of the network are not completely fixed but may be modulated or subverted. The dashed and wavy lines on the diagram suggest this as they intervene and disrupt the order of the diagram. Such lines of flight offer opportunities for further inflection and potential. We suggest therefore that the notion of the diagram is a useful one as it not only draws attention to directed, intended and organised lines between points but also allows us to explore those other fleeting and divergent lines that do not 'connect up'.

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The entrepreneurial function and the capture of value: Using Kirzner to understand contemporary capitalism*

Gerard Hanlon

abstract

This paper suggests that contemporary capitalism is increasingly shaped by a 'finders-keepers' model of entrepreneurship. Intellectually, this model has its origins in the Austrian School of Economics and, as such, it has been bolstered by the neo-liberal turn of post-fordism. Its greatest proponent is Kirzner. The model is ideological in that it attempts to legitimate entrepreneurial capture as the 'ultimate knowledge' despite the fact that it does not create, innovate, or produce. It is also increasingly engaged in the use of property rights as a means of capturing value produced beyond the corporation through 'free' labour and the enclosing of skills and knowledge developed elsewhere. As such, it encourages a society based in secrecy and mistrust.

Introduction

This paper examines a central figure in the modern neo-liberal economy. This figure supposedly acts as a catalyst of resource allocation, a disseminator of knowledge, a key to growth, and to competition. The figure's qualities are at the core of the recent attempts to morally rejuvenate the subject in a bid to reinvigorate capitalism by embedding responsibility, risk-taking, self-sufficiency, and creativity within each of us. Of course, this figure is the entrepreneur. For neo-liberals, the entrepreneur occupies a central role within capitalism – he or

* The author would like to thank Stephen Dunne and two anonymous referees for their assistance in strengthening the paper. Needless to say, all errors are the author's own.

she is the ideal of what capitalist subjectivity should look like – if you will, this figure is the superhero of the enterprise society (Hayek, 1945; 1948; Mises, 1996; Drucker, 1984).

What follows will examine the role of the entrepreneur in post-fordism (Vercellone, 2007). It suggests that this role is ideologically used to justify a new regime of accumulation. This regime is more unequal, appears to be increasingly located in rent as opposed to the search for profit driven efficiencies within the production process and, somewhat unexpectedly, is characterized by capital's growing un-interest in the how or where of production in favour of the capture of already existing value. As we shall see, this shift has led to the argument that we are experiencing a new form of subsumption (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 255) as management moves beyond the firm and uses the firm as a shell to capture value. This value is often created in the common or, from the perspective of a specific corporation, by 'free' labour and the extraction of such value is legitimated by a 'finders-keepers' (Burczak, 2002) model of entrepreneurship.

It will be argued that this 'entrepreneurial society' (Drucker, 1984) can be analytically understood better by a return to the entrepreneurial function described by Kirzner – that is, one where existing opportunities and value are captured by the entrepreneur rather than created or produced by them. This implies something of a break with recent aspects of entrepreneurship studies which have been positing an entrepreneurship located in the work of Schumpeter or Knight. In these renditions the entrepreneur is productive in creating or imagining the future (see Foss *et al.*, 2007; Klein, 2008; Chiles *et al.*, 2007; 2010). In opposition to this, what follows re-affirms a Kirzner-based 'discovery' theory of entrepreneurship despite a contemporary turn against his work within entrepreneurship literatures (see Alaverez and Barney, 2006; Burczak, 2002; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).

The paper argues that, analytically, the notion of 'capture' is a better way of understanding entrepreneurship. This is because emerging tendencies in the post-Fordist regime of accumulation suggest value is ever more created beyond the formal organization which then uses its resources to capture this value. For example, consider the following five instances of such capture: innovation increasingly occurs amongst customers before being integrated into the corporation (Oliveira and von Hipple, 2010); peer review commons production is increasingly prevalent and harnessed by firms e.g. open source software is often developed by peer review of ongoing work which is then incorporated into organizations (Benkler, 2002); there is the growing corporate use of litigation to protect property rights rather than creating anew (Perelman, 2002); the development of copyleft and other legal forms were deemed necessary to halt the

capturing of existing value by corporations e.g. in the publishing or computer software areas the product is often kept free to users by asking them to agree to legal terms and conditions prohibiting privatizing the initial work in later products produced on the basis of this knowledge (Lerner and Triole, 2005; O'Mahony, 2003); and through internships and other forms, labour value is 'freely' extracted by corporations (Perlin, 2011). This is the new regime and entrepreneurial capture not creation is in its heart.

The corporate emphasis on entrepreneurial capture is intimately linked to two tendencies – namely, the increased development of skills and knowledge created outside the organization e.g. the corporate exploitation of value created via open-source programmers in their spare time (Lerner and Tirole, 2005) and the increased use of property rights to capture value created beyond the organization. This second development stifles use and hence productivity – as we shall see it is here that Kirzner's analysis is lacking. These developments have led to capital's (relative) declining interest in the immediate production process which is in contrast to earlier regimes of accumulation wherein profits often came from efficiencies developed within the factory (Braverman, 1974).

This shift suggests a move towards an increasing subsumption of society to capital (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Tronti, 1970). Today, profits emerge more from the rents in the manner Smith (1981: 160) outlined for landlords in the pre-capitalist past. That is, where the tenant improved the land and the landlord extracted this value via property rights and charged higher rents to tenants for the improvements they themselves had made (Smith 1981). Using Kirzner's notion of 'capture', this paper will argue that these developments undermine claims that entrepreneurship can have an emancipatory role into the future (Rindova *et* al., 2009; Calas *et al.*, 2009) or a productive or innovative role (Foss *et al.*, 2007; Klein, 2008). Central to this is the use of property rights to limit access to knowledge and value that is already there. Thus knowledge that is already disseminated is captured and monopolized via this function thereby preventing the widest spread of use and hence of potentiality.

What follows will argue that because of its emphasis on creation, contemporary entrepreneurial studies are missing this capture. However it will also go a step further to argue that although analytically Kirzner's notion of capture provides an accurate image of the relationship between entrepreneurship and creativity, the political role of creativity within contemporary capitalism needs to be considered outside entrepreneurship studies, within post-workerist scholarship. It is the pleasure, joy, and the refusal of work which the paper does through the use of capitalist social relations that is driving the creation currently being captured e.g. elements of open-source software. As we will see later in the paper, today

innovation and entrepreneurial property rights are political enemies because the increasing resort to and expansion of property rights will limit and hamper innovation – the 'knowledge' economy and property rights are in conflict. However, before we reject entrepreneurship out of hand, we need to examine the role accord to the entrepreneur in neo-liberal thought.

The entrepreneur and moral rejuvenation

Austrian neo-liberalism criticizes mainstream economics because of the role it gives to market equilibrium (see Hayek, 1948: 33-56). In essence, the claim is that in equilibrium the processual nature of the economy is denied, people are made passive and individual decision making, wherein the outcome of today is based on a decision made yesterday, is underplayed (Hayek, 1948: 94-99; Kirzner, 1973a: 30-43; 1997). In short, the contention is that the market is dynamic, people have incomplete knowledge, and the future is unknown hence people need to exhibit agency, spontaneity, and ingenuity in order to survive (Hayek, 1945; 1948). The entrepreneur is the epitome of this active subjectivity.

The core building blocks of this position are based on the work of Hayek and of Mises. Hayek's emphasis on the incomplete nature of knowledge, on spontaneity, and an unknowable future implies we can never achieve steady-state equilibrium. Nevertheless, through our actions and constant learning we can move towards it by trial and error (Hayek, 1948: 100). For example, in the used car market we will learn from the actions of others and from our previous experiences e.g. what is too expensive, what is cheap, what is correctly priced – but of course what price we offer is based on an unknowable anticipation of the future and is therefore entrepreneurial. Within neo-liberal theory this makes the entrepreneur central to capitalism because s/he acts as a disseminator of knowledge. By seeing where there are differences in the market, the entrepreneur disseminates knowledge to other actors about where resources are under–valued and where high profits can be achieved, thereby shifting the allocation of resources. However, if they can, entrepreneurs will avoid spreading this knowledge via property rights, collusion, sabotage and other methods (Metcalfe, 2006; Foss *et al.*, 2007). Thus entrepreneurship is always double-edged and inherently contradictory because dissemination is accompanied by the tendency towards monopoly, secrecy, and a lack of trust.

For Mises, entrepreneurship is a human trait. In different places and circumstances we are all essentially entrepreneurial[1]. He provides this definition of the entrepreneur:

> In any real and living economy every actor is always an entrepreneur and a speculator...The function is not the particular feature of a special group or class of men, it is inherent in every action and burdens every actor. In embodying this function in an imaginary figure, we resort to a methodological makeshift. (1996: 252)

Mises centralizes two aspects of entrepreneurship. Firstly, the entrepreneur does not need capital nor take risk (he is somewhat contradictory on this point, see Foss and Klein, 2010). He or she must access capital but the capital and risk are owned by the capitalist, not the entrepreneur (Mises, 1996: 253; Burczak, 2002) – as we will see, Kirzner makes a similar argument. Secondly (prefiguring Becker, 1962), ontologically we are all entrepreneurs because of time – we all have to anticipate the future. For example, the labourer invests in his or her skills in an entrepreneurial anticipation of future needs (Mises, 1996: 254). Temporality and anticipation hold for all and, as a result, so does entrepreneurship – the fact that there is no risk involved nor capital required, ensures an entrepreneurial persona is open to everyone provided they embrace it or are forced to embrace it (see also Burczak, 2002). Ideologically, such a proposition implies that the conflict between capital and labour is obliterated because all can act entrepreneurially so there is no necessary tension between labour and capital – all there is, is an equality of opportunity.

One of the key characteristics of post-fordism or an entrepreneurial society is the tendency to extend entrepreneurial activity to more and more areas of social life (Foucault, 2007; Drucker, 1984). This is a fundamental element of the recent state driven neo-liberal turn. The Austrians argue that the entrepreneurial function should be made to grow so that it becomes the key social relation and that it and competition are the most important motifs of capitalism (Mises, 1996; Röepke, 1948, 1992). For them, enabling this extension was central to the moral rejuvenation of a decaying capitalism. Pivotal to this is the entrepreneurial, private, and individual pursuit of self-interest (Mises, 1996; Hayek, 1945; Röepke, 1948; 1992).

The centrality of the entrepreneur is therefore significant for two reasons. One, it breaks the grip of expert or specialist knowledge by enshrining entrepreneurial knowledge at the heart of capitalist social relations. Two, it enables the

1 This is the basis of one of the criticisms levelled at entrepreneurship – namely that entrepreneurship studies has spread its net so wide that every creative act can be claimed as entrepreneurial.

entrepreneurial function to drive development both in the marketplace and within the organization by making this social relation the primary social relation in life (e.g. within the family, between individuals, within the firm).

This neo-liberal heritage is at the heart of Kirzner's entrepreneur who acts as a price taker searching for undervalued resources via an 'arbitrage theory of profit' (Kirzner, 1973a: 85). Rather than innovate, the entrepreneur uses his or her alertness to see opportunities for price differentials and under-valued resources (Metcalfe, 2006; Alvarez and Barney, 2006; Foss *et al.*, 2007; Klein, 2008). In this sense, by spotting under-valued resources the entrepreneur not the expert, the labourer, or the inventor is the creative function in society. On the contrary the labourer, or the inventor, fulfills society's creative function. Provided it can avoid its contradictory nature and is not sabotaged, this activity then adds to everyone's knowledge of the market. What makes this arbitrage different is the temporal dimension – the entrepreneur anticipates the future. This anticipation then leads to entrepreneurial profit or loss.

Entrepreneurial knowledge and the human will

In an entrepreneurial society, knowledge is the key resource, not capital. As stated, entrepreneurs are central in this theory of knowledge because, through spotting and exploiting variability in the market, they disseminate knowledge (Hayek, 1948: 45; Mises, 1996: 299). In so doing, the entrepreneur has anticipated the future and thereby shifts 'the ownership of the means of production from the hands of the less efficient into those of the more efficient' (Mises, 1996: 299). For neo-liberals the key knowledge is not data or information. The knowledge prioritized in this tradition is about vision and alertness to the potential application of knowledge rather than the mere possession of it (Kirzner, 1973a: 68; Burczak, 2002). Kirzner (1973a: 38 emphasis in original) comments:

> Entrepreneurial knowledge, may be described as the "highest order of knowledge", the *ultimate* knowledge needed to harness available information already possessed or capable of being discovered.

In today's economy, it is perhaps unsurprising that entrepreneurial knowledge is so revered and that all knowledge is reduced to capitalism's arbitrage. Shades of this haunt management studies of entrepreneurship – when reading Drucker (1984) one is struck by the feeling that the person or firm that brings the product to the market is the entrepreneur rather than the knowledge creators – indeed Drucker's work is highly skeptical of science in favour of 'common-sense' (see Drucker, 1984: 48, 84-5, 138-9). Similarly, Schumpeter (1983: 88) values the

innovator/entrepreneur over the inventor because it is the innovator/entrepreneur who sees the profitable application of invention. And yet, Kirzner's entrepreneurial knowledge is not quite so positive because it means entrepreneurs do not generate anything. For example, Kirzner (1973a: 74, emphasis added) states:

> I view the entrepreneur not as a source of innovative ideas ex nihilo but as being *alert* to the opportunities that exist *already* and are waiting to be noticed. In economic development, too, the entrepreneur is to be seen as responding to opportunities rather than creating them; as *capturing* profit opportunities rather than generating them.

Thus within the economy, profit is not created by the entrepreneur, it is captured and the entrepreneur is reactive to opportunities that already exist 'out there'. As suggested earlier, one can see elements of this in, for example, the open-source movement wherein new legal forms e.g. copy-left, were created to stop corporations entrepreneurially making minor alterations to a code and then patenting it (Lerner and Tirole, 2005; O'Mahony, 2003), in the parasitic relationship between publicly funded science and the private sector (Perleman, 2002; Armstrong, 2005), or in the fact that fully forty four per cent of new banking electronic services were developed first by user innovation before they were taken and turned into a services by banks (Baldwin and von Hipple, 2011). In short, corporations used alertness to reap profits from innovations developed elsewhere – capture, not creativity.

This entrepreneurial 'alertness' to capturing existing value may provide an indirect benefit by teaching the less alert about price differentials and thereby lessening them – this is what locates them at the heart of neo-liberal economic development (Mises, 1996). However, given the double-edged nature of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs will also actively seek to limit the use of such knowledge in order to maintain their entrepreneurial profits. They will do so via property rights (Baumol, 1990), through the sabotaging of innovation (Metcalfe, 2006; Hayek, 1948), and/or monopoly (Kirzner, 1973a: 22). Thus entrepreneurs can and do both capture value generated elsewhere and restrict economic development in order to expand and extend entrepreneurial profit.

Despite this, neo-liberals see the entrepreneur and entrepreneurial activity (which sits in all of us alongside other roles – consumer, producer, or manager) as the legitimate appropriating mechanism of the value they have captured (Mises, 1996: 297). They argue that this captured value is then correctly used to pay others their market price e.g. capitalists, landowners, workers, or other entrepreneurs. Building on Locke and Mises, Kirzner (1973b; see also Burczak, 2002) argues that entrepreneurs display initiative and it is this human will, and

not what flows before or afterwards, that is the key to wealth generation and to their rights over it.

> In this view the product has come into being only because some human being has *decided* to bring together the necessary productive factors. In deciding to initiate the process of production, this human being has *created* the product. In his creation of this product this entrepreneur–producer has *used* the factors of production which his vision has brought together. He has not cooperated jointly with these factors (so that this view does not see the entrepreneur's contribution as consisting of a portion of the value of a product with the remaining portions being the contributions of "other" productive agents). He has produced the *whole product entirely on his own*, being able to do so by his initiative, daring and drive in identifying and taking advantage of the available productive factors'. (Kirzner, 1973b: 10 emphasis in original)

In this quote we see the inherently contradictory nature of entrepreneurship. The process of production is obviously a social endeavor – 'In his creation of this product this entrepreneur-producer has *used* the factors of production which his vision has brought together' and yet this socially cooperative moment and the dependency of the entrepreneur on the skill, knowledge and sociality of others is vehemently denied in order to legitimate Kirzner's model of capture within society. Rather than acknowledge this productive role of cooperation, Kirzner suggests that because entrepreneurs are alert to the value or opportunity that is already there, and because they have the initiative to capture it, they have the right to all of that value and they legitimately keep what is left after the mere factors of production have been paid their market rate. Hence human action and entrepreneurial knowledge justify 'a finders-keepers' society (Burczak, 2002). Within this, Kirzner suggests the entrepreneur in all of us is a conjurer, a magician – creating profit out of nothing and determining the distribution of resources.

The nature of human action in entrepreneurial moments

Kirzner (1973a: 52-62) hypothetically outlines what entrepreneurship looks like. This is essentially a description based in deceit. The example used by Kirzner is one of hunting. To summarise, an entrepreneur thinks that hunting will prove to be a lucrative area where price differentials could be exploited. As such, the entrepreneur gives no capital and seeks no risk, but hires a gun to exploit the high price of meat. If their view is correct, others will see the entrepreneurial profits and then enter the market, thereby lowering the price of meat and average profit because the entrepreneur has provided information for those who are alert enough to recognize it. The entrepreneur may not be a specialist in hunting in their own right and so will hire an employee to hunt for them. If the employee is an average hunter with average talent, the entrepreneur will get surplus simply

from their entrepreneurial alertness to be early – over time this will be whittled down via competition. If, on the other hand, the employee is an average hunter but finds better hunting grounds and passes on all this extra value to the entrepreneur, then the employee is more productive but not entrepreneurially alert. Simply because this employee sees him or herself as expending the same energy as other hunters, they get the wage of other hunters and the entrepreneur gets the excess entrepreneurial profit because the employee has no entrepreneurial alertness. Finally, if the employee finds better hunting grounds but keeps the excess value for themselves then they have exercised their entrepreneurship by getting the 'entrepreneur' to hire their equipment and provide them with a wage whilst allowing them to capture (some of) the entrepreneurial profit (Kirzner, 1973a: 61-2).

Here there is secrecy, and a lack of trust but there is no creation, no innovation, no romantic, iconoclastic break with equilibrium – there are merely entrepreneurs and knaves who act as factors of production and, by implication, take the price offered (see Kirzner, 1973a: 32-52; Burczak, 2002). If entrepreneurial knowledge is the highest form of knowledge then in an entrepreneurial society to seek out arbitrage is to be alert while to strengthen institutions is foolish, to engage in public service is foolish, to share is foolish, to build an open source software program is foolish, to participate in open science is foolish, or to innovate without patenting is foolish.

Essentially, we are left with moments of deception or trickery which are re–packaged as moments of alertness because, in an increasingly commoditized world, society is 'driven solely by the selfish' (Mises, 1996: 291). Indeed, this is the stance taken by Lerner and Tirole (2005) when they rationalize participation in open-source as a means of gaining reputation from which one can reap benefits into the future. There is no acknowledgment that this may be a structural problem wherein one has to donate free labour to develop a career in software programming because of the entrepreneurial activity of corporations or, indeed, that such an expression of expertise might simply be a fun thing to do in your 'free' time (as Adorno, 1998 wished the term to mean; see also Butler *et al.*, 2011). Here is, at its best, an asocial, amoral exploitative society with a lack of trust as its bedrock and an implicit acceptance that profiteering, violence, mistrust, secrecy, exploiting the desperation of others, or immorality, are part of the social fabric and are simply 'opportunistic'. In short, this is the emerging so called 'knowledge economy' where sharing knowledge is deemed counter-productive (Romer, 1990; Shane, 2002).

If this analysis of entrepreneurship is correct, the creator of value who does not hold onto it is a mere inventor – hence non-individualizing profit motivated

actions are naïve and merely enable others to entrepreneurially capture the value derived from them i.e. to allow oneself to be cheated and hence to deserve what you get. Capture is legitimated via property rights and this enables the already asset rich to claim the rights to the value produced elsewhere, thereby helping to further polarize wealth (Burczak, 2002). Here privatization of knowledge, invention and value is lauded as the one best way to secure future rewards for those who do not generate them yet somehow deserve them (Kirzner, 1973a; Burczak, 2002). This obviously denies the hugely important realm of knowledge or indeed innovation/invention as a public good – for example, hip replacement technology started through the 'invention' of public service doctors in the socialized medical sector known as the National Health Service in the UK (see Meeks 2011) and this value was then captured by others[2].

Legitimating the future: Entrepreneurial society, knowledge and rent

Kirzner's harsh 'finders-keepers' model of entrepreneurship illuminates today's capitalism in interesting ways. A number of points will be made to recap. Within the entrepreneurial studies tradition, the scholars who have most appropriately theorized entrepreneurship are the Austrian School of Economics and, most particularly, Kirzner. Although management scholars often refer to Schumpeter or Knight, here it is argued that the entrepreneurial society advocated and taught by management theorists appears to be rooted in the reading of the private individual-entrepreneur as outlined by Mises, Hayek and especially Kirzner. These theorists see knowledge as the sensorium of capital i.e. in the work of these authors knowledge is useful if it acts in the interests of the entrepreneur. All roads lead to the entrepreneur whose knowledge in this society is the 'ultimate' knowledge and yet despite this, the entrepreneur does not generate.

This entrepreneur is potentially ubiquitous and located in all of us because, building on Mises (1996: 253), capital or risk-taking are not required. What is

2 Hip replacement technology was designed by Sir John Charnley. He pioneered hip replacement treatment globally whilst working for the National Health Service, in the UK. He experimented on himself by putting polyethylene into his own body and left it there for months to test how the body would react before he was prepared to implant it as a ball and socket into a patient needing a hip replacement. His work was impressive and achieved a ninety five per cent success rate. On the basis of his success, the NHS provided hip replacements but not for profit – they merely had a use value. US firms took Charnley's work and provided hip replacements for profit (less good ones as it happens) – so one big social question is who is credited with the innovation in this instance and who should receive the benefits – Charnley, the NHS, patients through socialized medicine, shareholders, patients as customers and how is the answer to this question then legitimated?

required is spontaneous entrepreneurial alertness to knowledge rather than knowledge acquired via craft, education, or prolonged study. This knowledge is something that is, in theory, available to all. Ideologically, this form of entrepreneurial society is rooted in the spontaneous knowledge applied by individuals. This occurs in an unplanned meritocratic fashion so that success is based on one's ability to seek out arbitrage – not upon ownership of capital, risk-taking, value generation, study, or expertise (Burczak, 2002). Here labour and capital simply become resources to be exploited by the alert entrepreneur in all of us. On this basis, distribution and reward are legitimated because the entrepreneurial 'finder-keeper' is the ideal capitalist subjectivity. The entrepreneur is what we should want to be[3].

Prioritizing such subjectivity and such knowledge leads to an arbitrage society which supposedly ensures efficiency and meritocratic success – we each get our just desserts or are touched by fortune's fickle finger. It will also create an ideal subject – one who is uninterested in craft, security, organization, or institutions but is rather interested in money and exploiting opportunities for oneself and indirectly – but only indirectly, if at all – for organizations or institutions. However, this alertness to opportunity has enabled the corporation to reach beyond itself as the entrepreneurial subject threatens to subsume all of society to capital.

But there are surely some real problems with this 'ideal' worker and this form of society? The first thing to disintegrate is trust – we may have seen this in the recent crisis, banks lost trust in staff, in information, in each other, in the market. The social cohesiveness that Adam Smith describes is simply not encouraged by this entrepreneur who turns both themselves and us into individual speculative capitals (Burczak, 2002). For example, whilst exploiting in the pursuit of profit is a feature of equilibrium theorists like Keynes, this pursuit arguably also entailed the building of some collective social value whether it was via a factory or prolonged training or investment in social welfare. In the arbitrage of the entrepreneurial society of a Kirzner, social value and social bonds are weakened not strengthened. There is no emancipatory opportunity here despite the call of management theory (see Rindova *et al.*, 2009). Rather than Smith's trust and sociality, amorality and opportunism define the function. Indeed, when one reads about entrepreneurs (Armstrong, 2005; Collins *et al.*, 1963), one is struck by their asociality, by lives which have few bonds or interests

3 Given the popularity of television shows around entrepreneurship e.g. Dragon's Den, the rise and rise of entrepreneurial societies in Universities, and the increasing demand for entrepreneurship within Business Schools, it would seem the Austrian rejuvenation of this subject has met with some success.

beyond being a self-interested entrepreneur. Even when enmeshed in a network, self-interested activity is at its heart and if one can succeed in unilaterally exploiting this network through secrecy one would be a fool not to do so.

Post–workerism: Labour and capital in opposition – the return to rent

Central to entrepreneurship in the Austrian tradition is knowledge: the privatization of knowledge is deemed necessary to encourage entrepreneurship (Kirzner, 1973a). However, this privatization actually runs counter to economic development. For example in both innovation studies and strategy, scholars suggest that innovation and productivity are increasingly emerging from beyond the firm (see O'Mahony, 2003; Lerner and Tirole, 2005; Oliveira and von Hipple, 2010; Baldwin and von Hipple, 2011; Pralahad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Indeed, Lucas (1988) suggests that the escaping of knowledge from the private sphere, in what he calls 'external effects', is the vital ingredient for economic development and that it is both invisible and immeasurable. Here, unlike the classic Fordist factory, knowledge (and the labour that produces it) is not straightforwardly subsumed to capital (Vercellone, 2007)[4].

Rather in today's capitalism knowledge is diffuse, located within and without the factory, and with this so too is management which becomes more diffuse in an emerging total subsumption (Hardt and Negri, 2000). Knowledge is no longer simply subsumed to capital but part of what Marx called the 'general intellect' (Marx, 1976: 706-8). This is not entirely new but it is a growing tendency within capitalism. This implies that labour and its knowledge are based in sociality – or something like Merton's (1968: 604-16) 'communism of science' or Lucas' (1988) 'external effects' which grow through use and are primarily social in nature. Our knowledge is based on what we have learned from history, what knowledge is embedded in technologies, and in our inter-individuality where we bring people together to provide products and services (Virno, 2004, 2006; Lucas, 1988). It is essentially not private, not individualised, not alertness.

At the core of this form of knowledge is the interface (Virno, 2006). Workers increasingly communicate between work teams, customers, hierarchies, functions, or technology as work slides beyond the categories of the factory and the worker. Indeed, in growing elements of the global economy, communication is both the work and the product. This has given rise to a new type of labour which makes interfacing, exchange, porosity of organizational boundaries,

4 Knowledge itself was stripped from workers via management strategies of deskilling, technological innovation, and organizational restructuring – although such stripping is never complete – and would if achieved render capitalism inert.

politics, or trust central. The use of this knowledge should be to transform collective practice or life (Negri, 1991: 47). In this view antagonism is central. Antagonism, power, struggle, alternatives, these are the motor of change not individualized private capture. Knowledge entails conflict with other knowledge forms e.g. there is or there is not an environmental crisis but it is this, very materialist, conflict over knowledge (which often takes place on unequal terms) that enables innovation, creativity, or social reorganization.

Difference and the conflict that it engenders drives forward 'progress' because these oppositions create innovation and value (Negri, 1991: 44). Central here is a refusal of work. That is a rejection of capitalist social relations in favour of autonomy, creativity, sabotage, self-organizing, or the avoidance of the terms of the employment relationship even when one is located within it. These refusals may be seen in the pleasures of hacking but they are also witnessed in the development of spaces – however flawed – outside of labour as a pure commodity e.g. LETS schemes, open source, or self-organizing to name but a few. It is the knowledge to refuse life as simply labour power. It is difference and conflict that create the opportunities Kirzner's entrepreneurial function captures – one can see this in something like corporate social responsibility (see Hanlon, 2008; Hanlon and Fleming, 2009).

From this perspective social contestation not privatized capture is at the heart of innovation and change. Knowledge is both material and social – it is not individual in the entrepreneurial sense. Indeed, knowledge creates affect, desire, social value and through the encouragement rather than capturing of interaction it builds, releases, and expands value. In this view, to commandeer knowledge/value is to stifle and restrict it (Hardt, 2010). Capturing knowledge/value may allow you to own it but it does not facilitate its development. Here private property runs counter to productivity and innovation because it creates rival and excludable goods which do not have to be rival or excludable. That is, by privatizing innovations or restricting access to what are increasingly easily reproducible goods, we limit their potential productivity (Hardt, 2010).

For example, there is no reason why goods such as education, film, music, medicine, science, and the knowledge contained within them should be rival and excludable. They can be used simultaneously by many users at the same time and to limit this via privatization is to limit potentiality. In this sense entrepreneurial activity is an exercise in lessening possibility because it stifles innovation and creativity. Yet simultaneously entrepreneurship needs this refusal of capitalist social relations for creativity and innovation (and hence capture) to take place. Thus the knowledge economy is one where corporations increasingly

capture value created elsewhere and use property rights to ensure monopoly rents in a manner similar to the past. Facebook, for example, is simply a platform upon which users produce value for each other but the creativity of doing so is harvested by Facebook to sell as data (see Pariser, 2011). Hence contra entrepreneurship theory, a real knowledge economy is antithetical to an entrepreneurial society because knowledge is, by its very nature, a social product that grows via sharing and is limited by capture or monopoly.

Thus although both the Austrians and the post-Workerists emphasize knowledge they do so in very different ways politically. Post-workerism rejects the privatizing of knowledge, rejects sharing it with capital, and rejects a 'finders-keepers' model of production and distribution as a base upon which to build the present or the future. Here we have two very distinct visions of life or a knowledge society both of which are located in something beyond the organization, in the active agent, and in knowledge. One is liberating and enhancing and the other is parasitic and restricting. Entrepreneurial activity does not simply disseminate knowledge instead, and more importantly, it monopolizes its application and uses in order to extract from it.

The recently emerged post-Fordist economy has used entrepreneurial alertness and soft technologies such as HRM or Intellectual Property Law to capture the value created outside of the firm. Indeed, Vercellone (2007: 16) suggests that capitalism has returned to a mode of accumulation similar to the mercantile and financial accumulation of the putting out system of the 17th and 18th centuries (see also Marazzi 2008, 2011; Hardt, 2010). If he is correct, then it is not surprising that the entrepreneur, arbitrage, and primitive accumulation are at the heart of life today. Whilst generating nothing arbitrage, entrepreneurial knowledge or the capturing of diffused knowledge, allows capitalism to survive in its antagonistic relationship to labour's knowledge. In such a world, the 'smash and grab' entrepreneurial alertness of the Russian Oligarchs at the expense of any science, expertise, craft, or commonly produced and owned knowledge is to be praised rather than pilloried.

But it is not only such obvious capturing of wealth that is based on entrepreneurial alertness. Social media sites, academic publishing and education, music and film, or pharmaceuticals and bio-diversity are industries which are increasingly organized around capturing value generated outside their boundaries. This is what Christian Marazzi (2011) means by financialisation and it is at the heart of the emerging regime of accumulation. In post–fordism, the 'rules of the game' (Baumol, 1990) legitimate the use of entrepreneurial alertness to capture value in this manner. The current emphasis on the entrepreneur ensures that this socially dysfunctional relationship to knowledge,

to value, and to distribution is legitimated and that it will continue. And with its continuance so will we get increasing inequality and a reduction of human potential.

Conclusion

Today it is market power and capture rather than knowledge, productive capability, innovativeness, or creativity that is evermore central to profit. What is important is the ability to entrepreneurially capture value – any quick examination of the TV show Dragon's Den demonstrates this where innovators are forced to pitch their ideas to a wealthy panel of 'entrepreneurs' who say yes or no and dictate punishing terms. Closer to home, one needs only to think of the relationship between academics and the major academic publishing houses – in essence academics create and quality control intellectual works and the publishers capture them. We can also think of the harvesting of value from the subjectivities we create in the general intellect and socialization. This capturing has been at the heart of human resource management ever since Elton Mayo declared he was extending Taylor to the mind (Mayo, 1924: 258; see also Costea *et al.*, 2008; Fleming, 2009). We can see it in corporate engagement with open-source programming (Lerner and Tirole, 2005; O'Mahony, 2003). We can see it in attempts to 'ever-green' and to exploit our shared intellectual history and bio-diversity (Perleman, 2002). Controlling resources and extracting rents are at the heart of entrepreneurship and its knowledge form. Here entrepreneurial activity is rent seeking activity, not innovation.

This post-workerist reading of knowledge and entrepreneurship leads to a very different understanding of the entrepreneurial economy and its view of knowledge as individualized, asocial alertness. In this reading the use of property rights and monopoly allows entrepreneurship limit access to knowledge's applications thereby limiting human potential because knowledge, productivity, and innovation are extended by open access. The so called knowledge economy increasingly generates goods that are easily reproducible, non-rival and non-excludable and, by embracing this, innovation and productivity will grow because more users can access goods thereby generating both more diversity and more quantity. Neo-liberal entrepreneurship stands in direct opposition to this – although within this scholarship Kirzner's capture analysis is more insightful for today's economy than those rooted in liberation or creativity. It appears that elements of non-Marxist management scholarship are also acknowledging some kind of shift even if they have not theorized it properly e.g. endogenous growth theory (Lucas, 1988), strategy (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) and innovation studies (O'Mahony, 2003; Oliveira and von Hipple, 2010) in different ways

register the increasing porosity of the organization and the important role that non-privatized knowledge and value creation has in our economic and social development.

And yet today, corporate activity has witnessed a rapid expansion of its use of property rights to privatize, to limit access and to gain entrepreneurial/monopoly profits (Perelman, 2002). In some respects this is based in the primitive accumulation of early capitalism which was characterized by colonialism, war, slavery, capture and super-exploitation. But it is also different because increasingly individuals often provide free labour through their consumption of YouTube or Facebook for those organizations to then entrepreneurially capture, privatize and exploit. Within this, these organizations do not manage the 'product' or control its production as they did through the assembly line – management is thus reaching into society and using the corporation as a 'unproduction based' shell to privatize use value derived from elsewhere and create exchange value from it. Today 'extreme neo-liberalism' as Harney (2009) might call it, has as its legitimating guide, an Austrian theory of knowledge capture which is spontaneous, individualized, opportunistic, amoral and exploitative. At the heart of which is the entrepreneur and the limiting of innovation and productivity.

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The falling rate of enjoyment: Consumer capitalism and compulsive buying disorder

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abstract

The article explores the relation between consumer capitalism and Compulsive Buying Disorder. A theoretical approach to the study of consumption and enjoyment is developed using Baudrillard and Lacan, and existing literature on compulsive buying is reviewed using the theory. It is argued that enjoyment plays a crucial role when symbolic identity is created through consumption of commodities with certain sign-values. In order for the consumer to redeem the commodity's sign-value she must be able to enjoy its use-value. The compulsive buyer lacks this ability to enjoy, causing a fundamental disturbance in her identity as consumer. The analysis of Compulsive Buying Disorder is furthermore applied in diagnosing the role of enjoyment in contemporary consumer capitalism.

Introduction

During and after WWII, a number of primitive tribes in the South West Pacific developed so-called 'cargo cults'. They had seen how the skies were filled with Japanese and American airplanes and they had observed how these planes would deliver huge quantities of goods to small and apparently insignificant islands. Seeking to get a share of these seeming gifts from the gods, they would build fake landing-grounds, which they would meticulously try to illuminate at night and they would build sham airplanes out of branches and bushes to make the mock landing-grounds seem invitingly populated. And they would wait patiently for the real thing to arrive. But of course, the gifts from above never came.

As Baudrillard has suggested this is the perfect fable for modern consumer capitalism (Baudrillard, 1970/1999: 31-32). The hunter-gathers populating the urban jungle of today surround themselves with a whole array of sham objects and try to imitate the signs of satisfaction. And they wait patiently for the seemingly divine beneficiary of the market to deliver the consumer miracle. But of course, the satisfaction from consumption never comes. The real thing always eludes them. Baudrillard extends this tragic nature of the relation between consumption and satisfaction to serve as a defining characteristic of contemporary capitalism. On the one hand, the explicit justification for consumer capitalism is the alleged capacity to deliver almost unlimited satisfaction and enjoyment. On the other hand, the delivery of satisfaction and enjoyment seems to be perpetually postponed resulting in widespread dissatisfaction and in expectations always exceeding actual enjoyment. In the condensed style, that has come to be his signature, Baudrillard proposes the following diagnosis:

> Enjoyment is radical, value is sublime; so this radical symbolic insistence is sublimated in value. The commodity is the incarnation of the sublime in the economic order. The radical demand of the subject is sublimated there in the ever renewed positivity of his demand for objects. But behind this sublime realization of value, there lies something else. Something other speaks, something irreducible that can take the form of violent destruction, but most frequently assumes the cloaked form of deficit, of the exhaustion and refusal of cathexis, of resistance to satisfaction and refusal of fulfilment. Viewing the contemporary economic situation as a whole, all this begins to look like a tendency we might want to call *the falling rate of enjoyment*. (Baudrillard, 1981: 207)

The object of analysis in this article is the phenomenon of Compulsive Buying Disorder. If we project the tendency of the 'falling rate of enjoyment' proposed by Baudrillard, we arrive at Compulsive Buying Disorder as its logical end point. While the phenomenon of Compulsive Buying Disorder is indeed interesting in itself, it also provides an opportunity to study more general relations between enjoyment, consumption, identity and desire. The article thus revolves around the following two questions:

- What is the role of enjoyment in Compulsive Buying Disorder?
- How may the specific phenomenon of Compulsive Buying Disorder serve as an extreme case of the general relation between enjoyment and consumption in contemporary capitalism?

Our theoretical approach to the study of consumption is developed through Lacan and Žižek, since the hegemony of consumerism today, arguably, cannot be grasped without reference to the axes of enjoyment and desire (Stavrakakis,

2007: 228; Fontenelle, 2013). The application of certain Lacanian insights – particularly into the logic of desire and enjoyment – is, as pointed out by Stavrakakis, a promising perspective in the analysis and critique of consumption (2007: 22). In our engagement with contemporary capitalism, we also draw on Baudrillard's reworking of Marx' analysis of capitalism (Baudrillard, 1970/1999, 1981), since it is argued that an analysis of the contradictions of capitalism can still be utilized to understand the contemporary phenomena such as Compulsive Buying Disorder. Perhaps today, in our age of extreme individualization, even the contradictions of capitalism have become individualized. And perhaps we may understand the flourishing of different kinds of addictive disorders as subjectively manifested local collapses of capitalism.

In a time of economic crisis, rising levels of debt and harsh measures of austerity politics, excessive consumption may not seem to be the most pressing problem. Still, we believe, that in order for us to confront the fundamental causes of our current predicament, we must be able to imagine forms of economic organization and personal self-realization that point beyond the existing form of consumer capitalism. It seems that most solutions to the current challenges merely aim to restore society to a state of affairs immediately prior to the 2007-8 financial crisis. Even in a situation where the economic system has obviously failed, the public imagination is still mesmerized by the fantasies of consumerism. Rather than seeing the crisis as an opportunity to fundamentally reform society, the aim of mainstream politics is merely to restore the economy so that we can get back to previous levels of spending and consumption again.

The following analysis of Compulsive Buying Disorder offers a glimpse into the dark side of consumerism. The purpose of this article is not to refute or replace existing theories of Compulsive Buying Disorder but rather to supplement these theories with a social theoretical understanding of the relation between compulsive buying and contemporary consumer capitalism. There is an essential insight to be obtained from the existing and massively growing psychological research into compulsive buying disorder, namely that the compulsive buyer does not differ qualitatively but only quantitatively from the normal consumer (Dittmar, 2000, 2005). The pathological trait of the compulsive buyer is merely one of exaggeration, not one of transformation. The feature that makes the literature on compulsive buying disorder worth addressing is thus that what is found in the compulsive buyer is merely an exaggerated form of what is already present in the normal consumer to a lesser degree. Consequently, the examination of compulsive buying is also promising in shedding further light upon the nature of consumption more generally. The aim of the analysis is not to provide a sense of comfort for non-compulsive consumers by showing that there are people out there, who are much worse off. Instead, we want to demonstrate

the general dynamics of consumerism and thereby point to the forms of desire and enjoyment that perhaps we need to overcome, if we are to exit the current crisis through a door that does not just lead to even more spending and more consumption.

Commodities, sign-value and the structuring of desire

> A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, bounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. (Marx, 1867/1973: 85)

The use-value of a commodity represents the potential for satisfying human needs, while exchange-value represents the price for which the commodity is traded on the market (Marx, 1867/1973: 49-55). This is the well-known argument of Marx's classic analysis of the commodity. What is characteristic about capitalism, compared to other ways of organizing production, is the emergence of a market where the exchange-value of the commodity is determined independently of its use-value. The 'metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' generated by the commodity are for Marx essentially connected to this paradoxical mismatch; how can a commodity take on a value, which is not justified by its use-value?

In Marx's original study of capital, the commodity is analyzed primarily in its relation to the capitalist mode of production. However, a number of subsequent authors have argued that capitalism's centre of gravity has moved away from the process of production and towards to the process of consumption (Baudrillard, 1970/1999; Bauman, 1998; Campbell, 1987). The essence of contemporary capitalism no longer lies in the ability to continuously maximize productivity and profit, as Marx argued, but in the ability to reproduce and expand the capacity for consumption (Kjellberg, 2008). In short, we will argue that this shift in the gravity of capitalism produces a new set of 'metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties' connected to the commodity and that this new set of complexities can be analysed by means of the concept of *sign-value*.

In its original version, Marx' analysis is insufficient for an understanding of contemporary capitalism, since it does not adequately include an analysis of consumption. On the basis of this critique, Baudrillard has developed the classical Marxist analysis of Capital to also include the sphere of consumption (Baudrillard, 1970/1999, 1981). Homologous to the way in which the exchange-value of the commodity in the sphere of production is determined independently from its use-value, Baudrillard shows how the commodity in the sphere of consumption generates a sign-value independent from its use-value (Baudrillard,

1981: 64-87). Aside from its capacity to satisfy needs in the customer, the commodity also constitutes value by functioning as a sign that gains meaning and value in its relation to other signs.

In Marx, exchange-value is conceived as an ideological distortion of the commodity's true essence as use-value. As we know, this distortion is what makes commodity fetishism and alienation possible. But while use-value in Marx functions as an external point of reference, outside the ideological circulation of capital, Baudrillard radicalizes the analysis by also seeing use-value as a matter of ideology. Not only is the exchange-value of the commodity a product of symbolic processes working internally in the capitalist system, but even the use-value of the commodity and the subjective needs to which it refers are socially generated. The consuming subject does not, as in Marx, stand outside of capitalism and therefore cannot serve as an absolute and material point of reference for the determination of the commodity's true value.

> [M]an is not simply *there* first, equipped with his needs, and designated by nature to fulfil and finalize himself *qua* Man. This proposition, which smacks of spiritualist teleology, in fact defines the individual function in our society – the functional myth of productivist society ... Far from the individual expressing his needs in the economic system, it is the economic system that induces the individual function and the parallel functionality of objects and needs. (Baudrillard, 1981: 86, 133)

Baudrillard's point is not that needs such as hunger and thirst exist only by virtue of capitalism. The point is rather that capitalism functions in such a way that every need is appropriated and structured in a form that is useful to the system. Our basic thirst cannot be distinguished from our desire to quench this thirst with Coca-Cola or some other capitalist commodity-object.

Baudrillard is here drawing upon Lacan's analysis of the shaping of the shaping of primary needs and desire through the symbolic order. Baudrillard's basic move in innovating Marx's original analysis of the commodity is that of short-circuiting the oppositional relationship between the external, seemingly objective point of reference – 'use-value' – and the whole fluid field of social signifiers – 'capitalist ideology'. In Lacan we find the exact same movement whereby the Real, i.e. the external reference to an objective reality of natural needs, is directly related to the social and symbolic order. In fact, the most basic point for Lacan is that desire and the unconscious are not to be equated with 'the most objective and originary drives' or with 'an inaccessible truth' about the subject or the social. The concepts of desire and unconsciousness have no fixed reference or content. Rather these concepts denote the *variable procedures* by which the subject is enrolled in the symbolic machinery of the social. In the other words, the radicality of Lacan's famous dictums of the unconscious *as* the discourse of the

Other (Lacan, 1955/2006) and of desire *as* the desire of the Other (Lacan, 1964/2004) consist in the fact that they undermine the place which is usually keep intact and reserved for an autonomous subject or a substantial conception of a subject with fixed needs or drives.

By being socialized into a system of language, symbols and signs, the subject loses its immediate and unmediated relationship to itself and reality. As Lacan writes, 'the letter kills the Real' (Lacan, 1964/2006: 848). The subject's desire for different objects is thus always already mediated and shaped by the prevalent symbolic system: 'Man's very desire is constituted ... under the sign of mediation. [M]an has no object that is constituted for his desire without some mediation' (Lacan, 1946/2006: 148). In this regard, capitalism is not primarily a particular way of *satisfying* the subject's desire, but rather a particular way of *structuring* this desire in the first place.

> That is not to say that there are no needs or no natural utility, etc. The point is, rather, that consumption, as a concept specific to contemporary society, is not to be defined at that level. For needs and the like are valid for all societies. What is sociologically significant for us, and which marks out our age as an age of consumption, is precisely the generalized reorganization of this primary level into a system of signs which reveals itself to be one of the specific modes, and perhaps *the* specific mode, of transition from nature to culture in our era. (Baudrillard, 1970/1999: 79)

The appropriation of desire by the domain of the symbolic order of capitalism has two consequences. First, there is the obvious social constructivist point that identity is constituted through consumption. The relationship between sign-value and use-value in Baudrillard is comparable to the relationship between the symbolic and the Real in Lacan. The structuring of desire in the symbolic order is also at the same time a construction of the subject's social identity. By consuming different commodity-objects of desire, the consumer positions herself in a symbolic system of signs thereby attaining a particular identity. The sign-value of the commodity signals a particular social meaning of the commodity and the consumer gets a share of this meaning through her consumption. In short, commodities shape the way we think and feel about ourselves (Belk, 1988; Thompson and Hirschman, 1998; Cherrier and Murray, 2007; Venkatesh and Meamber, 2008; Gould, 2010; Lekakis, 2013).

Second, and perhaps less obviously, desire also impose certain 'Real' limits on the plasticity of the symbolic construction of identity through consumption. The subject cannot just take on any possible identity just by acquiring the proper commodity-objects. For the purchase of a commodity to become symbolically effective on a subjective and intersubjective level, a complicated set of conditions

have to be met. These involve a certain engagement with the material dimension of consumption (Borgerson, 2009; Miller, 2009).

'A little piece of the real'

The notion of the Real is the key to seeing how Lacan differs from prevalent forms of social constructivism (e.g. Berger & Luckmann, 1966). On the one hand, it is clear what Lacan shares with such a position, namely, that the human symbolic universes are irreducible to some notion of objective reality. As Lacan states in Seminar II: 'There is no biological reason, and in particular no genetic one, to account for exogamy. In the human order we are dealing with the emergence of a completely new function ... one shouldn't think that symbols have actually come from the real.'(Lacan, 1954/1988: 29, 326; cf. Evans, 1996: 204). On the other hand, the Lacanian notion of the Real points to the fact that the symbolic order is never able to close itself fully around itself and operate in a completely self-reliant way. Symbolization is always incomplete. It always leaves a remainder, a void, a blockade, where symbolic representation is impossible. This remainder is the Real. The Real, accordingly, cannot be understood commonsensical as a totality of facts, but as that which resists complete symbolization. It is exactly by resisting symbolization that the Real comes to signify an objective persistence. Unlike a totality of facts, which can readily be symbolized, 'the Real is the rock upon which every attempt at symbolization stumbles, the hard core which remains the same in all possible worlds (symbolic universes)' (Žižek, 1989: 169). Exactly because it resists complete symbolization, social constructivists tends towards eliminating any references to a substantial notion of reality, but Lacan refrains from any such 'taboo-ing' of the Real (Stavrakakis, 2007: 9; cf. Žižek, 1994: 199). Rather the analytical aim becomes to take stock of this impossibility and to chart how the Real relates to social processes of symbolization.

The Real is thus not to be confused with the reality we speak of when we say that 'reality is socially constructed'. The Real is rather what is in surplus when reality has become socially constructed. Precisely because the Real is not a product of the process of symbolization it may work as a guarantee for this process, as an anchor point (*point de capiton*):

> Some accidentally produced 'little piece of the real' ... attests to the success of the communication.... For things to have meaning, this meaning must be confirmed by some contingent piece of the real that can be read as a 'sign.' The very word *sign*, in opposition to the arbitrary mark, pertains to the 'answer of the real': the 'sign' is given by the thing itself, it indicates that at least at a certain point, the

> abyss separating the real from the symbolic network has been crossed. (Žižek, 1991: 31-32)

Žižek points here to the ambivalence of the relation between the symbolic and the Real. Symbolization constitutes a form of "social construction" whereby the Real is "cancelled out". At the same time, the Real retains a crucial and constitutive function for the symbolic order. The symbolic order is not able to sustain itself purely by its own means. In the final instance, it is dependent on a 'piece of the Real'. This piece of the Real is produced within the symbolic order, but also incarnates a surplus of meaning not entirely reducible to operations within the symbolic order. The Real is highly paradoxical insofar as it is simultaneously inside and outside of the symbolic order. By being dependent on the Real, the symbolic order is in itself also paradoxical. This paradoxical nature is however masked by the "self-evident" force of the symbolic or by what Žižek straightforwardly calls ideology: '[I]deology is the "self-evident" surface structure whose function is to conceal the underlying "unbalanced", "uncanny" structure' (Žižek, 1997: 82; cf. Fisher, 2009: 16-17). We shall see how this applies in the case of the capitalist ideology of consumption, where the commodity as use-value functions as the 'little piece of the real'.

This is so me!

In Baudrillard's terms, use-value functions as 'the satellite and alibi' for the sign-value, and use-value functions as the 'naturalist guarantee' for the sign-value (Baudrillard, 1981: 148, 156). Baudrillard's point here is here exactly parallel to Lacan's thinking about the way the real is first left behind in the process of symbolization and then secondly re-emerges as something, which is beyond symbolization and therefore functions to guarantee the whole operation. In this section, we will expand how this logic exposes the ideological illusion of a predetermined correspondence between consumer and commodity – a 'theological nicety' of the commodity if there ever was one.

When a commodity is purchased, the relationship between consumer and commodity is at first purely arbitrary. In a free market, any consumer can, in principle, buy any kind of commodity. When the consumer walks into the record store, she may choose freely between Richard Wagner and Roger Whittaker, and when she wants to go to the movies she may choose freely between Lars von Trier and Jean-Claude Van Damme. Depending on her choice, her consumption will constitute a certain symbolic expression of her identity. But if the relationship between commodity and consumer is arbitrary, how can the sign-value of the commodity say anything about who the consumer is?

When the consumer is out shopping for new commodities, she cannot just buy any kind of commodity and make it work on a symbolic level. It can be hard work to find exactly that particular blouse or that particular pair of jeans, which is the right one. After visiting ten different stores, when the consumer finally emerges from the dressing room with the right blouse, she will say: 'This is the right one. This is so me!' At the foundation of this statement is the notion that some commodities are not right for me. This and that blouse are not me. Conversely, other and perhaps very few, commodities are the right ones. 'It is so me!' So there is allegedly a predetermined correspondence between the individual self and particular commodity-objects, and it is up to the shopping consumer to walk around and try to feel, which commodities are predetermined for her and which are not.

In the ideology of the shopper, she can imagine all sorts of uses for the commodity – this blouse can be used at cocktail-parties or this watch can tell what the time is in Tokyo. But the ideology of the shopper does not include the conviction that when she buys a pair of Prada shoes or Replay jeans that these commodities shall make her sophisticated, feminine and sexy. She cannot automatically transform their sign-value into an intersubjectively effective identity. The process of symbolization works the other way around. The shopper imagines that she is already sophisticated, feminine and sexy, and that the shoes and the jeans only function as the externally visible signs of these inner qualities. I am not getting botox because I want to be somebody else. I am getting botox because I want to be more effectively *me*. It is not that buying L'Oreal will make magically make me successful. It is exactly 'Because I'm (already) worth it!'

Here the use-value functions exactly as 'the satellite and alibi' for the sign-value, as the 'naturalist guarantee' and legitimation for the pursuit of particular social identity (Baudrillard, 1981: *ibid*.). That is to say, the use-value of the commodity functions precisely as 'that little piece of the Real', which is a guarantee of the relationship between the symbolic identity of the subject and the sign-value of the commodity. The consumer experiences her need for a particular commodity as altogether real and external to the process of symbolization. This is how the fantasmatic illusion is created that the correspondence between the consumer and the commodity exists before the purchase, and that the encounter on the market is only the completion of a connection between two entities, which are made for each other. The commodity's use-value serves the ideological function as the material correlate to the subject's true self. We see here how fantasy constitutes a crucial component in the construction of identity through consumption (Bradshaw et al., 2013) as it creates the fiction that the commodity is a sublime object, allegedly holding the truth about the subject (Žižek, 1989).

Capitalist ideology functions by masking its own role in establishing the subjective desire for a particular object. The connection between desire and object is taken for granted, and capitalism presents itself only as a neutral mediator between the two. The consumer experiences her desire for the commodity-object as an existential necessity, expressing who she really is, and this is precisely why the whole operation works. For Lacan and Žižek, the desired object functions as an 'answer of the real'. For the object to function in this way it must be experienced as something that is *found*.

> [I]f an object is to take its place in a libidinal space, its arbitrary character must remain concealed. The subject cannot say to herself, 'Since the object is arbitrary, I can choose whatever I want as the object of my drive.' The object must appear to be *found*, to offer itself as support and point of reference for the drive's circular movement.... [W]hile it is true that any object can occupy the empty place of the Thing, it can do so only by means of the illusion that it was always already there, i.e., that it was not placed there by us but *found there as an 'answer of the real.'* (Žižek, 1991: 32-33)

What we see here is how enjoyment constitutes the foundation of the symbolic dimension of consumption. Enjoyment is the answer of the real, guaranteeing the correspondence between the commodity as a symbol and the consumer's identity. The cultivation of taste thus becomes significant for the constitution of identity (Armstrong, 2013). Here it is of crucial importance to note the tragic dimension of enjoyment or *jouissance* that is underlined by Lacan (cf. Evans, 1996: 92-3). On the one hand, the subject is constituted as a desiring subject, a subject missing something, a subject in pursuit of an object, which may fill up its lack and provide the kind of complete enjoyment, that Lacan refers to as *jouissance*. On the other hand, the subject is constituted by lacking the capacity for complete satisfaction, for absolute *jouissance*. Enjoyment, thus, is never quite achieved in consumption, but is rather what sustains our desire in the strife for commodities. Enjoyment always partially fails or as Lacan writes: '*jouissance* is suffering' (Lacan, 1959/1997: 184) in that subject always suffers in the pursuit of satisfaction. As initially pointed out, the seemingly divine market beneficiary never quite delivers the promised enjoyment and satisfaction for consumption. Each commodity only satisfies us for a moment. The real thing always eludes us.

This tragic suffering of *jouissance* is perhaps nowhere clearer exhibited than in the case of the compulsive buyer, who restlessly strives for the objects prescribed by the capitalist symbolic order - hoping for enjoyment while merely and tragically being deferred from one sign-value to the next in a compulsion to repeat. This 'subjective collapse' of capitalism in the compulsive buyer is what we will explore next.

Compulsive buying and the creation of social identity

Not only is buying and consuming commodities one of the most basic activities in contemporary capitalism, today an even excessive relation to consumption seems to be the norm rather than the exception. While the current financial and debt crisis may have taken its toll on the spending power of some parts of the middle and lower classes in the Western economies, the very idea of consumerism as the dominant form of life and self-realization seems to be as vivid as ever. And with a growing middle class in China, India, South-America and Africa, consumerism seems to be on the rise as a global phenomenon. In comparison to conventional forms of addiction such as drug addiction and alcoholism, the normalcy of excessive levels of consumption makes it more difficult to diagnose and discriminate the addicted compulsive buyer from the ordinary non-pathological consumer. Within our context, this diagnostic difficulty points to the relevance of the literature on compulsive buying to the broader theme of capitalist consumption, since what if nothing really differentiates the logic of compulsive buying from the logic at play in consumption more generally? What if compulsive buying is merely the excessive illustration of the character of consumption as such?

In therapy and research, a number of different tests have been offered to identify and diagnose compulsive buying (Valence et al., 1988; Faber and O'Guinn, 1992; Frost, et al., 1998; Christo, et al., 2003). However, compulsive buying is not a specified diagnosis in the official classification systems ICD-10 and DSM-IV, but is classified in the category of impulse control disorders. A US prevalence study suggests that 5.8% of the American population may suffer from the disorder (Koran, et al., 2006). A comparable study suggests approximately the same prevalence in Germany (Reisch et al., 2004).

To date, studies of compulsive buying have primarily been conducted from the approach of cognitive psychology (Müller, et al., 2005 for overview). A pioneering study defines the disorder as 'chronic, repetitive purchasing that becomes a primary response to negative events or feelings,' and this definition is later supplemented by, 'which becomes very difficult to stop and ultimately results in harmful consequences' (Faber and O'Guinn, 1989, 1992). Purchasing functions as a form of evasive action from confrontation with underlying psychological problems.

A number of studies have mapped the compulsive buyer's emotions before, during and after the purchase (Christenson, et al., 1994; Miltenberger, et al., 2005). The purchase is often triggered by negative emotions such as sadness, loneliness, anger, anxiety and boredom, and in some instances by positive

emotions such as joy and elatedness. During the purchase, both positive and negative emotions such as joy, power, loss of control and frustration may be experienced, and the purchase is immediately followed by emotions such as satisfaction, joy, pride and relief. These positive emotions are, however, short lived and are quickly replaced by indifference, guilt, anger and sadness. Compulsive buying has been connected with a number of general cognitive distortions such as affective difficulties, compromised self-perceptions and perfectionist expectations, erroneous beliefs about the nature of objects, potential purchases and purchasing opportunities, erroneous beliefs about the psychological benefits of buying and decision-making difficulties (Kyrios et al., 2004).

One of the problems in the approach of mainstream cognitive psychology is that mapping the compulsive buyer's emotions and cognitive constitution says only very little about the symbolic meaning attributed by the compulsive buyer to her purchasing behaviour. Registering how purchasing functions as a momentary relief from emotional tensions is one thing. Understanding why this is the case is quite another thing. Thus Dittmar has elaborated and supplemented the cognitive model by way of a psychodynamic approach. She emphasizes the concept of *self-discrepancy* as central to the understanding of compulsive buying (Dittmar, 2000, 2005; Dittmar and Drury, 2000). Self-discrepancy is the difference between self-image and the way one wishes to be seen by others, i.e. between actual and ideal self. According to Dittmar, the compulsive buyer has a particularly high degree of self-discrepancy and her purchasing behaviour may be understood as an attempt to transform her actual identity, in order for it to correspond better with her ideal identity. The compulsive buyer purchases products which she imagines may change her own, as well as other people's, image of her. In this way, shopping functions as a form of *identity repair* (Dittmar, 2005: 856).

Within both cognitive psychology and Dittmar's psychodynamically oriented approach, compulsive buying is explained by the subject not being in balance with herself. The subject has some fundamental problems, e.g. low self-esteem, depression, trauma or the like, which she erroneously believes she can solve or at least escape through shopping. Dittmar characterizes compulsive buyers as follows:

> They believe that consumer goods are an important route toward success, identity, and happiness, and they purchase these goods to bolster their self-image, drawing on the symbolic meanings associated with products in an attempt to bridge gaps between how they see themselves (actual self), how they wish to be (ideal self), and how they wish to be seen (ideal self). (Dittmar, 2000: 106)

While cognitive psychology speaks about downright erroneous beliefs in the compulsive buyer's attitude towards commodities, Dittmar argues that the compulsive buyer's beliefs about goods and purchasing do not differ qualitatively but only by degree from the normal consumer's beliefs. While cognitive psychology is certainly right that from a purely rational perspective, the whole idea that commodities possess the capacity for expressing who the consuming individual really is, must seem like an 'erroneous belief' in itself. What the cognitive approach misses is that this belief is nevertheless at the heart of ideology in consumer society and thus a necessary precondition for the normal participation and functioning of the individual in modern society. We all use things and commodities to signal our identities and the pathological trait of the compulsive buyer is merely an excessive focus on this aspect. This focus on identity is neatly illustrated by a prototypical description of a purchase whereby a commodity magically makes one 'a certain kind of person':

> I felt really depressed about myself. And when I've analyzed it now I've thought I think I probably wanted to make myself feel that I was something better than I was. And so to do that I bought expensive clothes, expensive make-up, expensive perfumes and things. Got it all on the [pause] store cards from a big department store. So, you know, by buying those things I felt.., 'cos I used to dress up really smart and, you know, I used to think 'Oh the shop assistants probably think I've got loads of money and I'm 'this sort of person', and I enjoyed getting them because of that really. (What kind of person?) I think it was a kind of, sort of, a smartly dressed, young, trendy woman that you see around the places, can afford to wear designer labels and show them off and have Chanel make-up and that kind of thing. (Quoted in Dittmar and Drury, 2000: 135)

If we return to the perspective on consumption developed in this article with reference to Baudrillard and Lacan, we can add further nuance to the interpretation of such experiences and Dittmar's connection between consumption and the consumer's ideal self. With Lacan, we can differentiate between the 'ideal ego' and the 'ego ideal' of a subject (Lacan, 1962; cf. Žižek 1989: 105ff). While the *ideal ego* is the ordinary identification with an attractive picture of oneself, the *ego ideal* is the symbolic identification with the particular socio-normative gaze that makes such a picture attractive at all. Thus, if, say, a young student wishes to be an always well-prepared and ambitious pupil she is identifying with a particular ideal ego, but her deeper symbolic identification is with the *gaze* that makes such attributes attractive at all, e.g. with the abstract and symbolic gaze of professorial authority. In the above case of the young compulsive buyer it is clear that her ideal ego is that of a smartly dressed woman wearing Chanel and Prada, but what symbolic identification makes such attributes attractive at all? It is, of course, none other than the abstract and symbolic gaze of capitalism. It is only within a particularly capitalist symbolic order that Chanel make-up and Prada bags are uniquely attractive. Compulsive

buying thus illustrates that a capitalist market is not only a mere servicing of our natural needs and desires, but rather a constitutive factor in the engendering of such needs and desires.

In fact, compulsive buying makes the connection of social identity to capitalist scales of value hyper-concrete, since the compulsive buyer will literally use such scales as a measure of her personal worth. A recovered compulsive buyer phrases this dynamic perfectly:

> Before I left the house I would literally total up how much the clothes and jewellery I was wearing were worth, and sort of 'put that on' as my value for the day. I knew it was crazy, but I couldn't help doing it in my head. Because I had no sense of intrinsic value, I looked to clothes for my sense of worth, because price is a measurable thing. (Quoted in Boundy, 2000: 9)

Uselessness, enjoyment and the ability to fantasize

The research literature on compulsive buying clearly highlights the excessive focus on the identity-creating sign-value of commodities in the compulsive buyer, but the cause of this focus is actually paradoxical. While the ordinary consumer is able to buy and consume in such a way that the commodity retains its symbolic meaning and its capacity for building identity, to the compulsive buyer the commodity has lost this very meaning. Within our perspective, the compulsive buyer's problem is, so to speak, that for her the entire process of symbolization in buying and consuming does not quite work anymore. A compulsive buyer will buy all the things that would make her look like a 'smartly dressed, young, trendy woman' (Dittmar and Drury, 2000: 135) but she is not able to muster the feeling of being such a woman. Despite the acquired commodities having the proper sign-values, the process of symbolization has not succeeded and the woman is unable to identify with the commodities. In the terms developed in this article, the compulsive buyer's problem is that she targets her desire directly at the commodity's sign-value. In her one-sided focus, she neglects to mobilize a need for the use-value of the commodity.

A typical phenomenon in compulsive buying is that, once purchased, goods are used only very few times, if used at all (Christenson, et al. 1994)(Christenson, et al., 1994). Clothes go directly into the bottom of the closet, perhaps even with the price tag still on them, and barely used sports equipment ends up in the back of the garage (Boundy, 2000: 9, 20). A recovered compulsive buyer explains:

> The joy was the act of buying itself. Often, I wouldn't bother to try things on – I'd look at the price tag and think, 'I've got to have this,' especially if I thought it was a 'bargain' I might not see again. More often than not, when I got my bounty home,

> I'd never even hang it up; it would sit in the carrier bag or the shoebox under the bed. It didn't matter *what* I bought; it still wouldn't have satisfied the continual, gnawing desire for more. (Quoted in Campbell, 2000: 68)

Faber and O'Guinn explain this phenomenon by highlighting that it is the very purchase, not the commodity, which is important to the compulsive buyer. They quote one of their interview subjects: 'I really think it's the spending. It's not that I want it because sometimes, I'll just buy it and I'll think, "Ugh, another sweatshirt"' (1989: 154).

This is a clear instance of the tragic dimension of *jouissance*. As Lacan states: 'That's not it! Is the very cry by which the jouissance obtained is distinguished from the jouissance expected' (Lacan, 1972/1999: 111). In our approach, the phenomenon may furthermore be explained by saying that it is sign-value not use-value which is important to the compulsive buyer. In the moment of purchase the compulsive buyer experiences an intense but short-lived euphoria, since she has now come very close to the *real* object of her desire. The euphoria is the culmination of her expectations towards the commodity. She is now in possession of the sign-value towards which her desire is directed. But once bought, the commodity must be consumed and enjoyed in order for the sign-value to be redeemed. Sign-value may be compared to sound waves that can only exist in so far as there is a material medium through which they may be transmitted. Sign-value is dependent on use-value in the same way that sound is dependent on air. Precisely because the compulsive buyer is not able to mobilize a need for the commodity's use-value, she is not able to consume it. Therefore euphoria is succeeded by some form of disappointment. Sign-value cannot propagate and hence fades into nothing. What is described in the quote above is a kind of desublimation. The woman is left with an object that she does not need, and without its use-value the commodity loses its sign-value as well and it is reduced to 'just another sweatshirt'.

It is noteworthy how female compulsive buyers typically buy goods such as clothes, jewellery, shoes and makeup (Faber and O'Guinn, 1989; Christenson, et al., 1994; Dittmar, 2000; Müller, et al., 2005). For male compulsive buyers almost identical shopping patterns apply, but they also extends to small pieces of electronic equipment, mobile phones, expansions to television sets, car accessories and hardware (Black, 2001). In short, men buy *gadgets*. What according to Baudrillard (1970/1999) characterizes gadgets as such, despite all their promises to the contrary, is their relative uselessness. Like Prada shoes, gadgets are characterized by having a relatively high sign-value relative to use-value. It seems reasonable to assume that the purchased shoes or car radio do not constitute life necessities, but are just additions to an already well-equipped wardrobe or functioning car, such that the marginal use-value is very limited.

The high sign-value relative to use-value makes the process of buying and consuming very fragile. If the sign-value of the commodity is to function as a marker and creator of identity, the buyer has to be able to muster a need for the use-value of the commodity, and has to be able to retain this need in her relationship to herself as well as to others. The higher the sign-value, the greater the demand on the buyer to be able to expand her needs and her capacity for consumption. In other words, she must be able to convince herself and the world around her that she needs this particular commodity. This conviction must be not only intellectual but also habitual. The acquisition of a commodity must be followed by a sense of enjoyment that functions as evidence of the consumer's urgent need for the commodity. The compulsive buyer suffers from being unable to produce this kind of evidence. This does not mean that the compulsive buyer has no desire for the commodity, but her desire is only directed at the sign-value of the commodity.

A classic study argues that compulsive buyers have a particularly strong ability to fantasize (Faber and O'Guinn, 1989). This corresponds very well with our argument that before the purchase they focus on the commodity's sign-value and imagine what identity the commodity symbolizes. Another study gives the example of a female compulsive buyer who, when making very expensive purchases, imagines herself to be the wife of a rich man able to fulfil all her wishes (Winestine, 1985). In the mind of the compulsive buyer, the commodity is imagined to be a sublime object capable of redeeming a special identity. This fantasy is, of course, entertained by advertising, branding and the ideology of consumption in general (Fitchett, 2004; Schroeder and Zwick, 2004). The fantasies induced by advertising are, as Stavrakakis has rightly pointed out, not only intended to support existing preferences and desire. They effectively teach us *how* to desire (2007: 241).

With regard to the ability to fantasize about the identity creating potential of the commodity there is, as Dittmar rightly argues, only a difference of degree between the compulsive buyer and the ordinary consumer. But once the commodity is purchased, another difference sets in. The compulsive buyer is not able to enjoy the commodity and she is not able to redeem the sign-value that she has been fantasizing about. If the process of identification through buying and consuming is to be effective, the consumer must have some prior notion of who she is. She must at least have the illusion that the commodity expresses something that she already is. Instead, the compulsive buyer's approach to the commodity seems to bear the expectation that the commodity will make her into something, which she is not beforehand. What is in question here is a 'theological nicety' of the modern commodity, so the question is not whether it is philosophically or theoretically tenable to speak of an essential identity before the

purchase or not. The question is rather whether the buying subject has an *illusion* about such an essential identity.

Epistemologically speaking, ordinary consumers are performative essentialists, as their very illusion of having an essential identity functions to produce exactly this kind of identity. Compulsive buyers, in turn, are enlightened constructivists as their failure to maintain the illusion of an essential identity prevents them from attaining such an identity through consumption. One compulsive buyer puts it this way: 'So I never really knew who I was or how people really liked me because I've never been fully represented' (Quoted in Faber, 2000: 39). Apparently she has no a priori notion about who she is, but waits instead for the commodity to tell her. Along the same lines, a male compulsive buyer says: 'I always refer to myself as being very shallow and superficial. I don't feel there's much more behind me than what you see' (Quoted in Faber, 2000: 39). So there is no illusionary inside for which the commodity may work as an outer expression, and there is no need which may connect to the commodity's use-value.

Empirical research has demonstrated significant comorbidity between compulsive buying and the eating disorder bulimia (Faber et al., 1995). On a theoretical level, the two disorders also show an interesting homology. While compulsive buying is 'buying without consuming'; bulimia, where an orgiastic ingestion of food is immediately followed by throwing up, is 'eating without digesting'. The bulimic is also driven by a fantasy of satisfaction provided by the food, as the eating spree is initiated, and yet she is unable to redeem the satisfaction when the food is to be digested. Similar to commodities, food has both use-value in the form of nutrition, taste, etc. and sign-value as a symbol of love, care, affection, recognition, comfort, prosperity, etc. The bulimic may be excessively fantasizing about redeeming these symbolic values by eating but she neglects the balancing of her desire for the symbolic with her capacity to digest and enjoy the food as use-value. She forces the process, resulting in her throwing up the food again. As vomit, the food is very concretely desublimated and it appears very obviously stripped of any sign-value. The bulimic's vomit is the theoretical equivalent to the compulsive buyer's shoes, sitting unused under the bed.

A vicious circle

It is perhaps fairly easy to understand why the compulsive buyer begins to shop. It is a lot more difficult to understand, why she does not stop. Homologous to the bulimic, the compulsive buyer's desire for commodities seems to increase and

not decrease as she repeatedly has experiences of desublimation. Paradoxically, the compulsive buyer seems to have no grasp of the decreasing marginal utility of yet another gadget or yet another dress. An inverse proportional relationship between her ability to consume and redeem sign-value, and her desire for and fantasies about commodities, seems to develop. The weaker her capacity for consumption and enjoyment, the stronger her desire for yet another commodity, and the more she fantasizes about the commodity, the less she is able to realize the fantasies after the purchase.

> Satisfaction from a purchase never lasts long. Shortly after buying the cross-country skis, the compulsive shopper's interest shifts to motorcycles, or video cameras. Perhaps that is because much of his spending feeds fantasies he has about himself. He harbors some vague hope that the next purchase is going to change his life, make him more interesting, fulfilled, but it never does. As soon as the high wears off, another craving sets in. (Boundy, 2000: 20)

The compulsive buyer's relationship to the commodity collapses since she is not able to consume and hereby redeem its sign-value. The collapse does not only concern the particular commodity, but is gradually generalized to any commodity with a certain sign-value. This process constitutes the development from ordinary consumption to compulsive buying. The compulsive buyer becomes unable to enjoy and find confirmation through shopping and the consumption of goods. The compulsive buyer has lost touch with the commodity objects which otherwise function as important navigation points in the capitalist consumption society.

The desublimation of the commodity in compulsive buying is comparable to the desublimation of money, we may find in compulsive gambling. As demonstrated in a Lacanian analysis of compulsive gambling, gambling games provide the gambler with an experience of random and groundless circulation of money (Bjerg, 2009). In some cases, this experience may have the traumatizing effect of permanently desublimating the gambler's relation to money. Money is stripped of the metaphysical properties otherwise vested in it by capitalism. This desublimation constitutes the development of Compulsive Gambling Disorder.

As we have seen in reference to Lacan, every process of symbolization presupposes an interaction with the Real in order to become effective. The compulsive buyer is not able to activate this interaction, and is therefore unable to stabilize her symbolic identity. She oscillates between a state in which she ascribes to the commodity the potential for realizing a fantasized identity, and a state in which this realization has failed and she is left with almost nothing. As Stavrakakis notes, an encounter with the Real has the potential effect of making objects oscillate between seeming like magical substances and nightmares of

contamination and guilt (2007: 7). The turning point is the moment of purchase. After this moment, the fantasy has to be realized through the act of consumption, which the compulsive buyer is not able to complete. Up to this point the compulsive buyer experiences a feeling of elatedness and perhaps even euphoria (Faber and O'Guinn, 1989; Lejoyeux, et al., 1996). Hereafter some form of trip downwards sets in.

> While in the act, the compulsive shopper often feels a sense of well-being, excitement, and control. But after the spree, as this woman drives home or puts away the goods, she begins to feel anxious and guilty about how much she's spent, confused about her loss of control, vaguely let down that the new items aren't magically transforming her moods or life, and ashamed that she can't seem to get her spending under control. In short, she emerges from her experience 'spent.' Her cravings to shop are then fanned by this complex of uncomfortable feelings, and thus the cycle perpetuates itself. (Boundy, 2000: 8)

Every time the compulsive buyer experiences her hopes and expectations of the commodity being shattered, she becomes more insecure in her own identity. This makes it more and more difficult to mobilize the pre-purchase notion of identity required for the symbolic operation of purchase and consumption to work. The compulsive buyer's shopping behaviour is out of touch with any sense of her own needs or the use-value of the commodity. She may buy goods that are obviously useless to her, or she may buy several identical articles making the marginal use-value almost zero. The erratic shopping behaviour of the compulsive buyer reflects her inability to make the symbolic order interact with the Real in a way that will fix her identity. She is completely at a loss as to which commodity contains the answer to who she is. The effect of her confusion is that no commodity is capable of delivering this answer. The compulsive buyer is caught in a vicious circle, where it becomes more and more difficult to produce the minimal amount of enjoyment necessary to confirm the symbolic construction of identity.

The compulsive buyer's problem with enjoyment is comparable to the problem of enjoyment, we find in drug addiction, although the two seems to function as diametrical opposites. In a Lacanian perspective, the drug addict's problem is the experience of enjoyment radically detached from any meaningful external object (Bjerg, 2008). The experience of this kind of *real jouissance* erodes the drug addict's ability to generate meaning from the more moderate and incomplete enjoyment in the consumption of commodity objects. The problem of drug addiction is thus a problem of 'enjoyment without object', while the problem of compulsive buying is a problem of 'object without enjoyment'. In between the drug addict and the compulsive buyer, we find the ordinary capitalist consumer, who is able to consume and enjoy the commodity to a degree sufficiently low for her to never become fully satisfied thus reproducing her desire for more, but still

to a degree sufficiently high enough for her to identify with the sign-value of the commodity.

Conclusion

The high prevalence of compulsive buying disorder attests to the increasing shift of gravity from production to consumption within capitalism. The mediating link between the two is the ability of modern capitalism to directly shape and appropriate desires and needs towards an increased capacity for consumption. Capitalism is thus not merely a market beneficiary that satisfies our needs; rather modern consumer capitalism also implies a symbolic structuring of our needs and our capacity for enjoyment. In order to explain his apparent indifference to clothes, Žižek once told a magazine reporter that 'for me shopping is like masturbating in public' (in Boynton, 1998). A main contention in this article may be phrased as saying that this joke also inadvertently expresses a more general truth, namely, that shopping is intimately connected with enjoyment and desire. Within modern consumer capitalism, shopping is the public form of enjoyment.

There are indeed biographical, psychological, genetic, or otherwise individual explanations as to why some people manage to function properly in contemporary consumer capitalism whereas others develop a detrimental Compulsive Buying Disorder. Yet, in this article we have argued that there is also a specific relation between compulsive buying and consumer capitalism and that the functioning of commodities in contemporary capitalism constitutes a societal disposition for the development of Compulsive Buying Disorder. As capitalism's center of gravity shifts from production to consumption, the importance of consumption of commodities as medium for the creation of identity also increases. In this sense, compulsive buying exhibits the structure of modern commodities more clearly than ordinary consumption in that the identity-creating trait of many commodities is more plainly exhibited in the compulsive buyer's excessive relation to this trait. In order to create identity through consumption by redeeming the sign-value of the commodity, the consumer must mobilize a certain element of enjoyment in the engagement with use-value of the commodity. The compulsive buyer is characterized by failing to make this process of consumption work. This failure does not quench desire, but rather sends it into vicious cycle where each commodity only yields satisfaction for a moment. At this point compulsive buying is however merely an excessive illustration of consumption as such. The incessant deferral of satisfaction is not unique to compulsive buying; it is rather a quite formal trait of consumption.

If we venture to read the phenomenon of Compulsive Buying Disorder as a symptom of the current state of consumer capitalism, we may see the failure of the compulsive buyer in the attempt to make ends meet in the intricate interplay between desire, enjoyment and the constitution of identity, as the subjective expression of the societal tendency, which Baudrillard refers to as the falling rate of enjoyment. The incessant pressure on individual consumers to consume more and more in order to provide an outlet for the never ending stream of consumer goods flowing from a globalized production apparatus may be approaching inherent limits of human subjectivity (cf. Soper, 2013). In debates about climate change and ecological devastation it is often suggested that economic growth has reached the natural limits of the global ecosystem. In similar fashion, we may risk the hypothesis that there are also natural limits to the capacity of the subjective 'egosystem' for producing enough enjoyment to facilitate the conversion of the sign-value of commodities into personal meaning and identity. If this hypothesis is true, Compulsive Buying Disorder constitutes the necessary breakdown of subjective egosystems under the pressure of consumer capitalism.

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The diagrammatic spectator

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abstract

Notions of diagrammatics and the use of diagrams are increasingly visible in both art research and art practice. Yet reflection on diagrams and specifically the activity of diagramming tends to focus on the position of the author. Sher Doruff's concept of what she calls 'diagrammatic praxis' sets out the foundations for this model. It is based on understanding how, through the doing of diagramming, one becomes relational to thought. This article proposes instead that the spectator's diagrammatic praxis be investigated from a position of equality. The intention is to expand Doruff's discourse beyond seeing the spectator as merely a collaborator, and evaluate how spectators become relational to diagrams on their own terms. By re-defining diagrammatic praxis around the spectator, the article suggests a re-organisation of the prevailing paradigm of informational consumption and communication. The diagrammatic spectator therefore offers a new perspective on how doing, seeing and thinking through diagrams forms an important position of critical enquiry independent of the author.

Introduction

This paper concerns diagrams and diagrammatic praxis. Diagrams are visual information devices that broadly comprise a range of technical genres including graphs, technical drawings and charts. These can be characterised further as visual displays or symbolic representations of qualitative information, often employing shapes connected by lines, arrows, or other visual links to present or communicate relations and ideas. In our daily lives we encounter diagrams in the form of maps, line graphs, bar charts, engineering blueprints, and architects' sketches. Diagrams are also prolific in a variety of academic disciplines and creative fields where they serve different functions from graphically representing algebraic or geometric relationships in mathematical practices (for example the

use of Venn diagrams to illustrate simple set relationships in probability, logic, statistics, and computer science), modelling structures of Multinational Corporations (for instance the Stopford and Wells model of MNC organisations), to the use of schemas and mathemes to illustrate theories of psychology and subjectivity (such as Sigmund Freud's diagram 'Dissection of the Psychic Personality'). Whether a diagram is intended for professional use (in pedagogy or publication) or an ephemeral doodle on a scrap of paper, it represents an experiment in thinking. The experimentation of thought that we engage with in diagrams is what makes the medium so interesting and peculiar. Rather than give a literal representation of information, such as we find in tables, diagrams operate primarily as discursive machines that show abstract relationships. How we consequently think with and through diagrams is the subject of diagrammatic praxis. The study of diagrammatic praxis, following Sher Doruff's concept of the term, focuses predominantly on the 'doing of diagramming' (Doruff, 2011c: 3). That is to say how one not only thinks and perceives in diagrammatic forms, but also how one re-thinks and alters perceptions in diagrams. As Doruff proposes, diagramming is a process of 'becoming-relational' to thought and 'the relational taking form' (Doruff, 2011c: 3). It is this element of diagrams that warrants further investigation, especially as a medium of information handling that brings into question less how each person relays information, and more how one relates to it directly.

The problem with the majority of research on diagrams though, including Doruff's concept of diagrammatic praxis, is that it tends to follow an author-centric model. In contrast, the present enquiry offers some speculative discussion about the diagrammatic spectator. Extant research commonly positions the spectator's entrance into diagrammatics only by way of collaborative production with the author, or as a process of social networking mediated by diagrammatic mediums. The alternative, I posit, is to progress from a position of intellectual equality. Following Jacques Rancière's description of the term, equality here means that the spectator's position is not analysed according to what knowledge is disseminated by diagrams, or what is shared through co-production or co-habitation with the artist/author. Instead, equality is achieved by way of the spectator's own 'venture into the forest of things and signs' (Rancière, 2009: 11). By addressing diagrammatics according to a model of intellectual equality this current paper aims to evaluate the different potentialities of doing, seeing, and thinking as they are manifest in the spectator's own relation to the world of information. Learning ceases to be about learning from the artist's position or through the consumption and communication of information. Instead it is about what one sees and thinks for oneself and, crucially, how that constitutes a radical position in our current informational paradigm.

Over the course of the next few pages I will navigate diagrammatic processes in the labour of spectators in order to draw out two main issues. Firstly, how the spectator (as the addressee of diagrammatic systems) enters into diagramming in their own right. Secondly, I am interested in the repercussions that arise from the spectator's diagrammatic praxis. This argument is set against a backdrop of informatisation and immaterial labour, notably drawing on Maurizio Lazzarato's idea of the consumer/communicator (Lazzarato, 1996) to define how the spectator consumes and communicates information diagrammatically. By addressing these two issues this paper intends, as does Doruff, to extend a concept of diagramming into a living space of art (Doruff, 2009: 121). In contrast to Doruff's investigation though, this article will focus on the spectator's (rather than the artist's) becoming-relational to diagrams and also posit how that relation takes form in the living space of informational society. The reason why I will focus this investigation on an aesthetic terrain of diagrams is because Doruff, Rancière and Lazzarato develop their arguments in relation to the figure of the artist. Doruff draws her argument on diagrammatic praxis from reflection on art research practices, Rancière characterises the dissensual figure that underpins his discourse on intellectual equality through the aesthetic regime of art and specifically the figure of the artist (Rancière, 2010: 173), and Lazzarato builds his model of immaterial labour around an aesthetic model of author, reproduction and reception (Lazzarato, 1996). However, while the context of this debate is founded in art, I encourage the reader to consider the wider potential of diagrammatics to re-think human/information relations in the organisation of aesthetics, the politics of organisation and as a practical methodology for organising new distributions of thought.

The 'active' subject

In order to bring out the relationship between spectators and diagrams and make it meaningful, it is necessary to first detail the network of presuppositions that place the spectator at the heart of information relations in the paradigm of immaterial production. The dynamic social field of art's spectator can largely be defined today in relation to the mechanisms of information production, reception and communication that arise with immaterial labour practices since the late 1960s and early 1970s. We are talking about a paradigm that increases the activation of information in every aspect of social production. The general model of immaterial labour against whose background we have become used to judging the political implications of this system comes from the socio-political work of Maurizio Lazzarato. In 'Immaterial labour' Lazzarato details a synthesis of immaterial labour between empirical research into the new forms of work and modes of labour organisation that have developed since the 1970s. The concept

progresses from a domain of work that has arisen around tertiary industries, computerisation and informatisation – for which Lazzarato uses the term 'mass intellectuality' – and corresponds to concurrent theoretical reflection at that time on biopolitics[1]. Specific to Lazzarato's analysis is how he understands the process of valorisation as a process of self-valorisation. Instead of seeing labour practices as divisive, splitting conception and execution, means and ends, he sees immateriality as a force that 'transcends' labour divisions from 'within the labour process' (Lazzarato, 1996). Key to this internalisation of control is the re-imposition of the process of command (over reproduction and reception) into the individuals' process of labour. As Lazzarato states: 'In this phase, workers are expected to become "active subjects" in the coordination of the various functions of production, instead of being subjected to it as simple command' (Lazzarato, 1996).

The diagnosis Lazzarato advances follows Foucault's idea that the biopolitical turn aims at 'the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production' (Foucault, 1998: 141). However, Lazzarato employs an aesthetic model in order to organise production around three key points of intersection that the material model would otherwise obscure: author, reproduction, and reception. Through the aesthetic model he is then able to reformulate these points of intersection for his model of immaterial labour in the following way: (a) the author looses his 'individual dimension' in order to be 'transformed into an industrially organized production process', (b) reproduction becomes mass reproduction, (c) the audience is recognised as the consumer/communicator (Lazzarato, 1996). The consumer/communicator operates according to the double function of both the addressee of the author's commodity (the ideological product) and simultaneously as a productive site with the role of integrating the ideological product into social communication (literally activating the product by placing it in the context of life)[2]. This model is important because through it we can identify how immaterial production entails a shift from a mode of consumption

1 Lazzarato places his idea of 'mass intellectuality' as a '"great transformation" that began at the start of the 1970s', whereby '[m]anual labour is increasingly coming to involve procedures that could be defined as "intellectual", and the new communications technologies increasingly require subjectivities that are rich in knowledge' (Lazzarato, 1996). Rather than simply meaning that intellectual labour has become subjected to the norms of capitalist production, what Lazzarato states has happened is that 'a new "mass intellectuality" has come into being, created out of a combination of the demands of capitalist production and the forms of "self-valorisation that the struggle against work has produced' (Lazzarato, 1996).

2 The use of the term 'ideological product' here designates how products (in the immaterial paradigm) are capable of producing new intersections between human power, knowledge and action: what Lazzarato calls 'new stratifications of reality' rather than mere reflections thereof (Lazzarato, 1996).

that traditionally would be defined by the consumer destroying the consumable object, to a model of consumption that consumes by communicating and re-communicating social products. Because of this double role we could even say that information handling by the consumer/communicator has become a complicit 'labour of control' (Lazzarato, 1996). The audience is not related to the information they consume and communicate as living experience. Instead, according to today's management mandates, 'the subject becomes a simple relayer of codification and decodification' (Lazzarato, 1996).

Diagrammatic praxis

Diagrammatic praxis, I will argue, presents us with a model of production capable of countering the bleak diagnosis of immaterial production, whereby one does not relate to information outside of relaying it. In the launch issue of *Journal for Artistic Research* (JAR) Doruff published 'Diagrammatic praxis' (2011a). Contained within this online canvas of hyper-linked texts and images are two documents of note: 'Diagrammatics: Portals of entry' (2011b) and her keynote speech at the Digital Resources in the Humanities and Arts (DRHA) conference in 2008, titled 'Hacking the re-markable relation' (2011c). Collectively these documents outline the concept of diagrammatic praxis, which Doruff formulates within the social field that situates practice-led art research today[3]. Her specific definition of diagram comes from Kenneth J. Knoespel's essay 'Diagrams as piloting devices in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze', in which Knoespel situates the origin of the word as coming from the original Greek *diagramma* (Knoespel, 2001). 'The root verb of *diagramma*', Knoespel tells us, 'does not simply mean something which is marked out by lines, a figure, form, or plan, but also carries a secondary connotation of marking or crossing out' (Knoespel, 2001: 147). From the ancient practice of writing on a wax tablet to the computer screen, the term *diagramma* gives us an understanding of diagram as a writable and re-writable medium. As with the wax tablet, for Doruff diagrams are 'remarkable' (Doruff, 2011c). To be remarkable plays on the double meaning of the word 'remarkable', both to mean 'outstanding', insofar as we think of something that is 'drawn into clarity', and also as a re-markable surface on which ideas can be 'drawn and re-drawn' (Doruff, 2011c: 4). The re-markability of diagrams therefore provides a framework where thought, text and illustration are dynamic. As Knoespel states, '[w]hile a diagram may have been used visually to

3 Doruff's work on diagrammatics extends from her doctoral thesis *The translocal event and the polyrhythmic diagram*, completed at Central Saint Martins (University of the Arts London) in conjunction with SMARTlab (2002-2006). This work focuses on diagrammatic praxis as performative and emphasises the conditions of real time collaborative image and/or sound improvisation in distributed networks.

reinforce an idea one moment, the next it may provide a means of seeing something never seen before' (Knoespel, 2001: 147). Similarly, Doruff's concept of diagrammatic praxis is intended to provide the expanding set of artist practitioners who struggle to articulate a process of thought and practice with a 'toolbox of applicable concepts and techniques' that 'affords a tangible approach to the movement of ideas and the emergence of form' (Doruff, 2011b: 2).

The problem with the extant formulation of diagrammatic praxis though is that it partitions productivity between the author and the spectator. The later only fits into diagrammatics as a collaborator. As Doruff states about her vision for diagrammatic praxis, diagrams facilitate 'parallel encounters between practitioners and publics' (Doruff, 2011b: 2) through collaborative production or 'social networking' (Doruff, 2011c: 1). Diagramming, for her, is a tool that enables speculation on our current collaborative ecology. On this point her work follows Deleuze's understanding of 'a different kind of diagram, a different machine, closer to theatre than to the factory' (Deleuze, 2006: 30). The issue raised here about the theatricality of diagrams concerns how they operate, or more specifically perform, as an information conduit between the author and the addressee – much in the same way that a stage or auditorium operates to distinguish between an actor and spectator. By aligning diagramming with theatre Doruff asks us to consider the 'formalizing and visualizing of co-authorship processes' (Doruff, 2011c: 2). Namely she questions how diagrams merge the stage of performance and the spectator. Generally speaking there are two common methods by which the divisiveness of the stage – divided between the actor and spectator as well positions of activity and passivity – can be contested. The first method involves mobilising the 'passive' spectator into the 'active' participator. Antonin Artaud's manifesto for a 'Theatre of cruelty' (in *The theatre and its double*, 1938) notably advocates this stance, whereby he proposes the spectator should be forced to abdicate any position and distance of the viewer. The second method aims at removing the distinctive physical boundaries of the stage and the auditorium, between performance and life, by taking theatre out into life. The Situationists typically exemplify this standpoint, especially their subversive political pranks that take art onto the streets.

Of the two strategies Doruff aligns diagramming to the latter. In previous writings she draws from the concept of drifting or *dérive* of Situationists' practice to evoke a 'perception and performance of place' that 'elicits a topology of the in-between' (Doruff, 2007: 1)[4]. We can see this topology of the in-between emerge

4 Guy Dubord defines *dérive* as: 'A mode of experimental behaviour linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances' (Debord, 1958).

in her thinking on diagramming as a re-imaging of how to perform the 'place' of thought through what can be described as 'purposeful disorientation' in an aesthetic sphere (Doruff, 2007: 5). The examples given in her writing on diagrammatic praxis include Web 2.0 infrastructure and projects such as FLOSS (Free/Libre and Open Source Software) and the Bricolabs initiative. These projects represent open, collaborative, internationally distributed production and development regimes that demonstrate a certain ethical distribution of know-how. The spectator operates in these systems through coinciding with actors, whereby the subjective positions of each are made to collide and break apart through a kind of *dérive*. By thinking through diagramming as an open process – which in modern art means that the relationship between the artist and the public is founded on a much greater degree of collaboration – Doruff sees the medium as a visible collaborative performance of 'place'. The place in question results from the artist and spectator's co-habitation and joint passage through creative production. The community that diagrams both mediate and map can therefore be said to echo something of Nicholas Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002). The community of production arises by placing the tools of artistic production in the hands of spectators, and thereby activate them by forming a specific context of participation. The open aesthetic space of diagrams can consequently be summarised as a 'collective belonging-together through the integration and differentiation of diagrammatic strategies' (Doruff, 2011c: 7).

Diagrammatic equality

The issue I have with the collaborative position of Doruff's diagrammatic praxis is that it ends up merely reproducing the spectator within a master plot, whether in the form of artist/spectator or producer/consumer. As Stephen Wright points out in his critique of relational aesthetics in his essay 'The delicate essence of artistic collaboration', these interactions never actually alter the established class-based power relations, but sustain the division between 'those who hold the symbolic capital' (the artists) and 'those whose labour (such as it is) are used to foster the accumulation of more capital' (Wright, 2004: 535). An alternative spectator/actor dynamic can be achieved if we approach the issue from Rancière's viewpoint of intellectual emancipation. In his essay 'The emancipated spectator' Rancière reforms the relationship between actor and spectator by first questioning the *a priori* association between spectatorship and passivity. The spectator/actor divide is founded on the basic principle that the stage is the proper place of activity, while viewing is a passive state traditionally aligned with not-knowing (Rancière, 2009: 2). Invariably theatrical discourse becomes embroiled around this point and is concerned with critique of the spectacle. This

debate encompasses whether or not theatre is 'bad' because it invites passivity, as Plato originally proposed in *Republic*, or whether it is positive, such as when conceived of as activating the audience as a kind of 'drama' in which 'living bodies ... are to be mobilised' (Rancière, 2009: 3). The idea of intellectual emancipation offers a third perspective because it is built on the equality of intelligences. This means knowing that all humans learn the same way, through the comparison and reading of signs. Rancière calls this the 'poetic labour of translating' (Rancière, 2009: 10), whereby the opposition between the labour of the audience and author, between viewing and acting, breaks down because equal activity is present on both sides of the equation.

Rancière's initial research into intellectual equality comes from his investigation into the peculiar story of Joseph Jacotot developed in *The ignorant schoolmaster: Five lessons in intellectual emancipation* (1991). The investigation follows the theory of a schoolteacher who, in the early nineteenth century, claimed that illiterate parents could themselves teach their children how to read based on understanding an equality of intelligence. Jacotot's demonstration of the ability of one 'ignoramus' to teach another what they themselves do not know was revived by Rancière in the 1980s as an entrance into the debates of that time on public education. Intellectual equality is referred to as a process of intellectual emancipation because it is counter-posed to the stultification of the pedagogical model, which asserts that the difference between the one who knows and the ignoramus is really dependent on one's 'knowledge of ignorance' (Rancière, 2009: 9). Knowledge of ignorance means that while the task of the schoolmaster is to reduce the gap of knowledge between their position and the pupil's, it begins by teaching the one who is ignorant their own inability. As such what is established is a hierarchy of knowledge that asserts a specific ordering or collection of knowledge, from what is simple to what is complex, on which trajectory the ignoramus' position of knowing is asserted as always below the schoolmaster's. Intelligence is therefore unequal. This division is overcome when learning is prefigured by an intellectual regime fore-grounded by a 'labour of translation'. Whereas the distances between the poles of knowledge in the pedagogical model were vast and almost ungraspable, here the distance, although not abolished, is assumed as simply 'the normal condition of any communication' (Rancière, 2009: 10). Learning is therefore simply a matter of practicing one's own ability to translate the sensible world.

In 'The emancipated spectator' intellectual equality is revived specifically as an entrance into the debate on the aesthetic spectacle. Following the logic of intellectual equality, the division between the artist and the spectator is negated because we approach each position from the base understanding that all humans learn in the same way. Each person learns by venturing, as Rancière puts it, 'into

the forest of things and signs', and 'by observing and comparing one thing with another, a sign with a fact, a sign with another sign' (Rancière, 2009: 10). The defining difference between the co-authorship of Doruff's diagrammatic praxis compared to intellectual equality can be identified by how each formulates an idea of the spectator's labour. For Doruff the spectator diagrams through being included in a collaborative labour. For Rancière the spectator first and foremost engages with the practice of their own labour, which is in every way equal to that of the artist. I do not propose that Doruff purports to situate the spectator in diagrammatic praxis based on a pedagogical model. Nevertheless, her placing of the spectator in a role of co-authorship does mean that the spectator's position is always already asserted in relation to the other (the artist). If instead we pursue Rancière's model of intellectual equality, then we seek only to express a dialogue of translation and counter-translation of sensible stimuli as it is encountered for each individual regardless of whether they are the artist or spectator. The capacity for the spectator to engage with diagrammatic praxis therefore need not be supplemented by an artificial pairing with the author. Furthermore, the goal of emancipating the spectator is not to transform ignoramuses into scholars, as Rancière puts it, nor even spectators into actors. On the contrary the goal is to understanding the specificity of the knowledge and the activity already at work in the spectator and the artist alike. In fact, as Rancière insists, we are all spectators. Moreover, '[b]eing a spectator is not some passive condition that we should transform into activity', rather, '[i]t is our normal situation' (Rancière, 2009: 17).

Arrows into diagrams

By interrogating diagrams from the perspective of intellectual emancipation I intend to offer an alternative model by which to judge the organisation of spectators in the prevailing system of information reception and production. Re-thinking the participatory bond between author and spectator according to their equality will also demonstrate how the spectator is not merely activated in the circulation of information, but rather how spectators produce authentic and autonomous experiences of their own. The next step in this intellectual adventure is to understand how spectators enter into diagramming in the first instance.

Following the logic of intellectual equality, we can say that spectators enter into the 'concrete assemblage' of diagrams through the same 'line of passage' that Doruff reserves for artistic practice (Doruff, 2011b: 6). Lines of diagrammatic passage in creative practices, be it studio, research or writing based, occur when one's activity is 'interleaved' with the processes it attempts to map. Fragments of thoughts, relations and non-relations are embedded in the content and expression of diagrams and, consequently, demark points of passage or entry to

the possibilities contained within its process. In product design and quality defect prevention this is literally the case when cause-and-effect diagrams (Ishikawa diagrams) are implemented to identify potential factors that cause an overall effect on the whole process. These diagrams were pioneered by Kaoru Ishikawa in the 1960s as a way to map quality management processes in the Kawasaki shipyards and disclose new possibilities for re-imaging production processes. The spectator's entry point into diagrams occurs through a similar passage between trying to map processes of thought and identifying new possibilities of doing so. In this case, though, the line of passage marks where the spectator intersects the diagrammatic form and, from that intersection, connects to all other points of the diagram and its content. As Doruff says, it is what moves us 'outside the stratified zone of the audiovisual' (Doruff, 2011b: 6).

To visualise this movement she suggests we think of the portal of diagrammatic entry through the analogy of an archway. Archways offer a bifuricating passage because the form can be considered as both the difference and similarity of concavity and convexity (see Fig.1). The point at which this doubling of perception takes place, highlighted on the illustration in Fig.1 with a dashed line, is the point at which our perception of the arch can be twisted and rendered anew. This marks the point of inflection, meaning that the steps we have already taken in forming perceptions can be re-traced, re-considered and potentially re-drawn.

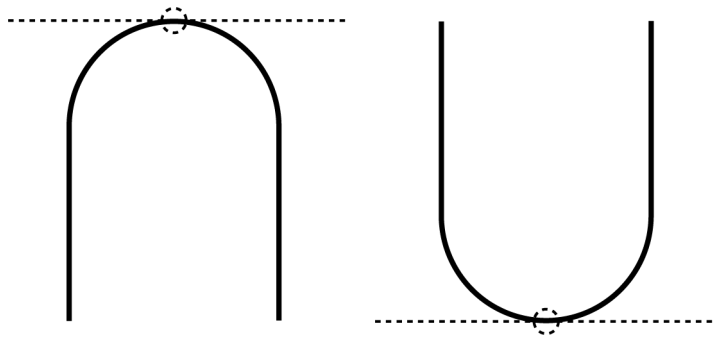

Fig.1: The point of inflection in an archway

So how does the spectator enter into inflection via diagrams? Let us consider the artwork *Arrows* by Alan Brooks (Fig.2). This work was shown as part of the exhibition *Diagrammatic form* at Banner Repeater in London (2012) and at Brooks' solo show *City* at MOT International's London gallery (2013). *Arrows* is one of a hundred elaborately detailed renderings in pencil crayon on paper that are collectively titled *The city* (2010-2013) and based on Frans Masereel's 1920 book *The city: A vision in woodcuts*. In Brooks' work diagrams are prolific. On the broader scale, he invokes the visual qualities of a diagram by organising *The city*'s

one hundred drawings across a single black-painted wall. Arrayed against the surface of the wall, the informational cacophony of content that he has pulled from gossip magazines, newspapers, the internet, personal photographs, architectural drawings, and literary fragments act like visual links communicating possible relations, frictions and movements. In their totality this has the effect of turning individual pictorial fictions into a diagram of the artist's thinking through what it means to be a metropolitan citizen.

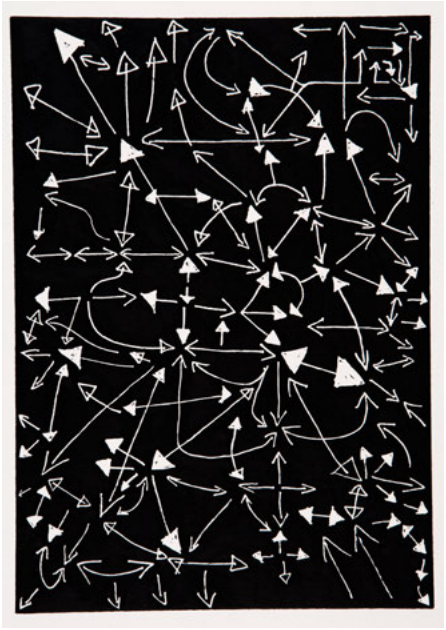

Fig.2: Alan Brooks, *Arrows*, pencil crayon on paper (2010-2013). Image courtesy of MOT International Gallery.

There are also individual drawings in the collection that are clearly diagrammatic in their own right, with *Arrows* being a clear example. *Arrows* presents the spectator with drawings of a common diagrammatic device, the arrow. I would like to be clear at this point that by referring to this artwork, or indeed *City* as a whole, as a diagram I am not questioning its status as art. Indeed, diagrams and art need not be counterposed to each other. The artist simply uses diagrammatic tropes in order to map his private and sensual relation to the subject matter. Moreover, the diagrammatic form compliments the artist's attempt to articulate his abstract relationship to the infinite narratives of the urban environment and what it means to live in a city, and furthermore express his process of thought without falling into literal representations. The sensual element of the artwork, rather than being diminished by my focus on *Arrows*' diagrammatic qualities, is part of the reason why I have chosen to illustrate the current argument with a example from art. The aesthetic space of a gallery encourages one to be aware of

the act of viewing and responding to visual stimulus in a way that is not so evident when viewing a diagram in a textbook. That is not to say that the viewer of a diagram in a textbook is not drawn into diagramming in the same way. Simply that the aesthetic model lends itself more readily to analysis.

Taking *Arrows* aside from *The city*, Brooks presents us with a diagrammatic narrative where the normal registers of reference are missing. Just as Masereel created stories without words, here the images of arrows remain quasi-directive pointers where the coherence of their direction, association, intelligibility and logic has been either erased, never existed or is yet unknown to us. On first encountering *Arrows* the spectator is therefore presented with a problematic informational device. It is problematic because it does not tell us everything. Yet precisely because of this failure the diagram also operates to encourage diagramming. To understand how by not telling us everything *Arrows* promotes diagrammatic praxis we need to consider how it conflicts the informational paradigm of immaterial labour. *Arrows* is problematic for the spectator because it brings the two roles of consuming and communicating into conflict. On one hand, we have a subject whom biopolitical production valorises as a 'relayer' of information. On the other hand, diagrammatic praxis encourages the spectator to experience information by becoming-relational to it. Walter Benjamin, in his 1933 essay 'The storyteller', says that the difference between information and the experience of lived experience is that information is 'shot through with explanation' (Benjamin, 1999: 89) and, because of this, leaves no room for one to live in it. Information is what is immediately plausible, instantly verifiable and digestible (Benjamin, 1999: 88). In contrast to the immediacy of information Benjamin asks us to consider the story. The story is what comes from afar, borrows from the miraculous, and does not entirely expend itself at the telling. In a similar manner, diagrams stand apart from other forms of information because they disseminate knowledge only partially. In Doruff's words, diagrams produce 'objects of partial capture' (Doruff, 2011b: 2). For instance, the degree of openness that Doruff highlights as an important aspect of diagramming corresponds to a degree of information that is left open in the work, which designates an ambiguity that allows for interpretation. We can see this methodology evidenced in *Arrows* by the way that it strips instruction of its functionality and removes it from prompt verifiability. Indeed, as with the act of storytelling, merely half the art is to be found in the action of telling a story. The other half occurs in what 'is left up to [the listener] to interpret things the way he understands them' (Benjamin, 1999: 89). Rancière makes a similar claim regarding the role of artists in relation to intellectual equality:

> Like researchers, artists construct the stages where the manifestation and effect of their skills are exhibited, rendered uncertain in the terms of the new idiom that

> conveys a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story. (Rancière, 2009: 22)

Brooks, like the artist of Rancière's description, has more in common with Benjamin's storyteller than he does with today's informational producer. This is because his work relies on input from outside of the diagrammatic frame. It requires spectators to develop their own story from their encounter with *Arrows* (and also *The city*) based on personal interpretation. Rather than presenting us with structured systems of feedback loops mastered by inputs and outputs, *Arrows* in this respect is what we would call machinic. Namely, diagrams are machines 'shaped by a desire for abolition', whereby its 'emergence is doubled with breakdown' (Guattari, 1995: 37). Insofar as diagrams are machinic, they are not resolved or self-maintaining operations, but subject to failure. The subject of *Arrows* clearly plays on this breakdown by pointing the spectator nowhere and purposely failing to convey meaning or information. Brooks' diagram consequently requires human interaction. This necessity for humans to diagram with *Arrows* (and diagrams in general), to venture into its field of signs for themselves, is what makes the medium so problematic to the consumer/communicator schema. The bifurcating portal, in this respect, refers not merely to a specific point, trigger or sign in a diagram that causes reflection. The diagram itself is the point of passage.

In the terminology of intellectual emancipation, diagrams would be instances of a minimum common link between the artist and spectator. This is what Rancière calls the 'third thing'. The 'third thing' is what stands between the artistic performance and the spectator as an autonomous meaning in signification (Rancière, 2009: 15) and forms a crucial element in intellectual emancipation. For Joseph Jacotot (in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*) this 'third thing' was a bilingual book (a copy of *Télémaque*) that formed the minimal link of the thing in common and made transmission possible. In order for diagrams to stand between the artist and the spectator as a common link, a diagram must be an independent and autonomous medium. This means that there must first be a withdrawal of authority. Diagrammatic praxis is capable of achieving this withdrawal where other performative mediums that attempt to resolve the artist/spectator divide fail. Activities aimed at exploding the constraints of theatre by taking possession of the street, for instance, only allow us to go so far in breaking down the barriers of stage and auditorium by enforcing active participation. But an enforced participation is not enough. To achieve a sensible redistribution of information a dislocation of the ordering of places and peoples needs to be complimented by a dislocation of knowledge. The dynamic and re-writable framework of diagrams achieves this by effectively alienating the artist's production from the artist

(because it remains open) and, conversely, the artist from their production (because, as Knoespel has said, 'it may provide a means of seeing something never seen before'). This introduces two important distances: the first between the artist and the spectator, the second instigated by the diagram itself. In Rancière's logic of emancipation this culminates in the introduction of the 'third thing', which is always interposed between the two other points of distance (the teacher and the ignoramus, or the artist and the spectator) through which they can verify a common ground of learning. The 'third thing' is necessarily alien to both parties, otherwise it would give preference to one or the other, but also must stand as something to which they can both refer to as a common point of verification. As a result of the transmission of the 'third thing' the spectator enters into creative relation with information. They do not merely relay codification and de-codification, because what they have been presented with (a diagram) does not come to them from a position of authority.

Lines of inflection

I have said that diagrams are problematic because they bring into conflict the conjunction of consumption and communication. This conflict is not something that is added to the equation consumption/communication, but rather is already inherent within it. The persistence of this struggle is what the spectator becomes implicit with beyond the bifurcating portal, where 'lines of resistance or lines of flight' (Doruff, 2011b: 6) converge and break apart. On the level of signs and information, by diagramming with diagrams the spectator encounters a process of re-tracing and re-drawing into clarity one's stratified perception of signs. This makes diagrams invaluable to pedagogical practices. For instance, the artist, writer and University lecturer John Cussans has reflected candidly on a career spent using diagrams as teaching tools in his text 'Diagram as thinking machine: Art as metapractice' (2012). In particular he points to how diagrams can be applied in lectures, as tutorial aids and in student notebooks to compliment other teaching methods. The benefit of diagrams, he notes, is that they practically help students see and understand relationships across disciplines. Diagrams help the subject disclose their own relation between philosophical concepts, art theory, art making, thinking and writing from an entirely personal perspective, which might otherwise have been obscured in traditional pedagogical models. This is because rather than simply reflect established relations of perception, diagramming gives the pupil a space and time to consider alternative possibilities of perception. On one hand, traditional pedagogical formats that are based on a teacher/student formation pursue a mode of authority in which information communicates itself, for instance in the tone that relates to a historicity of knowledge as one does to a lecture. On the other hand, by following a mode of intellectual adventurism the

spectator/student is able to play with knowledge without making of it a lesson, but allowing a space for one's own disturbances to exist.

To represent the event of entering into diagrammatics Doruff suggests we think of a fold (Fig.3)[5]. The fold defines a mixed up state of 'agitation, modulation and mutation' (Doruff, 2011b: 7). It occurs when external diagrams move to an internal diagramming. For the spectator this occurs when contemplation of their own drawing and re-drawing of perception takes place (either in real or virtual space). Rather than approach a field of enquiry by simply attempting to draw a clear line across it to demarcate its substances, we should think of the fold as opening up like a crevasse. Whereas the surface of a line defines the barrier between an inside and outside space – much in the same way as the line or barrier stands between the two constituents in the signification algorithm S/s (Signifier/signified) – the fold is where 'words and things are opened up by the environment without ever coinciding' (Doruff, 2011b: 7). Because Doruff draws much of her inspiration here from Deleuze, I propose we should also understand her conception of the fold in the context of his use of the term in *The fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. For Deleuze the fold is a layering of relationships, twisted to fold one upon another, whose function it is to interpret how we amass and organise actions (Deleuze, 1993).

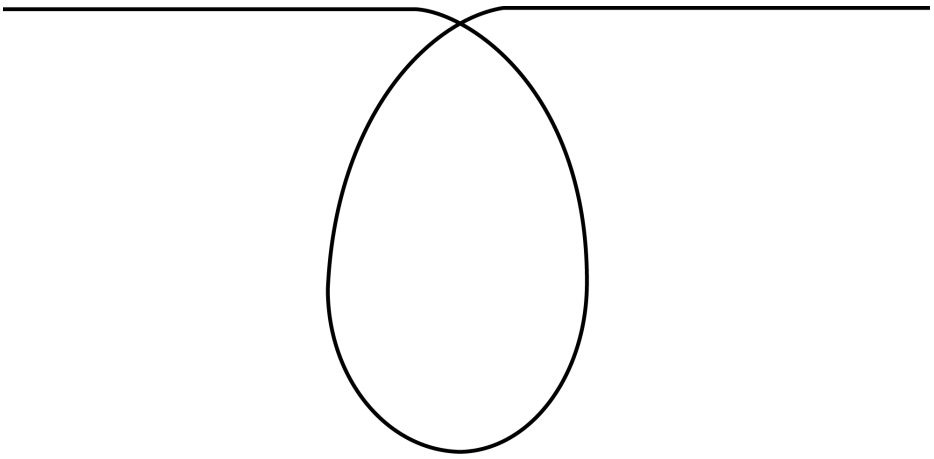

Fig.3: Illustration of a fold

The fold, or encounter between the spectator and the illogical directional instruction of *Arrows* does not, however, only open up reflection on a particular sign. The encounter in this instance also opens up the general schema of

[5] Here Doruff is referencing Deleuze's diagram of the Foucaultian diagram found in the book *Foucault*, specifically the chapter 'Foldings, or the inside of thought (subjectivation)' (Deleuze, 2006: 78-101).

informational handling. Using the idea of the fold we can map this process on Fig.4. On the surface of the interaction (Fig.4) an encounter happens between the spectator's two positions of subjectivity: as the active subject and the inflective subject. The former position defines the spectator according to Lazzarato's conception of how subjectivities are activated in the production process of immaterial labour. Here the spectator is activated in consuming and communicating information. The latter position arises because of the partial discord of diagrams, which hinders the spectator's relating to information in the usual way. As a result, the inflection point marked on Fig.4 defines where the spectator is drawn into diagrammatic praxis and an inflective relation with the informational product occurs. From this point information ceases to be a fixed form. It is like a lecturer drawing a diagram on a chalkboard and then passing the chalk and a cloth to the pupils. A shift takes place from the spectator engaging with information as a linear or causal relation, to suddenly being able to plot on it their own informal lines of relation.

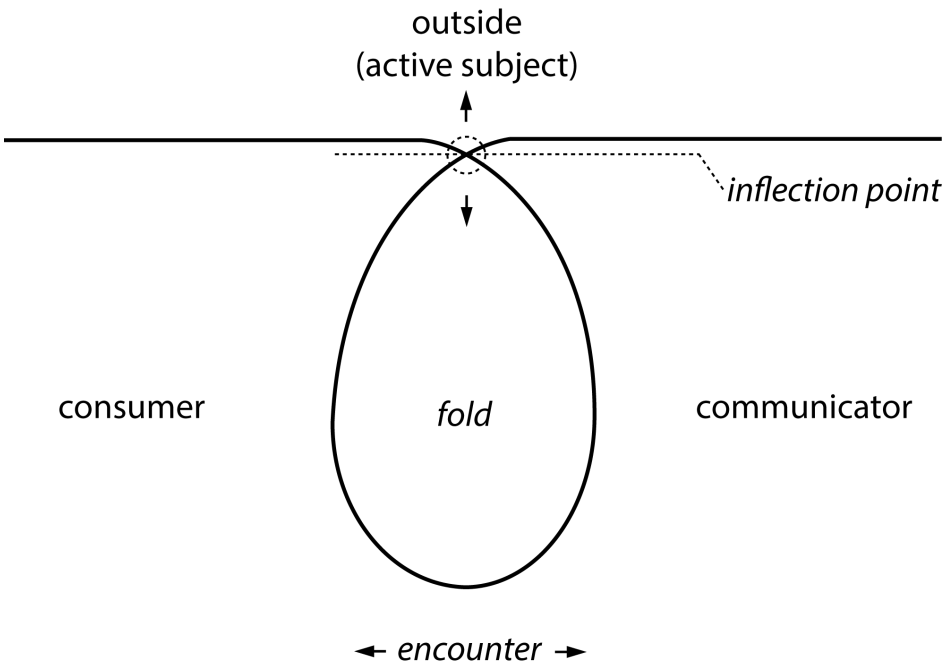

Fig.4: The spectator's encounter with inflection shown as a fold

The spectator's relationship with information at play here is more than a simple discourse between positions of interior and exterior. Firstly, the interrelation between outside and inside defines subjective positions of activity: between, on one side, the external activity of the 'active subject' who relates to information as a fixed form, and on the other side, one's internal inflective praxis. Secondly, as the informational content is inflected (made re-markable) the spectator also

becomes relational to their personal mediation of consumption and communication (marked in Fig.4 by the internal 'encounter' between them). This second relation takes place within the fold. It occurs because the spectator's diagramming with diagrams, such as *Arrows*, brings into question one's relation to an informational event as its inherent double and conjoined activity of external and internal contemplation. The interior and exterior do not simply reference the other, but fundamentally express a state of interrelatedness where distinctions between inside and outside, un-thought and thought are re-drawn.

Re-ordering one's exterior and interior sense of perception is a dissensual praxis. Following Rancière's development of the term dissensus – which underpins his overarching project on the distribution of the sensible and intellectual emancipation – the dissensual is what structures disconnection by assuming the stage of a conflict between two regimes of sense and questions their obviousness (Rancière, 2009: 48-49). Diagrams achieve this crucial dissensual constituent of intellectual emancipation by giving a stage to the conflict between senses of information and the apparent obviousness of our connection/confinement within the established order of sense (as dictated by immaterial production). Based on a process of dissociation, the dissensus of diagrammatic praxis dis-identifies the way signs correspond to this or that perception and opens them to a space of free association. Dissensus then forms the kernel of the relationship between diagrams, art and politics by re-distributing the sensible according to 'forms of creation that are irreducible to the spatio-temporal horizons of a given factual community' (Rancière, 2010: 2).

The diagrammatic spectator

Over the following pages I have proposed that the spectator is reconfigured at the level of the consumer/communicator (c/c) schema by the introduction of the spectator's always already present praxis. In effect this can be thought of as replacing the barrier in the equation c/c with the following: consumer ↔ *praxis* ↔ communicator. Instead of the spectator relaying the process of consumption to communication, they live the encounter between each as a living in the event of mediating information. To conclude this present speculative inquiry I propose that the mediality of one's living experience in the informational event can be presented with the schema depicted in Fig.5:

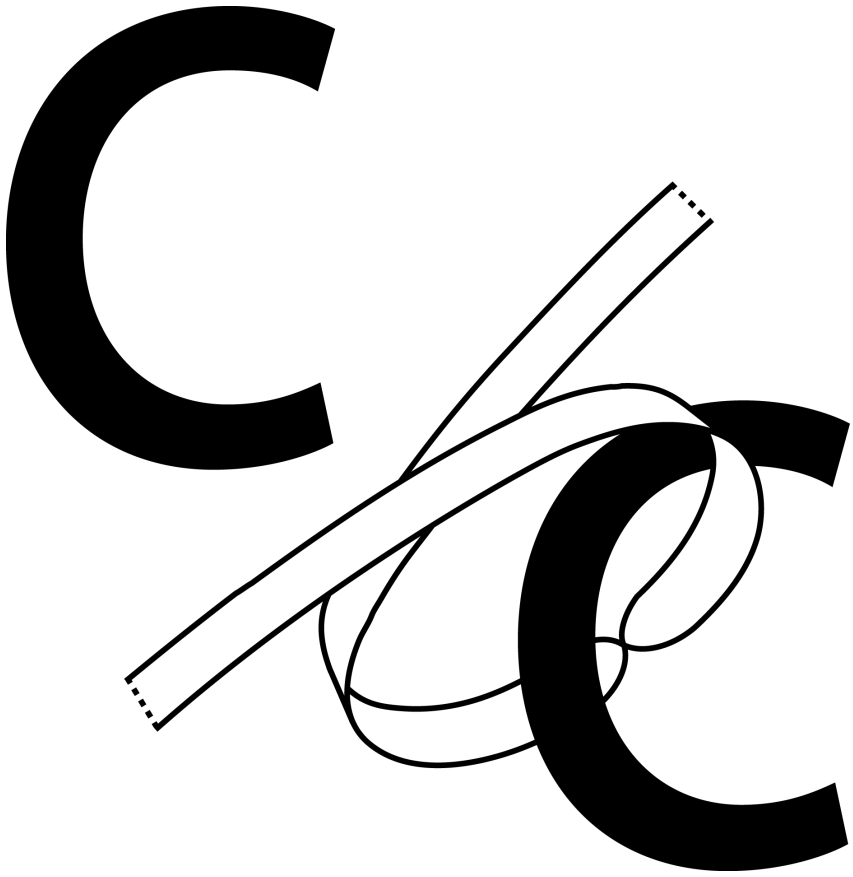

Fig.5: The mediality of consumption/communication expressed as a Möbius folded event

In Fig.5 the folded relation that was previously concealed between the constituents consumption/communication is now expressed as a Möbius folded event. In order to truly express the 'lived transcoding of the unformed/unthought' (Doruff, 2009: 122), Doruff argues that the fold (Fig.3) is better illustrated as a Möbius strip. Like a band of paper that has been cut, twisted and then stuck back together, the exterior surface and interior surface now form a single continual plain (Fig.6). Doruff prefers the Möbius fold over the standard fold as a descriptor of diagrammatic praxis because only the Möbius fold expresses how a variety of vectors relate to all other points and not just their polar opposite. The same mechanics apply to the spectator's inflection across the transverse vectors of active-subject/inflective-subject (outside/inside) and consumer/communicator.

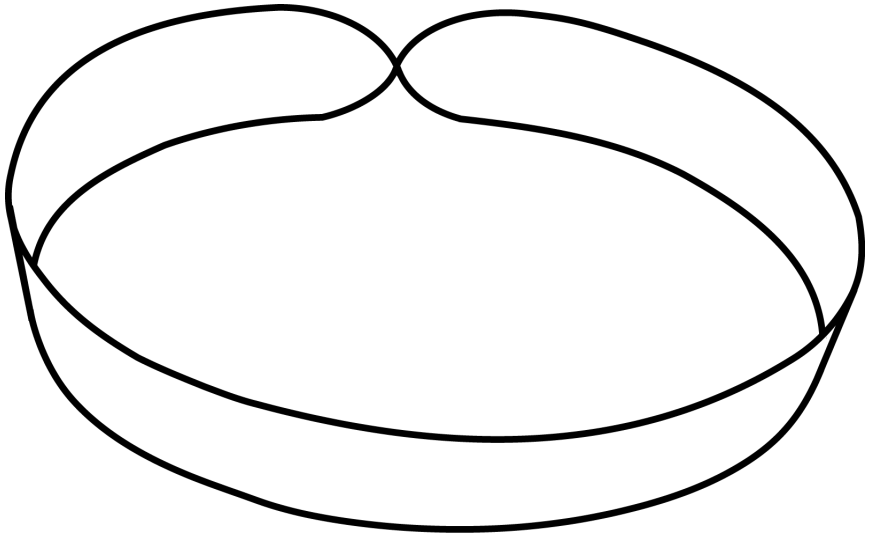

Fig.6: Möbius strip

The spectator's inflection across transverse vectors, as illustrated in Fig. 5, has a number of ramifications for the organisation of information that I wish to draw out in concluding this paper. Firstly, on the level of immaterial labour, the concept of the diagrammatic spectator poses an aesthetic re-organisation of what can be perceived, said and done by re-thinking the notion of 'active' subject and participatory notions of co-production. I propose that diagramming offers a new organisational politics that resists the established order of immaterial labour at the level of how it parcels out activity. Diagrams achieve this by creating a space of praxis that is irreducible to the consumer/communicator schema but gives visibility to the spectator's privative relation with information. As we have seen over the previous pages, the (partial) implementation of information in diagrams works to counter the principle labour of control introduced by immaterial production – which aims to separate subjects from the information they handle by subjugating them to the role of a relay. Diagrams have the potential to contest this control mechanism on three fronts. Firstly, diagrams encourage diagramming, whereby one enters into an inflective relation with information. Secondly, diagrams have the capacity to disavow the sovereignty of authorship and present a space of productive equality. Thirdly, diagrammatic praxis can instigate dissensual activity.

To elaborate, a diagrammatic organisation of aesthetics presents an opportunity to reorganise the artist/spectator relationship by acknowledging respective equalities of praxis. As a result, a viable model of production that includes the artist and spectator within a common field can be achieved without false recourse to participatory notions of co-production beyond the space of exhibition, or by

placing artistic tools and *operandi* at the disposal of the spectator. While the folding and unfolding of knowledge through the diagrammatic event defines a common space of subsistence, it does not result in outputs of co-habitation. Instead, diagrams preserve the autonomous investigation of each constituent. This is because diagrams have the potential to operate in the role of what Rancière calls the 'third thing'. They are necessarily alien to both parties while simultaneously standing as a common point of verification. The diagrammatic investigation of one party is not subsumed to the other, but rather forms a connection and disconnection between them. This can be summarised as a point of dissensual dis-identification that makes visible the delimitations of the author/spectator commonality by showing how their forms of creation are irreducible to a single regime of presentation. At its core, then, the organisational distribution of diagrammatics would be built on an equality of mediation. Furthermore, diagramming brings to life an informational space where the normal conditions of consuming and communicating are subjected to pure mediation. Here the adjective 'pure' is added to mediation to designate a 'pure' force of suspension that takes place when *praxis* becomes a new medium in itself.

The notion of the diagrammatic spectator also challenges the bleak diagnoses of immaterial labour in general. The profound changes brought about by immaterial labour have radically altered the organisation of production (in terms of the composition, management, and regulation of the workforce) by modifying the role and function of individuals and their activities. As Lazzarato has stated, the present labour of control means that 'personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organisation and command' (Lazzarato, 1996). However, present diagnoses of immaterial labour do not take into account the aesthetic potential for spectators to reorganise for themselves what can be perceived, said and done. This is the position of critique that can be offered by diagrammatics. Diagrams and diagrammatic praxis would therefore allow spectators to question the forms and mechanisms by which they are constrained to operate in capitalist production, its oppression of personal autonomy and creativity, and the occlusion of the consumer/communicator's own ideological reproduction, from the inside. In diagramming with diagrams the subject confronts their own sense of loss with regard to meaning ('meaning' insofar as we are talking about an ideological product). When spectators experience the potentiality of their own means, for instance by accepting their own authority to diagram, the apparent reality concealed behind the circulation of information is unveiled as false and the exploitative regime of the 'active' subject is no longer able to impose its obviousness on all. Diagrammatic praxis becomes in a sense the kind of radical autonomous space that Lazzarato speculated might possibly exist within the productive synergies of immaterial labour.

The above mentioned re-organisation of the artist/spectator plot and the contestation of the 'active' subject also have various methodological implementations. In general, the benefit of diagrammatic equality lies in the potential to organise research around the practice of those that would otherwise be excluded. In relation to art, spectators are often excluded from creative practice/research because their role is limited to that of the passive viewer or as a collaborator who is merely activated by the artist. In the field of organisation, the excluded might be the workers who comprise the social units of an organisation. Namely those whose interactions are often the subject of mapping exercises that plot the social structures of businesses and bureaucracy, but who otherwise are not involved in the actual creative process of mapping. Artists, researchers and authors would be able to produce instances of dissensual social relations, however, when they do not simply distribute their knowledge to the community – which can generally be called an aesthetic community of sense or a '*sensus communis*' (because what constitutes a common ground is 'sensation' itself) (Rancière, 2009: 56-57) – but invite a re-drawing of knowledge by each participant in the community. Furthermore, diagramming need not function only as two-dimensional objects drawn on a piece of paper, a journal article or in a book. New multi-media tools such as interactive whiteboards and handheld pointing devices (such as those commonly utilised by game consuls to detect movement in three dimensions) can be used to perform diagramming in a public space. These technologies make it entirely practical to envision a transformation of the auditorium, lectures, symposia and presentations around a diagrammatic space. One might envision the result of this kind of interrelation to be a changeable map of a discussion, concept or argument as it is (re)plotted and (re)inferred live by a multitude of spectators. In a similar vein, diagrams can be used as spaces for propositions and hypothesis to be aired without being solidified. For instance, structural diagrams of organisations, corporations, or even the state, could employ interactive tools so as to engage their constituents directly and allow them to think through their own participation in these structures. Such strategies offer researchers new opportunities for disseminating work in a manner that invites not just feedback from its audience, but critical perspectives for further re-drawing.

In the field of pedagogy, diagrams also offer an invaluable toolbox with which to communicate across disciplines, subjects and practices. In the situation of art education in particular, diagrams give lecturers, students and researchers a practical methodology with which to meet head on the demands arising from the recent development of a research culture in the arts. This is primarily the position in which Doruff views diagrammatic praxis. However, by expanding the practice of diagramming to include the practice of spectators, we are able to re-think discourses on how education is communicated and received by introducing

the question of inflection. A more pointed application of diagrammatic praxis would be to use the autonomy and alienation (from the author) of diagrams to expand the toolbox of protest pedagogy. In art and art education a conflict arises between how those representing protest speak, write, or perform and how that work is consumed or returned to the very system of funding, validation, and recognition that it seeks to critique (Rodda, 2012). Pedagogy about protest, conducted through protest and in protest (Cussans, 2011: 1) requires artists, educators and researchers to organise themselves from a critical territory of autonomy. Diagrams and diagramming can achieve this because they can occupy a mode of distribution that cannot be easily fixed within existing value systems. The dominant example in UK Higher Education is the Research Excellence Framework (previously the Research Assessment Exercise) – a five yearly survey of the quality of research being done in Universities. The valorisation of an academic work under the REF is completely subordinated to the circulation of information. Value is judged by the spread or circulation of a paper, book, or artwork through precisely its being consumed and re-communicated in the form of citations by academics (the 'active' subjects of universities). By interjecting diagrammatic strategies into research the authority of authorship can be questioned and a multitude of academic and non-academic perceptions given equal footing. Diagrammatic methodologies would therefore operate as mediation for intellectual production in a similar way to open source production. Open source publishing (such as FLOSS and, to some extent the *Journal of Artistic Research*'s open source Research Catalogue) currently offers some tentative examples of how production into presence might occur outside of the fetters of returnable capital. In these instances a program or text is not really published but shared. The product is not distributed as already validated, but instead opened up to an environment that maintains its re-markability. Diagrams similarly operate as open source points of access to information and thought where the spectator's processes of creation are given an equal position of visibility in an otherwise author-centric sphere of communication. Free or open school initiatives (such as The Free University of Liverpool, the Really Free School, and Free School in a New Dark Age) could use diagramming, then, as a workable medium of production, reception and distribution in order to organise effectively and consistently outside of the fetters of contemporary neoliberal policies in UK education.

The potential applications for diagrammatics I have detailed above are by no means exhaustive. These speculations nevertheless highlight something of the terrain of possibility that arises from rethinking diagrams as forms of intellectual emancipation. The broader ramifications of diagramming are still to be mapped, and constantly re-mapped by being put into practice. What will evidently emerge are various forms of inflection into the underlying power relations of

information, words and images. However this does not mean that diagrammatic praxis merely presents a methodology for mapping the individual by their processes of thought. At its most critical, diagramming is concerned with the very topology of thought, our performance of information and the power relations (whether between individuals or between the individual and production, economy or information) that are woven through these processes. What artists, educators and researchers are able to tap into by using diagrams are new sensory relationships that result from the author's frame of perception meeting and being modified by the spectator's frame of perception. The frames of perceptions are not merged, or one subjected to the other. Each is its own intellectual adventure demarcated in a space without connections. Just as the equality of knowledge means that each person is responsible for approaching their own knowledge in the forest of signs, so too can we say that each author and spectator is responsible for cracking open their own regime of distributing perception. It is a matter, Rancière insists, 'of shaping a new body and a new sensorium for oneself' (Rancière, 2009: 71). This adventure begins when we step beyond the inflection point and into the diagram.

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The relational network of knowledge production*

Emiliana Armano

Introduction

The aim of this essay, mainly based on empirical research conducted through focus groups and interviews, is to develop a qualitative understanding of the subjective condition of knowledge-based labour[1]. Therefore, this qualitative case study shows the depths of subjectivity in its multiple dimensions (without claiming, of course, general or universal results). The context of this research is Post-Olympics Turin[2], a city which has been the historical stronghold of Italian big industry and which is now in the midst of a profound transition to a service-based economy. The protagonists of this study are knowledge workers: their expectations, their fears, their skills, their political invisibility, the potential for innovation they embody and the uncertainty they face. The aim of our research is to delineate the self-representation of cognitive labour as a first step to recognize the necessity of self-protection (Bologna and Banfi, 2011). As a consequence, this study must be considered in continuity with the fruitful tradition of Italian 'co-research' (*conricerca*) (Alquati, 1993).

* The author thanks Emanuele Leonardi for his careful and attentive translation.

1 This article provides a summary of the results of research published in *Precarietà e innovazione nel postfordismo. Una ricerca qualitativa sui lavoratori della conoscenza a Torino* (2010, Bologna: Odoya). A preliminary draft of this paper has been published as *Il divenire relazionale della produzione*, in 'Quaderni di San Precario', Milano, 1/2010, p.199-210 (http://quaderni.sanprecario.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Q1-Il-divenire-relazione-della-produzione.pdf).

2 In 2006 Turin hosted the Winter Olympics Games.

The context: The development of knowledge economy in a post-Fordist city

The expression 'knowledge-based economy' refers to the heterogeneous set of productive activities that revolves around the processing of information and to workers who focus on the creation, development and diffusion of knowledge. In general, the knowledge-based economy does not exclusively refer to specific branches of production. Although some realms seem to be more invested than others (e.g. new media, web markets, advertising, cultural and artistic projects) the expression 'creative economy' does not refer to particular sectors but rather to the valorization of 'immaterial' functions and cognitive/creative elements of the cycle of production of goods and services as a whole.

Turin's 'tertiary' transition towards a knowledge-based economy was fostered, during the 1990s, by two simultaneous and convergent meta-processes: on the one hand, the de-verticalization (through outsourcing) of activities and functions once internal to corporations and, on the other hand, the creation of activities and functions linked to new technologies, self-promotion and entrepreneurialism (Consiglio italiano per le scienze sociali, 2007: 37). These processes mainly affected the most represented sectors of the economy, namely the services sector. This dynamic originates from multiple factors such as the outsourcing of previously internal functions, the development of ICT applied to productive cycles, the broadening of immaterial assets (R&D, design, education, communication, finance) incorporated into the value chain and, finally, the increasing displacement of professional expectations on the part of young and/or educated workers.

In relation to Turin, there are two relevant aspects emphasized by our research: the increasing socio-economic significance of knowledge-based jobs – particularly creative and cultural jobs – and their centrality with regard to a specifically urban economic structure.[3] This transformation was driven by an expansion of technical and professional employment and a remarkable reduction in the number of generic workers and employees.

3 In Turin the chain of knowledge-based labour shows a mixed structure: it combines immaterial assets related to technology-driven manufactures and advanced consulting on management, technology, finance, research and 'creativity' (design, communication, etc.). See Turin Socio-economic Provincial Observatory.

Elements of empirical research

We limited ourselves to the investigation of a high skilled segment of labour, which qualifies the ongoing transformation and is particularly relevant for approaching workers' subjectivity. Our field research is based on the analysis of 39 in-depth interviews (narrative and biographical aspects are privileged) with women and men employed in several and differentiated chains of knowledge-based labour in Turin (Armano, 2010a; 2010b). The interviews were mainly conducted during significant 'events' that occurred between the end of 2006 and the beginning of 2007: Virtuality, Linux Day, Artissima and the Turin Film Festival.[4] These are events that mark, symbolically, the kind of passage that this transformative city is experiencing.

We interviewed ICT programmers and developers, telecommunication workers and university researchers, web designers and web workers, digital artists, industrial designers, journalists, translators, photographers and video makers. Mostly, these workers were employed through temporary contracts, from self-employment to project-agreement and micro-enterprise. The stories we collected show new labour subjectivities, constantly oscillating along the demarcation line between autonomy and exploitation.

The use of a narrative and biographical approach allowed us to understand the lived experiences of precarious knowledge workers, starting from the very meaning attributed to working conditions. As a consequence, our attention is focused not primarily on 'facts' and 'objective' transformations of the job market; rather, we look at narratives as sources of signification – in fact, interviews have been collected as discursive formations and expressions of subjectivity and representation (Bertaux, 1998).

In order to provide a clear presentation of the sample, the tables show personal data of the interviewees as well as their professional and contractual profiles (see appendix). The interviews are organized according to the working chain (ICT, digital productions, web, new media, multimedia arts, education and research). To respect participants' privacy, all names have been changed.

In this sample, project-based employment can sometimes be regarded as an explicit choice on the part of the creative worker, namely as a particular socio-working mentality (Himanen, 2003) as opposed to a mere market-led necessity. In accordance with other studies on knowledge-based labour conducted by Sergio

4 Virtuality (www.virtualityconference.it), Linux Day (www.torinolibera.org/linuxday.php), Artissima (www.artissima.it) and the Turin Film Festival (www.torinofilmfest.org).

Bologna, the attention has focused on subjective and objective risks (Lupton, 1999; Beck, 2000; Rullani, 2005) and our main hypothesis assumes that micro-enterprises[5] belong to the sphere of labour and not to that of capital. The progressive construction of our sample has followed the snowballing model with specific reference to cases of interest in a given socio-professional environment. With regard to textual analysis it is important to underline that the systematization of data and its interpretation are strictly interconnected moments and do not linearly follow one another. The *in extenso* transcription of interviews represented the first step of the analysis (Armano, 2010b: 25-231).

Findings

The empirical research, through the analysis of narratives, allowed us to grasp the substantive categories (Bertaux, 1998; De Maziere and Dubar, 1997) of the social language by means of which subjects express their practical logic. The keywords allow for the understanding of subjects' point of view.

Let us now synthetically expose some results:[6] this research highlights some counterintuitive dimensions with regard to mainstream readings of knowledge workers' conditions. In recent literature, knowledge workers' subjective experiences have been mainly described through stereotypes or particular categories which progressively generalize single aspects of working conditions as a universal form of class composition. Some authors have *tout court* depicted them as a new 'élite' in a sort of mythical, creative e-topia (Florida, 2005). At the opposite end of the spectrum, some authors have proposed the image of 'net slaves' or 'web precariousness, advancing an interpretation which shows workers exclusively as 'victims' of de-regulated forms of the job market dynamics (Lessard and Baldwin, 2000; Sennett 1998; 2008). In order to formulate a criticism of these opposite readings, our research has attempted to investigate the subjective representations by individual workers. By assessing knowledge workers' own point of view on their actual experiences, our results refer to the idea of a socio-professional and life condition characterized by a strong and irreducible ambivalence between elements of precariousness and elements of innovation. If, on the one hand, labour in post-Fordism brings to the foreground new

5 A micro-enterprise is a small firm with one to five employees, including the co-owner. Organizational roles and income of participants have more in common with autonomous work than firm employment.

6 More detailed analysis can be found in the research report (Armano, 2010a: 95-176) and in the volume which collects the *in extenso* interviews transcriptions (Armano, 2010b: 25-371).

communicative, relational and creative capabilities, it is nonetheless true that, on the other hand, those capabilities are put to value and dispossessed.

The knowledge worker's condition has been investigated starting from the initial, indicative assumption that risk (as Ulrich Beck understands it) affects subjects in a variety of ways. Especially with regard to social and labour rights, the notion of risk brings about aspects of precariousness which are connected to the weakness of formal protections contained in atypical contracts, as well as to the peculiar condition of autonomous workers. At the first stage of our field research, we expected participants to refer often to rights-related issues, contractual instability and the absence of political representation. On the contrary, however, we discovered how frequently and spontaneously references to the value of self-realization in the professional framework emerged, along with a strong emphasis on the importance of belonging to networks. Narratives, as fundamental elements of such workers' identities, mostly turn around these axes.

Our results show that subjective risk-perception is neither exclusively nor primarily focused on the lack of formal protections but, rather, on the fear of disappearance of those informal protections upon which this socio-professional world strongly relies. As a consequence, it becomes impossible to interpret informality as solely a resource or, to the contrary, as a mere trap of precariousness. For knowledge workers, as it emerges from their biographical stories, informality in its different dimensions (organizational, labour relations, educational) appears inextricably ambivalent as a peculiar element of this labour segment (Alquati, 1997; 2003). The narratives are invaluable for accessing a situated description of workers' position within organizations and of their more general conditions. Instead of the formal narrative provided by organizations (composed by contracts, proceedings, memorandums, table, calendars, pay-cheques, etc.), the interviews provide a subjective narrative based on informal living experiences, a picture of the organization which is latent in working subjects.[7]

7 The conceptual distinction between formal, informal and latent organization was developed by Romano Alquati. In his view, *informal proceedings* are both the modalities that effectively put in practice the official aims (i.e. the informal organization of labour) and the modalities through which workers can, potentially, realize their goals as subjects rather than official aims (i.e. the latent organization of subjects). What is emphasized is the ambivalent gap between the system of official rules and the reality of subjective power. This definition of 'informal' is clearly different from the usual notion of 'informal economy' used in the International Labour Organization's statistics. The latter refer to an economic set of irregular labour, non-regulated (contractually or fiscally) grey jobs such as home-based employment or street vending. Institutional literature has repeatedly assessed this

In the narratives, empowering elements of informality present themselves in simultaneous conjunction with its critical aspects. Such ambivalent proximity re-defines the notions of precariousness and innovation-based risk. This situation is not adequately articulated, for example, by the concept of embedded social capital (Granovetter, 1985), which is only partially able to describe knowledge workers' socio-professional condition. The kind of informality produced by profound processes of de-proceduralization, de-institutionalization and de-verticalization of organizational structures, de-standardization of labour and risk-diffusion, is experienced on the one hand as a resource, as a social capital that carries with it opportunities, information and relations; on the other hand, as soon as it replaces working continuity and extended contractual protections, it appears as a limit.

Contrary to the Fordist epoch, the gap between formal corporate organization and informal (potentially autonomous) labour organization seems to have vanished. For knowledge workers, due to mobile technologies, organization ostensibly liquefies itself and the informal dimension of labour overlaps and replaces the formal corporate organization. In other words, we witness a net composed of people who function as hubs, that is to say, 'informal organizations' based on the indisputable priority of belonging to it. In contrast to the Fordist world, the organizational environment for knowledge workers is not circumscribed to a single workplace. Trust bonds and cooperation are not limited to the working community *strictu sensu*; rather, they are rooted in the magma of social cooperation, in the leisure environment in its broadest sense. Thus, we find individualized working profiles and professional trajectories within which durable social links are often situated in a network that extends beyond the temporary, physical workplace.

Interpretation and interviews extracts

> My job? It's all via email. There are rather curious situations where I've never been. There were phone contacts with *La Stampa* [a national newspaper] in Milan, then I met a journalist who asked me to write some pieces, then I met another journalist so I kept collaborating, without having physically been in the *Mondadori* [publishing house] headquarters. In Milan it works like that, more or less. (Gianni, freelance web journalist)

Whereas in the Fordist world the physical cornerstones were constituted by factory, office and plant, in knowledge-based labour the physical frontier is the

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informal sector, especially to quantify the value produced by so-called 'shadow economies' (see Portes and Halles, 2005; Carr and Chen, 2010; World Bank Report, 2010).

metropolis, the territory in which the project is situated. It is not by chance that the idea of the network emerges in many narratives as an evocative metaphor to describe sociality and, simultaneously, the technological model around which the working activity is organized. This issue recurs often, for example when new media workers discuss the tensions and limits brought about by the use of mobile technologies or by participation in virtual communities (interactive social structures created by Web 2.0). This process is also due to the usage of mobile technologies that delineate new, flexible and dynamics modalities of labour. The fundamental novelty concerning the relationship with technology is the fact that knowledge is no longer exclusively incorporated within labour and machinery. In fact, there exists an in-between space of connectivity within which it is possible to build up working and learning relations. Knowledge-based labour is re-territorialized within this in-between space (Castells and Himanen, 2002; Shirky, 2009), giving rise to a true trans-corporate web.

> [W]e work on communication and so our job cannot only be a gym for personal and professional growth. You've done half the work and the other half must be that of spreading it because we believe a great deal in the net. You throw it out and who knows what'll come back! (Catia, freelance photographer)

The kind of mobile labour that deploys itself in these professional networks is posited on the one hand as a liberating tool that provides further degrees of autonomy linked to the power of digital technologies and to the universality of languages allowed by the expansion of communication beyond time-space constraints:

> We use the internet very intensely. First of all, we do not have an office, no secretaries, and we try to manage things without them [...] The exchange of documents is exclusively via email, very often we send offers through email, or we get an order, or we forward an invoice. It's like that also in Italy, especially these last years. I recall when I used to go to the post office to send the invoices with stamps: now many people accept a .pdf invoice sent by email and then they print it. (Alberto, software house co-owner)

On the other hand, the mobile labour that is remunerated once the result is achieved is measured through new modalities of communication. This digitalization fosters the utter saturation of workers' experience of temporality, which is now becoming limitless.

> Damn cellphone! I was always available, impossible to be free from this terrible little light [...] It's terrible because my job there was always to answer the cellphone and then run everywhere. It was very, very difficult. (Catia, freelance photographer)

In this kind of relational labour (Marazzi, 1994) – socialized through the network and transmitted through mobile technologies – availability, autonomy and

traceability are part of a *modus operandi* and of an organizational model centered around the interiorization of the market. What seems to be common, regardless of sectors and contractual forms, is the importance of always being available. This condition of forced availability is characterized by an expansion of working time: for cognitive workers – whose job is structured through projects and collaborations – working time becomes limitless. Thus, the separation between life-time and working-time, which is typical of the Fordist world, completely shatters. Similarly, the distinction between workplace and 'home' is no longer valid. As a consequence, knowledge workers' labour is less dependent on factors such as 'space' and 'time' than Fordist, manual labour. Time appears to be internalized and thus freed from external, formal control. At the same time, it shows itself as extended, indefinite and extremely dilatable. It is clear, then, that the ambivalence of connectivity is experienced as informality, brought about and supported by mobile technologies.

> I couldn't put a figure on the time I spent working [...] I frequently read, in the evening or during the weekend, what I need to know at work, I read on the train. (Valerio, freelance researcher)

> [P]ersonally, I live with these working concerns, even in my daily life. Even when I go to watch a movie at the cinema, or when I rent a DVD, or when I buy a magazine. There is no discontinuity with my personal life. (Marco, software house co-owner)

> Clearly, when you work in such a way you don't have fixed working hours. I used to work (and still do) through projects and, as a consequence, it's very difficult even to define time, to distinguish between time spent for training and development and time actually spent for production. (Alberto, software house owner)

These relationships are very personal and, from an organizational perspective, are similar to connections and contacts in a shared environment and socio-professional community. They appear to be mutual recognition links rather than structured and formalized relationships. In fact, the web should be read through a logic of connection/disconnection. Connection entails the creation of a temporary link based upon trust-toward-a-goal, a loose bond whose refusal is always possible by means of disconnection (Castells and Himanen, 2002; Petti, 2007). This act occurs contingently, simply when the 'trustful contract' decays or when the goal changes.

Moreover, within these networks the norms are fluid. Norms depend more on the capability to relate and interpret a working role, to mutually recognize each other in professional communities (Pizzorno, 1999; 2006; 2007; Regalia and Sartor, 1992) than on standardized procedures, protocols and codified behaviors.

> [O]nce you're able to do this job well, the important thing is just to continually widen your contact base, which is something this environment allows [...] It's not that important, at least for companies like mine, to regularly visit your clients to present your services. It doesn't really work like that. What is required is trust, and trust is to be found in the social network. A friend of yours tells you: Trust him, give him a try. So you go, and then this happens again. This is how it works [...] Well, you're in the network and you transpose it into real life. (Claudio, self-employed web content)

It seems to us that the professional condition of service-based and advanced tertiary labour assumes a paradigmatic role also for knowledge-based labour. According to some scholars (Touraine, 2006), it is possible to refer to a widespread process of feminization of labour as a trademark of the post-Fordist employment regime (Morini, 2010). Through such a definition, a reference is established to relational and affective attitudes, flexible and caring interactions, which belong to the field of so-called labour-power reproduction (historically determined as feminine). Informality, however, as well as the linguistic and relational character (Marazzi, 1994) of knowledge-based working relations, are not only resources but also limits.

> [Y]ou can work in an environment where you aren't asked to do grueling shifts [...] but [...] it depends, yes, it does, on how a person manages to fit into the group. It's strange, but that's the way it is. It's more like a secondary school class rather than a work situation. (Gabriele, *cocopro* project worker)

With regard to feminization it is clear that there is a gap between paid capabilities and broader capabilities, also of a relational kind, which are employed in the production process. What is required is for the worker to produce and sell a commodified interaction with the costumer. The fruition of the product-service is always coupled with (sometimes even based on) the trust involved in the worker-costumer relationship, the limitless availability in a continuously flexible interaction. There is a section of the working performance that is not included in the required set of competencies but is nonetheless mobilized for free, as if it were a 'natural and spontaneous' personal inclination of the individual worker:

> It came very easily, for someone from particular fields where everyone knows everyone else personally and where you're among friends [...] Here it is attributed to the company. (Valerio, freelance researcher)

It is a sort of disposability, a forced availability, which is presupposed and somehow demanded by the company. We have already defined such a process as feminization of labour, namely as a perpetual availability which is assumed by the corporation as a 'normal' attitude to take care of things with affect, even beyond contractual constraints. Within the framework of knowledge-based, labour informality is not merely a resource; it also contains contradictory

elements. Starting from this point, we would like to advance some considerations about the costs implied by the permanence (i.e. the duration of belonging) in these informal networks. For knowledge workers, such a permanence involves huge costs of a social, economic and political nature because the network 'puts to value' personal bonds; in addition, both roles and protections are configured as informal. The personal interpretation of roles is pivotal in the context of working processes: individuals 'jut out' of organizations (Butera, et al., 2008) and personal bonds often become valorized through self-exploitation.

The profound ambivalence of those informal, amicable, pseudo-'communitarian' working networks relies on the fact that, to a certain extent, norms and rights formally defined by contracts actually depend on the extent to which, at a concrete level, they can be enacted. Positions, roles and tasks are often fluid and depend on whether or not working relations and contracts can be informally interpreted in the workplace and within single projects. It is clear that when formal protections are weak (as it is the case with temporary contracts as well as with many forms of autonomous labour), the amicable and pseudo-familial networks provide security in an effective (if momentary) way. Moreover, whereas in the Fordist era working identities were constructed by means of successive, slowly ascending steps that designated a linear trajectory oriented to a precise end within an organization, in the post-Fordist environment both procedures and results are fluid and uncertain. From the narratives we collected it is evident that our respondents have difficulty thinking according to a long-term temporal perspective. For knowledge workers who experience the temporary nature of current contracts, suffering seems to arise from the difficulty of shaping a consistent narrative, of defining a storyline, of recognizing a 'plot' in different activities and of selecting a clear goal. Our insistence, corroborated by the narratives, on the issue of risk and its management shows how fundamental constructed trajectories are, conceived of as assemblages of differentiated working experiences.

Final remarks

The network, as it emerged from the interviews, is never critically put into question. To be in a network as an informal field of provisional roles with temporary duties and rights seems to represent a necessary condition, without which mere exclusion remains: from contracts, projects, income, identity. In a field in which temporary and task-oriented contracts, digital technologies and aspirations to self-realization appear to be integrated, knowledge becomes obsolete almost immediately and transforms itself in an incredibly rapid way. Simultaneously, new standards proliferate and people express the necessity to

constantly be up to date (as well as the pressure that derives from it) and the desire to live on the threshold that separates self-exploitation and self-realization. This line of tension creates a sort of informal sociality which is compulsive, extremely lively but profoundly coerced (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991).

It is important to underline the consequences of spontaneous cooperation and informal sharing that are present in the socio-professional networks. Human capital, being by definition inseparable from its bearer, transforms the subject (Cohen, 2004). Knowledge-based labour, as we have seen, embodies a relevant portion of immaterial and relational labour so that behaviours, motivations, and social and emotional skills play a much more decisive role in qualifying such an activity and its inclusion in the valorization process. On this premise, André Gorz could claim that the individual becomes an enterprise, and that this 'transfer of corporate skills toward the base' allows for 'the suppression, to a large extent, of the labour-capital antagonisms' (Gorz, 2005: 1; my translation; see also Gorz, 2003). This feature recalls the nature of the network economy, in which every enterprise is embedded in a territorial and social texture defined by its interconnections. Thus, productivity depends to a considerable extent on cooperative capabilities, communication, hubs and participants' self-organization. The result is not something tangible but, first and foremost, the construction of relations, an activity of interaction in which the very self of actors is produced. Such being the nature of subjectivity and its relations, the following question can be posed: to whom does such wealth belong? Who accumulates those resources and who puts them to value?

From a corporate perspective, in a sort of new enclosures frontiers, what is at stake is the dispossession (re-codification) of a human capital they did not train nor pay for (Cohen, 2004; Gorz, 2003). Such a capital is constituted by the set of non-remunerated socializing activities, those most common and everyday-like, which enable us to interact, communicate, learn and create trust. Enterprises exploit skills produced by society as a whole, for example the abilities of interpretation and communication which lie dormant in language. Individuals, on their part, appropriate this knowledge and cultural capital to pursue personal ends such as self-production and autonomous socialization. This human capital produced by society, or this self-production, thus becomes what is at stake in the conflict between subjects who bear it (having developed it starting from a set of faculties and personal capabilities) and markets as capturing networks of enterprises whose goal is to freely dispose of this social, human and relational capital according to their specific needs. From a political perspective, what must be achieved is a proper understanding of the modalities through which the link between relational practices and forms of coalition can be modified. If the

starting point is the category of risk, the ending point cannot but be the idea of self-protection.

Thus, what is needed is an attempt to understand which spontaneous and/or organized processes can effectively socialize risk in the context of knowledge-based labour. Similarly, what must be newly addressed is the question concerning new forms of solidarity, to be possibly based on a higher degree of autonomy and on unprecedented acquired potentialities. Recalling the arguments articulated so far, it is possible to discern some subjective characteristics and relational practices that are of great importance in order to envisage new forms of social coalition. As we pointed out, the tendency to remain in a given field of activity and to invest in informal networks is a fundamental element of knowledge workers' identity. It is exactly this field of services – defined by a high degree of knowledge and creativity – that employs a whole population of productive actors. Such a population configures itself as 'socialized' to values, languages and conventions that are clearly permeated by 'the new spirit of capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). At the same time, however, these conventions are also traversed by subcultures linked to the 'cultural' revolution operated by the new economy during the 1990s (Ross, 2003), project- and network-based way of working, and the attitude of collaboration experienced by IT workers and hackers (Himanen, 2003; Formenti, 2011; Lovink 2012).

We can say that informal networks not (at least not *only*) serve as an organizational model; rather, they show the relevance of cooperative aspects (and the strategic centrality of knowledge, relationality and information) as fundamental structures of contemporary forms of production. This issue poses the question concerning the relationship between individual conditions, labour representation and collective bargaining. Moreover, such a question must be situated in an environment in which the terms of cooperation and competition (along with their conditions, hierarchies and segmentations) are symbiotically shaped in unprecedented ways.

Appendix

Name	Age	Gender	Role	Contract
Marco	35	M	programmer	co-owner software house
Federico	25	F	software developer	*cocopro*[8]
Patrizia	27	F	software promoter	occasional labour
Dario	35	M	project manager	consultant
Gloria	32	F	web designer	*cocopro*
Alessandro	32	M	web writer	*cocopro*
Claudio	32	M	web content e blogger	autonomous labourer
Gianni	30	M	web journalist	freelance

Table 1: Interviews with web workers, conducted at Virtuality

Name	Age	Gender	Role	Contract
Sergio	34	M	developer and trainer of open source software	*cocopro*
Roberto	36	M	promoter of free software	*cocopro*
Marcello	23	M	promoter of free software	*cocopro*

Table 2: Interviews with web workers, conducted at Linux Day

8 *Cocopro*: project-based labour (short - term job with minimal rights)

Name	Age	Gender	Role	Contract
Emanuele	45	M	systems specialist	*cocopro*
David	36	M	software developer	consultant
Sara	41	F	software developer	consultant
Alberto	40	M	developer	co-owner software house
Alfredo	44	M	database administrator	public sector employee

Table 3: Interviews with ICT workers

Name	Age	Gender	Role	Contract
Marta	27	F	collaborator to art websites	internship in art journalism
Mario	36	M	consultant art publishing	*cocopro*
Renata	38	F	architect	*cocopro*
Desiree'	48	F	architect and graphic designer temporary contract	architect and graphic designer temporary contract
Antonella	41	F	architect	*cocopro*

Table 4: Interviews with graphic art workers, conducted at Artissima

Name	Age	Gender	Role	Contract
Paul	50	M	project manager, video productions	cooperative member
Silvana	34	F	videomaker	*cocopro* in Web TV Università
Catia	30	F	freelance photographer	*cocopro* in Web TV Università
Sandra	28	F	video audio project manager	internship at VRMMP
Omar	25	M	master student DAMS	internship in video productions
Gabriele	26	M	master student DAMS	*cocopro*
Marla	24	F	multimedia graphic designer	*cocopro*
Beppe	25	M	set designer	*cocopro* in Web TV Università
Elena	25	F	digital archivist, post-production	*cocopro* in Web TV Università

Table 5: Interviews at Turin Film Festival and Virtual Reality Multi Media Park (VRMMP)

Name	Age	Gender	Role	Contract
Ennio	31	M	environmental engineer	temporary researcher, polytechnic
Eleonora	32	F	historian	temporary researcher, Turin University
Fabio	29	M	engineer	temporary researcher, polytechnic
Giovanni	29	M	sociologist	multi-contract, Turin University
Diego	43	M	translator	co-participant in a translation company
Valerio	39	M	researcher	autonomous worker in a research company
Loris	39	M	medical researcher	temporary researcher
Frank	40	M	English teacher	consultant
Valentina	26	F	teacher	multi-contract

Table 6: Interviews at Universities, polytechnic and cultural institutions

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Bureaucracy, citizenship, governmentality: Towards a re-evaluation of New Labour

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abstract

Drawing inspiration from the genre of studies of governmentality, this note explores developments in the organisation of the British Civil Service during the years of New Labour. Arguments and debates over the limits of bureaucratic knowledge and communitarian arguments borrowed from the American context served to encourage modes of citizen participation in respect of the work of the central bureaucracy. Bureaucrats during these years were encouraged to assume the role of agents of what we term here 'participatory citizenship', seeking to bring citizens into a new relationship with bureaucracy. Bureaucrats were enjoined to attend to the voice of the citizen in new ways. Arguments and prescriptions for change ultimately led to innovations in the technologies of rule to be effected by bureaucrats, designed to 'activate' citizens and to bring them into a new and more participatory relationship to the central State. Exploring these developments, we highlight their costs, risks as well as certain suppressed political possibilities. Conceived as a preliminary investigation and certainly making no claim to historical completeness, the aim here is to begin to re-evaluate the experience of New Labour.

Introduction

The history of New Labour's management of the Civil Service would appear to be a familiar one, suggesting significant continuities with an earlier era of Conservative rule. Changes in administrative practice in the British Civil Service in the years of the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s acquired a certain consistency of style, a manifestation of the loosely coupled regime of administration that came to be known as 'the new public management' (Hood, 1991; du Gay, 2000). From the early 1980s, with the aim of enhancing efficiency

and curtailing the expansionary tendencies of bureaucracy (Niskanen, 1973), British civil servants were made responsible for budgets and accountable for the achievement of performance objectives in new ways. An array of economy measures were pursued. The reforms of the later 1980s and 1990s introduced agency arrangements to the Civil Service, new customer charters and simulated market mechanisms. Expectations of the personal qualities of the bureaucrat altered during these years as politicians affirmed the virtues of enterprise, responsibility and initiative.

Far from contesting the reforms of the Conservatives, New Labour praised the Conservative leaderships of Thatcher and Major for their innovations in the deployment of management techniques (Cabinet Office, 1999). New Labour, seeking to 'modernise' government (Cabinet Office, 1999), turned increasingly to outside sources for policy advice and to politically appointed policy advisers, initiating policy but also integrating the policy processes of government. The offices of government were to become more 'strategic' in response to a tendency towards fragmentation that had developed under the Conservatives. Senior bureaucrats became key agents in the implementation of policy, improving the responsiveness of the bureaucracy to political goals – particularly in respect of the promotion of quality and choice in the delivery of public services. Performance management and other managerial innovations became important remedies. Public Service Agreements were applied to the departments of government enforcing outcomes and process requirements, with the related Best Value indicators imposed on local government. Above all, in the delivery of services it was a matter of 'what worked' from the customer point of view. Tony Blair argued that choice in the mode of delivery of public services 'put the levers of power' in the hands of citizen consumers (Blair, 2004).

Our interest here however will be in another, perhaps less familiar, mode of 'modernising bureaucracy' associated with the New Labour years. Seeking to encourage further consideration of this era, we evaluate the advanced liberalism of New Labour as a hybrid formation (Hall, 2003) containing a variety of ways of conceiving the government of the subjects of the State. Interest here turns to a particular conception of 'citizenship' that informed the New Labour project. Arguments and debates over the limits of bureaucratic knowledge and communitarian arguments borrowed from the American context served to encourage modes of citizen participation not only in relation to community development, health or local government but also – as we will see – in respect of the work of the central bureaucracy. Bureaucrats during these years were encouraged to assume the role of agents of a particular form of 'participatory citizenship', seeking to bring citizens into a new relationship with bureaucracy. Bureaucrats were enjoined to attend to the knowledge of the citizen in new ways.

Arguments and prescriptions for change ultimately led to innovations in the technologies of rule to be effected by bureaucrats that were designed to 'activate' citizens and bring them into a new and more participatory relationship to the central State. It was not the 'good consumer' that such interventions sought to activate, but the 'good citizen' more actively engaged in matters of policy. Numerous methods of citizen participation – from the 'People's Panel' to the 'Citizen's Jury' – were implemented guided by this aspiration. Here we explore these recent historical developments, beginning with a comment on the perspective that guides our investigation. We go on to consider the concepts and practices at stake and their historical emergence and development, highlighting the costs and risks as well as certain suppressed political possibilities.

'Governmentality' in perspective

This exploratory study draws inspiration from the genre of studies of governmentality (Dean, 1999; Miller and Rose, 1990; Miller and Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999). With the recent publication of Foucault's later lectures (2007; 2010), we now have a fuller sense of his interest in the rationality of modern government, and in particular liberal government. Although studies of governmentality were initially catalysed by the earlier publication of fragments of these lectures (Foucault, 1982; 1991), the relationship to Foucault was always a loose and attenuated one: key themes and concepts in the later Foucault were drawn upon and extended by the analysts of governmentality. At an abstract level, studies of governmentality are concerned with the more calculated forms of the exercise of power, highlighting the diversity of powers and governing authorities which seek to regulate the subject's space of freedom. Evoking an early modern usage, the word 'governing' relates to any attempt to shape or mould the conduct of others (Foucault, 1982; Rose, 1999). Interest turns to the discursive character of 'rule', the language that authorities and experts use to imagine and define the subjects they aspire to govern as well as the technical methods of influence and inscription that they put to work (Foucault, 1982). The problem of government breaks down into an analysis of the concepts, arguments and procedures by which 'rule' comes to be enacted. Activities of government and modes of knowledge are understood to interconnect in diverse ways. Governing always relies on a certain framing of objectives or a certain manner of reasoning. Practices which monitor, inscribe and record the activity of the governed facilitate the activity of those who rule. Experts are at the very centre of contemporary governmental regimes, purporting truths about what we are and what we should be.

Expositions of the genre (Rose, 1999; Dean, 1999) suggest a form of analysis that in principle embraces both the historical and systematizing dimensions of genealogical critique. Studies of governmentality seek to capture not only the overall logic of the games of truth or rationalities of a decentred political field, but also the process by which they took shape. The aim is to identify the emergence of a regime of government, the multiple sources of the elements that constitute it and the 'diverse relations and processes by which these elements came to be assembled' (Dean, 1999: 31). Attention turns to moments of 'problematisation' in the practice of government and the emergence of prescriptions and solutions to the problems identified (McKinlay, et al., 2012). Historically informed enquiry seeks to reveal the contingencies by which the present was formed. Games of truth are shown to have been different to those to which we are accustomed (Rose, 1999). Studies of governmentality therefore aim to enhance our awareness that what we are is not given or inevitable, thereby increasing the contestability of the present moment.

Studies of governmentality have been especially concerned to shed light on a contemporary 'advanced liberal' rationality of government (Rose, 1999). The 'neoliberal' aspiration to advance entrepreneurial and competitive norms of conduct represents but one strategy associated with this rationality (Miller and Rose, 1990; du Gay, 1996). More generally, advanced liberal rule seeks to promote the responsibility of individuals and collectivities for determining their own fate (Rose, 1999). In diverse fields of government – from, for example, the promotion of social welfare to that of the cultivation of human capital – the subjects of advanced liberal rule are guided and steered by an array of authorities and experts to exercise their freedom in an appropriate way. Social problems and issues that might once have been the responsibility of political authorities become the responsibility of individuals, the 'communities' to which they belong or other social agents independent of the State. Thus, the unemployed subject is increasingly responsible for his or her own self-government as an active jobseeker but such 'self-government' is regulated by an array of governmental forces, from the think tank intellectuals in policy-making circles that prescribe the norms of the jobseeker to the managers that monitor and scrutinise his or her conduct on a daily basis. Similarly, in matters of health, we are enjoined to take responsibility for our own well-being in accordance with the standards delineated by an array of scientific, medical and health professionals, media analysts and commentators.

Yet critics have raised a number of problems with the genre which seem to suggest that some re-thinking is required. There has been significant critical commentary with a strongly anti-Foucauldian flavour (e.g. Kerr, 1999). But those seeking to develop the genre also highlight an array of limitations (McKinlay,

2010; McKinlay, et al., 2010; O'Malley, et al., 1997). In part the challenge is a common reliance on – and consequent overestimation of the significance of – official textual sources and programmes. There is a need to move beyond the study of texts of rule and the tendency to read history through the programmatic statements of authorities, to an exploration of the practical dynamics of government at an organisational level. For the analysts of governmentality, it has been argued, the possibilities of exploring the manner in which broad concepts are translated into practices on the ground remain largely uncharted (McKinlay, et al., 2010). Instances of the genre incline, it has been claimed (O'Malley, et al., 1997), towards over-generalisation. Excessive attention is given to the characterisation of abstract and general rationalities of government. Much of the commentary on advanced liberalism (Miller and Rose, 1990; Rose, 1999) appears vulnerable in this respect to the extent that it implies a progressive enlargement of an all-pervasive rationality of rule (Fournier and Grey, 1999). Concepts, classifications, instruments and procedures of government have a complex history which historical analysis should seek to unravel at a level of detail untypical of the genre (O'Malley, et al., 1997; McKinlay, 2010; McKinlay, et al., 2010). Greater attention needs to be given to the struggles out of which ideas and practices were born and the complex and contingent process by which they took shape. Studies of governmentality not uncommonly discuss historical events without reference to individual or collective agents (McKinlay, et al., 2010; Walters, 2012), which suggests an implausible 'anonymity' in their analyses. Sympathetic critics (O'Malley, et al., 1997; Walters, 2012) point also to a tendency towards the avoidance of critique (Barry, et al., 1996). There is a diagnostic element, present in Foucault (O'Malley, et al., 1997), that is frequently absent from the genre.

In the style of the criticism we have been considering, our aim here is not so much to reject as to find ways to modify the governmental approach. But in no sense would we claim to address the arguments of the critics in their entirety. Rather, the more modest aim is to begin to restore attention to the specificity of practices of governing (Barratt, 2008). The identification of rationalities that span institutional fields remains vital, not least as a means of illuminating commonalities in different fields of political struggle. The intention here is to balance this by respecting the singular forms of government. We share the nominalist perspective of Dean and Hindess (1998): modes of government appear in definite institutional, social or professional settings and should be assigned a time and place. The focus here is on how particular categories of person are formed or 'made up'. But genealogical enquiry can serve also as a reminder of forgotten possibilities in the sense of historical experiences that have been suppressed in the course of time, which can nonetheless be of relevance to contemporary struggles (Barratt, 2003; Burchell, 1996). Accordingly, our interest

here is not only in the emergence of a particular mode of participatory governmentality, but also in certain episodes in the history of the British left and the women's movement.

A certain humility is nonetheless implied in the account that follows. The past is not a place we can return to; at best, it can offer resources – in the form of ideas or practices – that we can adapt in our own present circumstances. We would suggest that any attempt to expand the political imagination or to imagine alternative futures should as a minimum requirement take the form of an intimation, as anything more than this runs the risk of constraining the inventiveness of political actors or implying a definitive position. What is ultimately required is a labour of invention and imagination by those who struggle. Thus, we offer here analysis and argument that might be of relevance to those movements of the left debating the question of the organisation of the State (e.g. Shah and Goss, 2007) or the developing alliances of public sector trade unionists and activists now pursuing struggles in the context of Liberal Conservative austerity measures.

'Modernized' bureaucracy and the birth of participatory governmentality

New Labour was evidently not the first Labour Party faction to have attempted significant 'modernisation' of the central administration. Harold Wilson's neo-Fabian image of a 'regenerated' Britain in which expertise and science would arrest the decline of the nation (Theakston, 1992) encouraged the reformers associated with the Fulton Committee Report (1968) and their proposals to enhance management and specialisation in the Civil Service. Though limited in their practical effects, the management reforms of the 1960s prefigured the NPM. 'Modernisation' under Blair, however, followed a variety of paths. For the developments with which we are concerned, the decisive turn or historical break is perhaps the 'Third Way' (Blair, 1998). Many familiar positions associated with New Labour are developed in this text, including the redefinition of 'equality' to refer to 'equality of opportunity' and the idea of 'partnership' as the means to deliver efficient and customer-sensitive public services. But the Third Way also offered a critique of the administration of government premised on the 'maturity' of British society. Britain, it was argued, was now passing through a new era or modern age. The increased flow of information made possible by technological developments – an 'information revolution' – as well as educational developments in the post-WW2 period had changed the citizenry, encouraging a demand for more democracy. A 'deepening of democracy' should mean not only devolving power to Wales and Scotland, greater community influence in local government decision making or support for local community initiatives.

Crucially, a 'new openness and responsiveness' on the part of central government and the administrative machinery of the State was now also needed. A form of administration that gave greater attention to the voices of citizens in respect to decisions that affected them and encouraged public debate would lead to improved political decision making. Society, as Blair saw it, was a 'laboratory of ideas' concerning how social needs might be best met.

The arguments of the Third Way suggest the influence of an array of intellectual and political sources. Importantly, there was a certain epochal quality to the argument. In this respect, recent commentary has highlighted New Labour's debt (Andrews, 2004; Finlayson, 2003) to debates encouraged by elements of the British Communist party during its final years. As the party's magazine *Marxism Today* came under the control of a Gramscian faction in the Party (Hall and Jacques, 1983), and particularly with the ascendancy of Thatcherite neo-liberalism, a new and wide-ranging debate ensued over the future direction of the British left. What underpinned much of this debate was a sense of 'new times'. The favoured analysis of those who initiated the debate relied on the notion of a transformed post-Fordist economy and society (Hall and Jacques, 1983). Diverse phenomena, from working practices to social and political identities, were taking new varied and flexible forms to which the political left were compelled to respond. For Charles Leadbeater (1988), like Blair, a political topography shaped by the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher required not only a new sensitivity to customer choice and efficiency in the delivery of public services, a balancing of social rights and responsibilities, but a new era of democracy in the administration of the State.

Blair then, a contributor to the debate over 'new times' (Andrews, 2004), appears to have taken something from its characteristically epochal and sociological character. More obviously perhaps, the arguments of the Third Way suggest a debt to an American revival of ancient political ideals during the early 1990s (Putnam, 1993; 1995). According to Philip Gould (1998), an active participant in these events, in the later months of 1995 the advisory group around Blair began to borrow from the republican and communitarian thought of Robert Putnam, mirroring the American Democrats at this time, as they sought to extend and give substance to the ideal of a 'modernised' version of social democracy adjusted to new political conditions. As instanced by certain regions of northern Italy, Putnam argued that a citizenry active in the public domain and its civic associations acquired virtues with wider benefits for social and economic cooperation. America could be restored to a more organic condition by the enhancement of opportunities for association amongst citizens. Active engagement in 'horizontal' relationships fostered social capital – a concept adapted from the American sociologist James Coleman (1974). With the Third

Way, we see the revival of these same ancient notions of the dutiful and active citizen of the republic. Communitarian and civic republican ideals were thus to be adapted to contemporary conditions: the circumstances of a globalized society and economy.

Perhaps more surprisingly, in the allusions to the knowledge embedded in the citizenry and to a more democratic form of administration, the Third Way bears the mark of radical political sources. In particular there are traces of the ideas of social movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps the most obvious debt is to a movement that centred around the inner cities of England, commonly referred to as the 'new urban left' (Gyford, 1985). The movement in question – of councillors, local activists and trade unionists – came to see the local state as an arena in which a new 'logic of the left' might be pursued. As Wainwright (1994) shows, the emergence of this movement needs to be understood in the context of the shifting political priorities of the diverse movements that emerged in the years after the student protests of 1968. Feminists, inspired by American example, explored the politics of everyday experience and, in so doing, came to a new appreciation of the subordination of women in relation to the welfare provision of the State. Socialist feminists highlighted the denial of voice and the narrow understanding of legitimate knowledge presupposed by the relevant agencies. Anarchist and romantic 'countercultural' influences in the women's movement encouraged an emphasis on separate provision of welfare. Women worked to provide their own support for battered women and rape crisis centres. Yet by the middle years of the 1970s, as government cuts in public services began to take effect, feminists came to a new appreciation of the State. Though denying the voices of women in the definition of need and in relation to the provision of services, the State was an essential mechanism for promoting the security and autonomy of women. The point was to attempt to address the ways in which the State worked to disqualify women's knowledge. In a similar way the community activists of this era, initially inspired by the anarchist movements in the inner cities in the middle years of the 1960s and by the student organisers of the poor in the American new left, came to a new appreciation of the benefits of the social State during these years. For both groups of political actors, the problem became how to secure the participation of marginal citizens in the provisions of the State.

Wainwright characterises the administration of the Greater London Council (GLC) in the period between 1981 and 1986 as the most ambitious and high profile achievement of this movement in the British context. But the local state was also intended to suggest an example of a wholly different way of governing from which national leaders might learn (Wainwright, 2003). Without imagining the Council – as the strategic local authority for London – could transform the political economy of the capital, a distinctive aim was to use the powers of the

authority to extend modes of self-government. Initiatives with the aim of enabling the autonomous action of excluded groups took many forms: the funding of cooperatives, support for workers campaigning to save their own jobs or developing their own plans for production, support for community resources and women's centres. But representatives of user groups and workers in the capital also came to be included in the policy making processes of the Council. Experiences and ideas could thus be fed back into the administrative apparatus. Blair evidently paid little regard to the detail of the experience of these movements. Yet, especially in its perspective on the marginalised knowledge of the citizen, we would argue – like others (Finlayson, 2003; Davies, et al., 2007) – that traces of these radical movements can be discerned in the discourse of New Labour.

Bureaucracy and the activation of the citizen

The early years of New Labour provide evidence of attempts to translate the more general and abstract analysis of the Third Way into more concrete and specific practices of rule. An array of experiments designed to bring citizens into a new and more direct relationship with the bureaucracy were attempted. Initially the expertise of the marketer – a technology of consumption – would play an important role. Indeed, the turn away from simple opinion polling to the application of more sophisticated marketing techniques had brought New Labour electoral success. Now, enlisted by bureaucrats in individual departments, such methods would become part of a consultative process, an element of a 'dialogue' between State and citizen (Gould, 1998).

With the People's Panel, launched in 1998, the aim was to establish a panel statistically representative of the population to which senior administrators and politicians in all departments could turn for opinion. Between 1998 and 2002, members of the panel were engaged in some 30 research studies – both qualitative and quantitative – conducted in various departments but particularly on matters related to social policy (Game and Vuong, 2003). On the qualitative side, the technology of the focus group became widely used during these years. In the practice of the political marketeer (Savigny, 2007), the focus group is conceived as a scientific instrument whereby the consistent application of question guidelines and research protocols by a facilitator is intended to incite participants to reveal their views and feelings. Now such technologies would provide what was understood to be direct and unmediated access to the thoughts of both citizens and electors (Gould, 1998).

The early programmatic statement *Modernising Government* (Cabinet Office, 1999), though much concerned with the enhancement of strategy and performance management in the offices of the State and the needs of the customers of public services, also anticipated a new era of attentiveness to the citizen in the shaping of policy. 'Modernisation' was not simply a matter of increasing effectiveness, deploying management techniques to oversee the work of local and central government, building partnerships or integrating policy-making in an increasingly fragemented bureaucracy. More importantly, bureaucrats were enjoined to become 'the agents of the changes' that citizens were demanding and encouraged to take 'full account of the experiences of individuals' who would be affected by policy. Again, social change was invoked to rationalise the need for new modes of engagement with citizens.

Many initiatives and experiments in citizen participation in the work of the central bureaucracy were attempted in the years that followed (Davies, et al., 2007). The establishment of a Youth Parliament in 2000 was intended as a complement to new attempts to educate youth in the ways of citizenship. Adapting its procedures from the legislature, the young were to enjoy the right to elect their peers as local area members, empowered to represent the opinion of their constituents to service providers and politicians. Meanwhile at the Department of Health, the aim was to move towards a new model where the voice of the patient was to be heard at every level including the policy-making processes of the bureaucracy (Department of Health, 2001). E-government would play its part as well: through the 'Big Conversation', launched in 2002, a website was established to bring the administration into an unmediated relationship with citizens, who would be able to comment on matters of policy in a way that would inform bureaucrats and politicians directly.

Yet by the early years of the millennium, criticism began to emerge of the fragmented and ill-coordinated nature of these innovations. Many of the initiatives had run into difficulty. The first assessment of the People's Panel by the Cabinet Office in March 2001 revealed a high attrition rate. The membership was now white, professional and activist in composition (Mair, 2007). Similar difficulties had arisen at the Youth Parliament (Davies, et al., 2007). There were calls from groups influential in the political process for more imaginative approaches to be adopted in engaging the citizen – in the light of the evidence of declining levels of political participation by the electorate. In the years that followed, New Labour looked increasingly to more sophisticated and deliberative ways of activating the citizenry.

Arguments for the advancement of citizen involvement in the activities of central government emerged from outside the formal political process during the middle

years of the 1990s. The think tank the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) actively promoted a more deliberative model of democratic participation (Coote and Lenaghan, 1997), supported by influential academic voices (Stewart, 1996). The Institute drew heavily on American and German experience in prescribing a particular version of the technology of the Citizen's Jury. Working independently, but inspired by the same ideal of a dialogical mode of citizen engagement with the bureaucracy, the political scientist Ned Crosby in the United States and Peter Dienel – a member of the planning department of the German Chancellery – had fashioned comparable techniques for engaging the citizenry (Crosby, 2007). In Germany, in particular, Dienel's planning cells became widely used by both central and local governments (Vergne, 2005). Adapted to British conditions and with modifications after a series of pilots in the Health Service in 1996 (Coote and Lenaghan, 1997), for the IPPR the mechanism of the Citizen's Jury offered a powerful new way of reconfiguring the relationship between citizens, bureaucrats and politicians.

The particular version of the Citizen's Jury favoured by political and administrative authorities in Britain suggested juridical practice in the use of small groups – of no more than twelve in number – taking evidence and cross-questioning witnesses typically over a three or four day period on matters of public policy (Mair, 2007). But in this instance it was policy experts that would bear witness. There was the expectation of deliberative participation on the part of those involved with subjects reviewing and debating the evidence, making judgments with regard to the public good, fashioning recommendations, but without the expectation of a shared consensus. Deliberation was to proceed under the supervision of a facilitator, aiming to foster the exercise of appropriate norms of participation. Participants would enjoy equal rights to speak and would be expected to show respect for others in a reasoned debate. Statistical expertise was deployed to ensure a random sample of the public, remunerated for their contribution. After 2003, panels of this kind – or a somewhat larger variant known as the deliberative forum or deliberative assembly where larger policy questions were at issue – became widely used, particularly in relation to matters of social policy.

In a speech given to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in September 2007, the Labour leader Gordon Brown (2007), reflecting on the developments we have been reviewing, spoke of a new era of government now in progress. There were echoes in his words of the Third Way and other earlier statements of ideals – implying the returning of power to the people or the nurturing of full citizenship. The new 'Juries' would not be 'one-off events', but part of an 'on-going process of reaching out, of doing the business of government differently'. Accordingly, in the later years of 'New Labour', numerous

deliberative events of this kind were attempted (Mair, 2007). Indeed, the values of the nation were to be derived by such means: citizens had their say in the 'British Statement of Values' by the medium of a national conversation in which a larger variant of the system as well as electronic and media-based instruments would all play their part.

'Participatory citizenship' in critical perspective

For Norman Fairclough (2000: 124) the developments we have been considering suggest the merely 'managerial or promotional' aspirations of manipulative political actors. The deployment of the focus group exemplifies the problem. For Fairclough, there is a failure of genuine dialogue between citizen, administrator and politician in such 'non interactive practices'. Whether their talk is to make any difference to the senior bureaucrat or politician is out of participants' hands. These are not voluntary exercises, since participants must be induced to cooperate.

We would endorse Fairclough's scepticism. Yet we would wish to broaden and extend the critique. The various programmes and practices under discussion here, as we see it, suggest a distinct field of 'government' in its own right (Foucault, 2007; Rose, 1999) in which the empowered citizens of the State become a key target of political intervention. An array of practices are deployed in an attempt to mould and shape the legitimate forms of citizen participation, with the aim of encouraging more active engagement in the policy initiatives of central government. Participation acquires a normative dimension in the discourse: an expectation of the good citizen. Within this field of citizen participation, actors in the executive and the administration reserve important powers to themselves: powers to determine the scope of the public domain, the legitimate topics of participatory government and the processes by which participation will be enacted. Inspired by the later Foucault (2007), analysts of governmentality highlight the role that multiple agencies of government – an array of experts, an alliance of professionals, consultants, business academics, gurus and agencies loosely connected to the State – characteristically play in governing a liberal polity. In this particular case, we find administrative and executive powers deferring to other expert voices: that of the marketeer, the statistician and the think tank intellectual. There is a flow of power beyond the State, extending at the lowest most 'microphysical' level (Foucault, 1980) to the role of the facilitator of the Citizen's Jury seeking to promote appropriate deliberative norms. Matters that might be the focus of debate and decision among citizens, including, for example, the scope of the public domain, the possible forms of participatory freedom and the means of recruitment or

representation in such processes, or among the subjects of particular participatory processes – such as methods of working and management – are left to an array of experts and authorities to determine.

Genealogical enquiry, we have suggested, can serve as a reminder of forgotten possibilities. Historical experiences which have been suppressed in the course of time can sometimes be of relevance to contemporary struggles (Barratt, 2003; Burchell 1996). How in the events we have been reviewing might one discern the outline of a possible alternative, a different order of governmentality? Perhaps one might return to the experience of those movements of the left, to which we have seen there are highly selective allusions in the Third Way. In pursuit of 'modernisation', it could be argued that the political forces under examination here effectively detached themselves from important historical experiences. Nikolas Rose has written of the possibility of a genealogy of the diverse forms that the political imagination has taken in the recent past (Rose, 1999: 288), of the modes of struggle, of self-government and discipline, of the ends and orientations to truth of alternative movements. We would suggest the example of the 'new urban left' and, perhaps most especially, the brief experiment at the GLC might be a suitable place to begin such an investigation.

Such experiences merit serious critically informed genealogical examination, beyond the scope of the present discussion and, indeed, the largely anecdotal political commentary on this era. Here we can do no more than begin to map a future line of enquiry. It is in the field of the politics of gender in authorities such as the GLC that developments appear most suggestive and in need of reappraisal (Goss, 1985; Lansley, et al., 1989). Existing commentary highlights the use of open meetings across the capital bringing representatives of women into a direct dialogue with both politicians and senior administrators, shaping the direction of policy from the outset at the GLC. Key campaigning issues appear to have emerged from this dialogue, including health, the defence of women's health centres, advertising and images of women and women's unemployment. Moreover, open dialogue seemingly helped to encourage experimentation in the processes of participatory government, with the scope of activity and methods of working of a new Women's Committee emerging through dialogue between women's groups and Council officials. Those concerned with governing the city looked to the knowledge of the governed; they questioned the narrow forms and exclusive claims to legitimate knowledge of the administration; and there was a continuing element to the exchange between women and the authority. Participation did not, it would seem, have an 'end date' as it has done for the subjects of the focus group, the citizen's panel or jury.

But any serious examination would need to consider an array of critical perspectives on these experiences. Developments did not pass without criticism from those involved, and their experiences suggest an array of seemingly enduring problems for any exercise in participatory freedom (Wainwright, 2003; Landry, et al., 1985; Rowbotham, 1989), such as the arbitrary extension of participatory practices to a particular community of identity (Landry, et al., 1985). For all the efforts to promote cooperative and local forms of enterprise in the capital, the more affluent and articulate appear to have played a dominant part in shaping these processes from the outset. The availability of time, factors of class and race all shaped the ability to participate; lacking a democratic mandate, the groups could not claim to represent the women of London (Landry, et al., 1985). In addition, there were exclusions experienced by those unable to pursue appropriately participative lifestyles or to exercise appropriate participative skills, and concerns that participation in the affairs of the Council might compromise the strength and independence of the broader women's movement (Rowbotham, 1989).

Despised by the Thatcherite neo-liberals as the new face of the left, the GLC would prove to be a short lived experiment. The neo-liberals believed their democratic mandate legitimised the abolition of 'profligate' and 'extreme' political forces. But we would suggest that there might be much for contemporary critics of organisation to learn from the detailed examination of this experience as part of a more general appraisal of the practical organisational achievements of the left (Rose, 1999).

Conclusion

In this note, we have tried to highlight the role of bureaucrats and other expert voices in attempts to activate modes of citizenship during the years of New Labour. Our interest has been in a particular conception of citizenship that informed the New Labour project: arguments for promoting citizenly qualities and the tactics and technologies of power that sought to give such ideals practical expression. At issue here was not so much the lack of enterprise in the bureaucrat as his or her failure to engage adequately with the knowledge of the citizenry. In short, bureaucrats were enjoined to find ways to extend democracy into the bureaucracy of the State. At work here is a particular form of 'participatory citizenship', with senior policy-makers reserving the powers to determine the legitimate modes of citizen participation. It is not the 'good consumer' that such interventions seek to activate, but the 'good citizen' engaged in key political decisions. A preliminary attempt has been made therefore to

decompose the 'aerial' notion (Walters, 2012) of 'advanced liberalism' (Rose, 1999) into a more specific figure of participatory rule.

The ethos that has guided this study is informed by those who were active but critical participants in the radical movements of the second left (Senellart, 2007). Like Michel Foucault (2000), especially in some of his later work, we have not assumed the State to be a cold monster. Candidly welcoming the election of the French Socialist party in 1981, Foucault (2000) hoped for a new era of dialogue between those who govern and the governed: a new respect for the governed on the one hand and of active participation without subservience or compliance on the part of the French citizenry on the other. A related line of political reasoning can be found in the work of the noted activist intellectual Hilary Wainwright (1994; 2003). Framing her arguments as an alternative both to neo-liberal orthodoxy and the authoritarianism of bureaucratic traditions, Wainwright seeks to encourage a movement beyond the typically limited and passive involvement of electors in systems of parliamentary democracy. She does not deny the effects of contemporary liberal regimes in which citizens are predominantly encouraged to define themselves as 'consumers', not least in their relations with the State (Needham, 2003). But citizens could still have a part to play in shaping the detail of the policy measures that affect them, the State being a vital means to promote their autonomy and security. 'Representation', Wainwright suggests, could be re-imagined to refer to practices which would seek to make citizens present in the administrative processes of the State, a field of political practice from which they are customarily absent. Bureaucratic knowledge could be augmented by the customarily disqualified knowledge of the citizen and politicians made more accountable by experimentation along these lines. Representation, in this sense, could displace forms of influence commonly brought to bear on Governments and senior officials of the State, the clandestine work of think tanks or the organised interests of business and the professions. At stake here is the potential for relevant publics to determine the very terms of their relationship and association with the State.

We would endorse these aspirations. Yet we have also argued that genealogical enquiry could help to redefine the terms of the type of participation that Wainwright now recommends, intimating a future line of inquiry. 'Old Labour', as constructed by Blair and others, relied on a crude caricature of earlier times (Bevir, 2005) that rendered any serious historical learning impossible. Part of what was lost was much of the experience of the 'new urban left'. Revisiting practical experiences of the left of this variety remains an important challenge for those who now contest organizational orthodoxy.

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Wall Street Women: Careerists and/or feminists?

Markus Latzke

review of

Melissa S. Fisher (2012) *Wall Street Woman*, Duke University Press: Durham and London. (pp. 227, $22,95, ISBN 978-0822353454)

Context

Women working in the financial sector on Wall Street earn 55 to 62 cent for each dollar a man earns, which points to an impressive gender wage gap (Bass, 2012). Although these women are not impoverished, it is a strong signal for gender segregation in various ways. It seems there is still a long way to go in order to reach equal opportunities; though, a long way has been covered already – a way that is delineated in Melissa S. Fisher's book.

The first generation of women on Wall Street is a cohort of about roughly 65 females that entered Wall Street in the 70s and aimed to reach other professional positions than those taken by most women at that time, such as secretaries, stenographers, bookkeepers, receptionists or messengers. Quite in contrast, these women achieved top positions in the 'core' areas of research and investment banking in the course of their careers. Melissa Fisher, being a cultural anthropologist herself, conducted an ethnography study in which she shadowed the first generation of Wall Street women. Fisher gathered data in three periods: In the mid to late nineties, she interviewed the women about their careers, mentoring and networking experiences, as well as their superiors, colleagues and peers. About ten years later, when most of the women had already started their postretirement projects, Fisher conducted a follow-up fieldwork

study. Finally, as the financial crisis of 2007-2009 urged her to do so, she organized a round table discussion with these women.

For a theoretical basis, Fisher draws on a feminist remaking of Bourdieu's (1977) practice theory, which assumes intentionalities of the acting subject – as 'history makes people, but people make history' (Ortner, 2003: 277). In doing so, emphasis is put on social transformation as well as on social reproduction. The reader learns about the rules of the financial field and its power structures by her focusing on structure and agency, and by neither overemphasizing one nor the other. One gets to know about the history of the field (Wall Street), the shifting relationship between feminism and the financial market, important events that were able to change some rules (like the Meryll Lynch suit, the shareholder revolution, the financial crisis etc.), and the modes in which these rules shaped the careers of the women. Moreover, Fisher delineates how the women themselves affected the 'rules of the game', mainly by supporting each other formally and informally to climb hierarchical career ladders. Instead of just reproducing established hegemonic power structures, Fisher claims that the women also changed these structures over time.

Entering Wall Street

Fisher explores how various sociopolitical changes in the 70s, such as discrimination lawsuits and the shareholder revolution, allowed women to start their careers on Wall Street. As Fisher points out, Wall Street was not among the early adopters of equal opportunity or diversity management activities – quite on the contrary, its representatives introduced such policies only after they faced discrimination law suits and, probably even more important, critique of their shareholders. The inglorious question in an entrance exam at Merill Lynch in 1972 provides a vivid example of wide-spread discrimination practices: 'When you meet a woman, what interests you most about her?' [51]. Generally, most points were given to the answer 'her beauty' and least for 'her intelligence'. However, since many of the very powerful shareholders raised their concerns regarding these practices, from the mid 70s onwards women and other minority groups were actively recruited on Wall Street. Most of the women now entered Wall Street in the area of research, as the detail-oriented analysts working there had been symbolically feminized for a long time. That means, e.g. in contrast to the broker 'stars' in investment banking, research represented a less visible and low-paid back office function. Yet, the evaluation of research activities was altered during the recession of the 70s, and then became increasingly important for companies, which in turn improved access points and chances for the women.

As regards their social and family background, many of the women originally came from suburban areas. They were part of the middle-class, and generally attended smaller non-elite colleges for women. While already active at Wall Street, many of the women attended business schools after work. At these schools they started to form ties with other women working on Wall Street. Furthermore, the Financial Women's Association (FWA) became an important site for networking and supporting other women, with the aim to climb the corporate ladders on Wall Street. Though, not all women in Fisher's sample pursued a career in the field of research; a few of them also progressed in investment banking. What united them, was their more privileged background and their reliance on male mentors. They were less connected with the women active in research, who had formed specific female networks.

Early networks

As the area of research was more in the spotlight and the women progressed in their careers, they recognized a lack of female role models in the financial world. Here, the institution of the FWA provided a space where the women could develop and perform a distinct professional habitus, including ways of bodily movements, gestures, eating habits or modes of dressing [54f.]. Fisher remembers that at one of the FWA events she felt 'an awful lot of social pressure to confirm precisely to a very feminine, polished mode of dress, appearing and behaving' [84]. In her view, the women presented themselves as members of the financial elite and, thus, as members of a social upper class who did not want to be mistaken for secretaries or members of the lower- and middle-class back office employees (the latter ironically corresponds exactly to the positions most of them had when they started their careers). The women's associations also clearly reflected their aspiration to set up an elite female network rather than, for instance, a political initiative debating gender issues at the workplace. Besides, they were keen on building alliances with other women active in the international finance industry (e.g. in London, Tokyo, Peking and Hong Kong). An illustrative example of their disinterest or dissociation of feminist concerns was their coverage of the march for the Equal Rights Amendment in 1978. It was publicized in the FWA newsletter in ways that made clear the FWA was not the sponsor of this action. These Wall Street women regarded gender equality as a politically too delicate matter to advocate – at least in the earlier stages of their careers.

Wall Street and politics

Reaching top positions, such as senior vice president, principal or director, remained a big challenge for the women. Besides, compatibility of family and career was experienced as difficult. During the 90s, their role at the FWA also changed; at events they now spoke as authorities, and they gave advice to younger women about how to be successful on Wall Street. They had become the mentors for the next generation, teaching them how to get on boards, to network and to find other mentors. One might say that the women meanwhile knew the rules of the Wall Street game. Regarding their own careers, they increasingly began to form ties with female governmental representatives. The Women's Campaign Fund (WCF) provided a suitable space for that purpose [122f.]. The bipartisan organization united 'elite' women from business and politics in their desire to promote those female candidates into leadership positions, who supported women's reproductive rights (pro-choice). Fisher stresses that this was the first time these women actively attempted to change the system (as members of a 'state-market feminist' network), instead of just adapting to it [125]. Though, such activities were not just altruistic but they also enlarged the women's own social capital. For example, female donors who spent between USD 1,000 and 5,000 could attend the WCF Leadership Circle, in which female politicians spoke about new political developments. Another special event, the WCF Annual Dinner, allowed the women to interact with the managerial elite of many different industries. Such dinners started at an official location with some snacks and presentations and then continued at the private apartments of the network members. Here, the women's formerly developed elite habitus came into action: they were impeccably dressed and e.g. showed knowledge and appreciation of fine food and wine. Networking, fundraising and the bridging of corporate and political life became central to their identity-related activities and conduct. Regarding their identity as women and the role of gender throughout their careers, Fisher extracted two main discourses from the interviews.

Discourses on Wall Street

One discourse explicitly denies the relevance of gender, while the other one draws on stereotypical attributions for women: the gender-neutral discourse of *meritocracy* and the discourse of *risk*, respectively [95-119]. The first one derives from the assumption that hard work is leading to success and that performance is thus relevant. The first generation of women on Wall Street broadly shared this belief, which is in line with 'neoliberal' ideologies of deregulation, free markets and competitive individualism. As Fisher states, it is the financial world's enormous greed for money which may override sexism and racism. Due to their

strong belief in meritocracy, the first generation of women on Wall Street was not convinced of formally affirmative actions, such as introducing quotas or giving women the status of an underrepresented group, requiring 'special' support. Paradoxically, however, they considered it as relevant to be active in the FWA to support other women and provide them with access to social networks.

The second discourse, the discourse of risk, is strongly gendered, as risk-taking is clearly associated with masculinity – while conservative, long-term thinking is associated with the 'female nature'. The traditional risk-averse role of the 'caring mother' tends to fit well with research activities. Besides, the interviewed women portrayed themselves as financial consumers and, correspondingly, they compared buying new stocks with buying a new blazer. They used established assumptions about their roles as mothers making family purchases in order to sell themselves as economic experts. In the accounts given, they also drew on their 'caring' nature for the clients; an argument and claim that had previously paved ways for women in areas such as teaching, nursing or selling insurances.

In the course of the financial crisis from 2008 onwards, the discourse of risk-taking, generally attributed to greedy male behavior, was picked up again by the media. Consequently, women working in the area of investment banking had to face certain challenges. As risk-taking, especially in the light of the shareholder revolution, is central to investment banking, women engaged in those masculinized activities were portrayed as 'ball busters' or 'monster mothers' by colleagues. It becomes clear that the adherence to traditional gender roles was simultaneously conducive (in research) and hindering (in investment banking) for the women and their careers.

Life after Wall Street

Most of the first generation women on Wall Street retired during the 2000s – not only because they reached a certain age but also because they 'bumped against the glass ceiling' again and again, as the following account suggests: 'The women getting the big jobs on Wall Street are at least ten years younger than we are – if not fifteen. No one is giving us opportunities. You know we fought the battles' [148]. Many of the women participated in post-retirement projects in which they could apply their knowhow and competences. They became involved in a variety of activities, mainly to improve the chances of younger women and to uphold and further advance their own positions as national or international elites: joining firms that invest in corporate social responsibility ('make a difference for women and minorities' [142] was e.g. stated as purpose), fundraising for women (including the support of poor and lower-class women),

and getting on boards of non-profit and for-profit organizations were some of the central interests followed.

Additionally, the women did no longer consider the bipartisan WCF as appropriate or sufficient political engagement and, thus, started to promote Democratic or Republican female candidates directly. In their projects after retirement, they also actively recruited women to become part of the company boards they have been connected with. Interestingly enough, the women seem to have become more and more politically active over the course of their careers, if only in order to improve their own status as well as the career chances of other women. Here Fisher also emphasizes that the women's narratives are shaped by both 'feminism' talk and talk about the 'free market' and, more broadly, financial capitalism. In any event, it remains debatable to what extent the 'feminization' [174] of Wall Street was an intentional project – or simply a byproduct of the women's career ambitions.

Relation to the next generation

Finally, a certain unease with the younger generation, which entered Wall Street in the 90s, becomes obvious throughout the accounts that the Wall Street women gave. From the point of view of the first generation, the younger women took too much for granted, risking thereby to lose what the older women had achieved in regard to inclusion and voice opportunities. One of the respondents complained in this regard: 'We all had to work so hard. We expected so little in the way of a combination of work and family' [167]. In contrast to the second generation, the first generation women had never participated in work-family programs, and they apparently had prioritized work over family and personal life; in consequence, they felt at least ambivalent about maternity leaves, flexible working hours and job sharing that the younger women started to practice. In a rather bitter manner it was stated here and there that 'the second generation is totally entitled... Some women open the door others walk through' [167]. The younger generation's work ethics was often evaluated as 'soft' and seen as hindering the women to perpetuate their place in the social order and hierarchy of Wall Street. Furthermore, the young women were regarded as ungrateful, mainly because they were apparently ready to leave their companies when better offers came. However, this might have also been the result of socioeconomic changes ('shareholder revolution') and organizational policies of downsizing, layoffs and delayering, which, over the last two decades, affected the nature of careers and the expectations of what a career should look like (e.g. Smith, 2010). The first generation of women on Wall Street entered the labor market at a time when long-term organizational membership and career paths within one firm

were the norm; for the younger women, on the other hand, inter-organizational job mobility and, generally, dynamics in careers tend/ed to present the norm.

Moreover, the older generation expressed worries about the current networks females were involved in. They were either considered as militant (talking about 'revolution' and wearing 'Wonder Woman' T-Shirts) or as sites in which passing on expertise was no longer intended [157f.]. These evaluations, more generally, suggest that at the end of their careers the women of the first generation encountered a renewed Wall Street world. For them it was highly doubtful if they were still needed in this world, not making them fear less that their 'merits for the field' might soon be lost. It may only be symptomatic that, at a round table discussion in 2010, the women could not agree on how to provide potential support for the second generation of Wall Street women. This is displayed in the following statement: 'I think that those of us who were pioneers once still have to be pioneers... I am not quite sure in what or where or how' [163]. During the round table discussion yet another, more basic aspect was raised, revealing the alienation from contemporary Wall Street experienced by some of the women: the lack of morality characterizing the 'new' Wall Street, only looking for algorithms and short-term profits rather than good companies for people to invest in. In their nostalgia for the 'old' Wall Street, foregrounding moral standards such as honesty, reliability and stability, they, however, did not (want to) see their own role in transforming Wall Street into 'a casino'.

Concluding comments

Although the introductory chapter shows a high density and complexity of information, the remainder of Fisher's book gives a smooth reading experience. The longitudinal study is a great example illustrating how the contextualization of careers can generate in-depth insights into the power relations and the career-structuring rules infusing specific professional or institutional fields. The interplay of structure and agency, the historical development of the field, and the corresponding consequences for individual careers and career strategies are portrayed vividly. With a vast amount of insightful accounts, Melissa Fisher allows us to gain a valuable glimpse behind usually closed doors. Hence, the book is an inspiring source for scholars in the field of gender studies, identity studies and career studies, and other readers who are interested in the exploration of institutional change and concomitant changes in career paths and practices.

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Similarity and difference: The shared ontology and diverse epistemologies of practice theory

Mark Thompson

review of

Davide Nicolini (2012) *Practice Theory, Work & Organization: An Introduction. Oxford*: Oxford University Press. (PB, pp. 320, US$40.50, ISBN 978-0199231591)

Aim of the book

'Good' science, writes Nicolini, involves becoming 'more articulate and capable of perceiving differences (and thus meaning)' [216]. Such an undertaking is 'generative, not eliminativist: its goal is to increase our capacity to make connections among phenomena, not to eradicate interesting features in the name of generalization' [ibid]. In attempting an 'introduction' to the ecumenical and keenly topical world of organizational practice theory, Nicolini has set himself the challenging task of achieving lucid summary of a difficult, somewhat diverse field without resorting to abstraction. That he largely succeeds is testament to a sureness of footing in the different philosophical and theoretical traditions underpinning the various practice approaches introduced in the book.

Structure

The book is broadly divisible into two parts. The early chapters provide a historical outline of the development of notions of 'praxis' and early attempts to operationalize this in 'praxeology', whilst the later chapters explain the different conceptual underpinnings, methodological emphases and empirical affordances

of five current approaches to studying practice: communities of practice, activity theory, ethnomethodology, Schatzki's theory of practice, and discourse analysis. The final chapter encourages researchers to draw selectively on elements of these approaches to illuminate different aspects of organizational practice. What's nice about this book is its demonstration of each of these approaches' different commitments to practice as the emergent, relationally-constituted and non-dualistic stuff of which the organizational world is comprised. In turn, at a time when the ubiquity and modishness of 'practice' invites casual use, this book also demonstrates the commitment demanded of the researcher: practice theory is not for the ontologically faint-hearted.

Early praxis and praxeology

To underscore the seriousness of this commitment and start the sensitising process, Chapter 2 outlines the historical demotion of practice in the Western tradition, 'to illustrate what historical baggage a practice view has to lose in order to generate an alternative view of the world' [23]. The chapter is essentially a summary of Aristotle's early exposition of *praxis* and its later 'rediscovery' by Marx, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. In establishing Aristotle's contribution, Nicolini is however careful not to over-simplify. He juxtaposes Aristotle's emphasis on forms of practical knowledge - *praxis* as knowledgeable action performed in real time (supported by *phronesis,* or practical wisdom) – with *episteme,* Plato's abstracted, contemplative knowledge. According to Nicolini, this opposition hardened over the centuries into the Western tradition: 'an opposition between theoretical thought and almost any kind of human activity' [28].

Nicolini singles out three 'founding fathers' of modern practice theory, to whom he primarily attributes the 'rediscovery' of activity. He argues that Marx's transformational materialism reconnected thought, activity, and the world, and underscored the inherently political nature of the social and historical context in which all human action takes place. Equally important for Nicolini is Heidegger's phenomenological emphasis on the everyday, affectively-inflected practice that is prior to representation – the gestalt of background totality: 'although Heidegger did not develop a coherent theory of practice, by reversing the Cartesian tradition and making the individual subject dependent on a web of social practices, he made it possible for others to develop one' [37]. Third, Nicolini ascribes importance to Wittgenstein's insight that our absorption of pre-reflexive, unarticulated social rules, whose relevance and meaning only appear in contextual relation to unfolding purposive action, means that 'language and world are interwoven through a huge manifold of interrelated practices' [40]. These last two 'background' writers laid much of the theoretical ground for

Schatzki's agential humanism, the subject of possibly the most interesting chapter in the book, to which I turn later.

Chapter 3 sees Nicolini move onto the 'social praxeologists', Giddens and Bourdieu, each of whom attempted to build out a sociological framework capable of elucidating the interrelationships between the structures and relations among practices. Bourdieu fares better than Giddens under Nicolini's critical gaze. In developing 'a social theory that makes room for a subject without lapsing into subjectivism' [44], Nicolini points out that Giddens has attracted criticism (e.g. Schatzki, 1997) for adopting an overly voluntarist account of agency, in which 'practices remain ontologically subordinate to actors' [52]. Such a view has undoubtedly led to Giddens' ideas falling from fashion within current practice theory. As I have argued elsewhere however (Thompson, 2012), this perception may stem in part from a tendency to focus on Giddens' structurational model (Nicolini's own account centres on Giddens' 'structurationism') at the expense of the broader hinterland of his ideas, which allow more of a back-door sensitivity to socially conditioned unconscious and affective structures that inflect agential behaviour. Reading Nicolini, I wondered whether the academy has perhaps been too hasty in following Schatzki's dismissal of Giddens.

Although he considers Bourdieu more readily operationalisable, Nicolini nonetheless holds Bourdieu accountable for a lingering structuralism that mirrors the charges of voluntarism levelled at Giddens. This would appear fair: Bourdieu's concept of habitus, in particular – 'practical knowledge which is at the same time inscribed in the body and sustained within a collectivity' [67] – is conceived by Bourdieu himself as a "structuring structured structure" (Bourdieu, 1990b: 52-53) whose internalization and embodiment within the actor implies 'that agents are ultimately reducible to social structures' (Kemp, 2010: 9). Nicolini levels three criticisms at Bourdieu: first, such a primary focus is less sensitive to the way in which habitus (and fields) mutate over time; second, Bourdieu's preoccupation with cultural inscriptions leaves him with little to say about technology and other forms of mediation (Lash, 1993); and third, habitus offers little explanation of agents' reflexive monitoring of conduct – something that recursively affects practices. That said, in showing how 'practically intelligible, creative agency, and institutionalized patterns of action are not opposed and, in fact, co-exist and presuppose each other in practice' [69], Bourdieu's praxeology 'provides what is probably one of the most convincing ways of understanding practice and its central role in explaining social order' [ibid].

Five approaches to practice

Having set out these important foundations for current practice theory, Nicolini provides a summary of more recent developments across five strands of literature that can all be loosely ascribed to a practice-based ontology. In Chapter 4, although not the first to say so, Nicolini rightly laments the way in which Lave and Wenger's (1991) delicate and emergent dynamic 'legitimate peripheral participation' has too often become hardened into the more entitative 'communities of practice'. Such hardening has occurred to the detriment of the original concept, whose strength lies in its highlighting of the relational unfolding of mutual engagement, social identification, and learning.

Chapter 5 offers a nice account of Engeström's broadening (e.g. 1995; 1999) of the Marxian Activity Theory of Vygotsky and Leont'ev to incorporate activities' embeddedness, and mediation, within broader systems. Nicolini draws attention to Activity Theory's strength in engaging with multivocality and contradiction, drawn from its dialectical roots, whilst also rightly noting the dangers of a latent structuralism in researchers' focus on the 'system' as object of analysis (see also Thompson, 2004). This caution is reflected in a concern for what researchers may miss in the pursuit of activity theory's relentless focus on object-oriented mediation.

In Chapter 6, Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (intelligibility as practical everyday accomplishment) is distinguished as resistant to 'theories' of practice, which 'would substitute theoretical constructs for the "real thing"' [147]. Nicolini acknowledges the constricting gaze of localism that characterises many ethnomethodology approaches, suggesting a remedial programme of 'interactional constructivism, an approach in which practice and its relations, and not practices in isolation, become the main topic of study' [152].

Chapter 7 outlines some of the 'post individualist' [178] implications of some more recent formulations of practice theory, particularly as developed by Schatzki's (2005) 'Heideggerian/Wittgensteinian tradition' (see also Hopwood, 2013, for a useful annotated bibliography offering greater depth on the development of Schatzki's ideas). *Contra* Latour's principle of generalised symmetry between people and things, Schatzi's project offers an agential humanism in which teleo-affective structure and practical understanding are practised by humans alone – albeit that these are emergent from social and material 'orders' that are instantiated in the nexuses of practices (other writers, for example Pickering and Barad, lie somewhere along the continuum between these two positions).

It would seem to me that Latour's and Schatzki's differing emphases on the interrelationship between agency and structure constitute battlegrounds for important ontological questions – such as the dialogue between agential and critical realism (Leonardi, 2013), which contains within it for example the question of whether 'agency/structure' is a duality or a dualism. Whilst acknowledging that pushing the ontological frontiers of practice theory lies beyond the scope of this book, I found myself wanting more. Given limited space though, Nicolini is right to move on to his critique of Schatzki's formulation of practice. This is in two areas: its limiting 'spatial language' [180] – 'units' and 'frontiers' of practice – as well as a tendency for over-prescription, something that Latour's 'open-ended infra-language' [180] avoided, in leaving local interpretation to the researcher.

In Chapter 8, Nicolini undertakes a similarly useful mapping of the discourse-as-practice literature, comprising a 'continuum delimited by two divergent versions of discourse: one that sees discourse mainly, if not exclusively, as a local achievement, and the other which conceives discourse as a broad system for the formation and articulation of ways of thinking, behaving, and, eventually, being' [190]. The former is characterised by conversation analysis, or CA (e.g. Sacks, 1984); the latter by Foucault's 'discursive formations', leading to 'orders of discourse' – and by critical discourse analysis, or CDA (e.g. Fairclough, 1992, 1995). Following Nicolini, from a practice perspective both CA and CDA suffer from the weaknesses one might expect: CA in focusing overly on the micro-level, at the expense of the macro-level dimensions of unfolding reality, and CDA in losing the middle ground of situated social activity in zig-zagging dialectically between macro and micro. A third framework, mediated discourse analysis, or MDA (Scollon, 2001), is then commended as particularly relevant for practice approaches in viewing discourse as a form of social action itself; mediated, social-material, and clustered into recognisable practices. Nicolini suggests that this more mediated approach might benefit from a dialogue with actor network theory's 'assemblages, conjunctures, and organized forms of social order' [207]. Like Giddens' account of social generation, actor network theory may have fallen from fashion somewhat prematurely, perhaps.

Nicolini's 'toolkit'

Nicolini's whirlwind tour of these five strands of organizational practice literature will provide a highly useful mapping of the territory for organization researchers seeking to deepen their understanding of the practice field. However, his distinction in each case between the comparative advantages and limitations of each framework all lead up to the most original contribution in the book: the

final chapter entitled 'bringing it all together', in which he argues 'the need for a toolkit approach' [214]. The hub of this final chapter is a 'theory-method package' enabling the researcher to 'zoom in' and 'zoom out' iteratively between situated specificity and wider space-time relations. This zooming method is offered as 'an encouragement to appreciate and expose the connectedness of practices by patiently expanding the hermeneutic circle' [239].

Although Nicolini is careful not to present his 'package' as some meta-approach to supersede others, I suspect that some who acknowledge the importance of collapsing both macro-and micro-level dimensions into their own accounts of practice will nonetheless remain suspicious of an explicitly multi-method toolkit such as he proposes. I believe that his 'sensitising questions' will be useful methodological checks for organization researchers in incorporating the multidimensionality of practice, even if their ability to 'zoom' in and out iteratively is constrained by the need to offer depth and conviction in a primary idiom. Similarly, Nicolini's rolling telemedicine account, appended as a coda to most chapters and ably performed in the idiom of each, offers readers a very useful illustration of each approach's relative advantages and disadvantages, whilst perhaps unintentionally also illustrating the depth limitations of multi-method methodologies.

Who should read this book

This introduction will be of interest to organization researchers who are relatively new to practice-based approaches, as well as to many existing practice scholars. For comparative newcomers to 'practice', the early chapters are useful in explaining the fundamental ontological commitment to process that underlies the entire practice family – whilst the later chapters introduce the important differences of emphasis and approach that characterise each tradition. This tension between ontological similarity and epistemological difference is well-handled throughout the book. For this reason, researchers already labouring within the trench of their own chosen practice approach are also likely to find this book useful: moving through the chapters, Nicolini's bird's eye view of any one tradition in relation to neighbouring traditions is at times topographically revealing. In summary, Nicolini delivers a highly useful map of the territory of the emergent, consubstantial, and provisional within current organization research from which different researchers will take different things.

Nicolini's book ably illustrates the reasons why many organizational practice researchers have come to see the study of *organizing* as more fruitful than the study of *organizations*: how, in many ways, we amount to little more than the

work that we practise. In doing so, he has offered us a timely and accessible introduction to a complex topic that embraces the diversity of current approaches to organizational praxis, whilst underscoring the ontological commitments common to them all. It is because it succeeds in these aims that I am sure this book will be widely used by practice researchers for some time to come.

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Compassion and contradictions in the world of creative knowledge work

Angelika Sjöstedt Landén

review of

Susanne Ekman (2012) *Authority and autonomy: Paradoxes in modern knowledge work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (HB, pp. 264, US$95.00, ISBN 978-0-230-34822-6)

The book *Authority and autonomy: Paradoxes in modern knowledge work* (hereafter referred to as *A&A*) is written by Susanne Ekman, assistant professor at the Department of Organization at the Copenhagen Business School in Denmark. With a background in anthropology and management, Ekman's ethnographically informed study of media companies in Denmark is a useful contribution to our understanding of the role passion plays as a driving force in the performance and management of creative knowledge work. Comprising approximately 250 pages, the book poses many questions about the conditions that exist for those involved in knowledge work and the organizations where it is concentrated today.

Ekman has conducted ethnographic case-studies at two major media companies that produce television and radio programmes. The core data comprises interviews with employees and managers, combined with relatively lengthy participant observations at the two companies' offices. Ekman is generous with her ethnographic material and gives the reader a nice sense of being present, especially in the interviews with company employees and managers. The introductory section is followed by two chapters that deal with data gathering, ethics, and analytical strategies, and four chapters that focus firmly on the empirical material, drawing on interviews with management and staff in

particular. The book ends with a short concluding chapter that includes suggestions of topics for further research.

The title of the book elegantly captures the scope of the study, Ekman sets out to capture the 'simultaneities' and paradoxes inherent in the conditions of doing knowledge work by looking at three themes: (*i*) the tensions between existential meaning and exploitation; (*ii*) the simultaneity of having the power to influence one's work as well as being in a vulnerable position; and (*iii*) the power dynamics of contractual demands and profit on the one hand and existential journeys expected of and by the personnel on the other (3). It is a general research problem to find ways of grasping simultaneities in the work situation of creative knowledge workers in such a way as the methodological queries and design are closely intertwined with the aims of the study. If nothing else, it requires an analytical framework that remains open to the contingencies of knowledge workers' power relations, as well as the researcher's interpretations of them. More detailed research questions are then formulated in the course of the exposition.

There are obviously several exciting aspects of this study that are worthy of discussion, but Ekman has two major strands to her argument that I would particularly like to address here. First, she argues that the study makes an empirical contribution by elaborating on knowledge work as something that operates in contradictory work contexts that are not acknowledged or even conceptualized as contradictory. Second, a methodological argument is developed that draws on what the author calls an *analysis of compassion*, promoting the idea that the author/ethnographer should enter the world of work with evident compassion for everyone involved, without pre-determining who the 'bad guys' might be in the work environment studied. I will discuss these issues from the point of view of current research on knowledge work and its methodological challenges, and will then reflect on the conclusions that can be drawn from a reading of Ekman's book, especially concerning social inequality. First, however, we must enter the world of knowledge work as presented to us in the opening pages of *A&A*.

A world of knowledge work

When we first encounter the topic of this book, a narrative is presented to us that many of us will recognize from magazines, television shows, conversations with friends and family, and from our own workplaces, and thus it catches the reader's attention. This particular story is taken from a women's magazine, and paints a picture of a perfect, ambitious, female knowledge worker. In the

example she is called Michelle, and is a well-known host on one of Denmark's most respected topical debate programmes. Michelle is characterized by 'professionalism, insight, and competence' (1). However, in the article, Michelle describes how she was gradually overcome by anxiety, had trouble sleeping, and became unfocused. She eventually broke a shoulder falling off the chair when checking her emails:

> Soon after this incident, her exhaustion was so deep that it prevented her from getting out of bed. In retrospect, Michelle admits that it is extraordinary how she could ignore these symptoms and just keep working. She explains that she had always been a highly ambitious woman who did not include in her repertoire the message 'I can't do it'. (1)

Michelle's assignments at work had often been so challenging that she doubted she would be able to complete them. Paradoxically, Ekman notes, this was one of the things that made her feel passionate about her work, because 'The job was like a pioneering voyage — always exploring new horizons and treading unfamiliar ground' (1). There are many illuminating examples from the interview data given in chapters 4, 5, and 6 that could be related to Michelle's story. One example is the vividly portrayed radio host who had a nervous breakdown every Tuesday because he needed to come up with a new, innovative theme for the show he hosted on Thursdays. The same problem recurred almost every week, and it was therefore suggested by his manager that he might like to create a database of the topics that had been aired on the show before: the weeks when he was not inspired enough to come up with something new, the database could be used to look up previous topics for inspiration. The programme host refused the idea because he firmly believed that he was *supposed* to go through the agony, or, as he said, 'it's my fucking program and I will walk the plank!' (104). Every week, this painful process proved that he possessed the unique skills for the job. Ekman states that 'he preferred the breakdown' (104). It was important that he managed himself in order to sustain the fantasy of being the chosen one, convincing himself and others of his irreplaceability.

At the same time as the knowledge workers talked about how they were driven by a passion for their work, individuals as well as organizations seemed to be constantly on the verge of collapse. Ekman even argues that the story about Michelle 'is almost a mandatory formative repertoire for highly skilled workers' (2). One question that piqued Ekman's interest was how this breakdown narrative could be such a resilient dynamic? The question also serves to provoke the interest of the reader, and is then methodically woven into a research design where the author takes an interest in the longings and fantasies that fanned the desire to be 'the chosen one' despite all the agony. Thus it is worth considering the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin the analysis.

Methodological explorations of an analysis of compassion

The methodology starts from a deconstruction of some of the 'grand narratives' of contemporary social sciences. It finds its leverage in critical readings of sociological theories of modernity — labour process theory and critical management theory; general level theories Ekman argues often overlook the complexity and heterogeneity of everyday life in organizations. Here, the author invokes the common criticism that grand theories of modernity and/or post-bureaucracy tend to look for sharp ruptures in history and disregard how different developments slowly emerge and overlap (14)[1]. Given that this critique is indeed common, Ekman here is pushing at an open door, and instead greater credit could have be given to those who have raised similar criticisms before (Alvesson and Svenningsson, 2003; du Gay, 2000; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2004; Stokes and Clegg, 2002; Storey et al., 2005). When the argument moves on to the construction of a methodological framework, it turns on a critique of labour process theory (LPT) and the works of Kunda. Ekman states that Kunda and others have built their analysis on an assumption of suspicion and that LPT researchers tend to assume beforehand who the 'good guys' and 'bad guys' are:

> These analyses tend to operate with predefined dualisms imbued with normative value, such as: freedom (good) and power (bad); employees (victims) and employers (exploiters); authenticity (good) and profit (bad). (228)

Ekman argues for compassion towards everyone and constructs a framework for an exploration based on compassion in an *analysis of compassion* (39). This approach promises more openness to the unexpected: victims can become exploiters and profit can draw on authenticity. This approach springs from the wish to establish 'methodological tools capable of reading for difference and surprises rather than corroborating general diagnosis' (15). It includes 'messing' with common 'messages and data which do not immediately correspond with my hypothesis, with my theoretical "darlings", or with the dominant tales of the field' and instead 'read for difference' (71)[2].

With an analysis of compassion setting the agenda, Ekman looks for a way of relating to the data, allowing researchers to continuously reflect on their

1 In particular the works of Bauman, 1993, 2009; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2009; Giddens, 1991; and Sennett, 1998, 2006, are here discussed.

2 The expression 'read for difference' could be used in different ways. Glynos (2008: 286) brings it up in relation to the Lacanian concept of fantasy, suggesting that 'the more subjects are invested in fantasies, the more likely they are to read all aspects of their practice in terms of that fantasmatic narrative, and the less likely they are to "read for difference" '. In Ekman's study, 'reading for difference' becomes an analytical strategy.

assumptions and positions in the research field. In this search, the author takes an eclectic approach, drawing on systems theory as well as poststructuralist discourse analysis inspired by the work of Laclau (and its reading by Glynos and Howarth, 2007). The integration of Laclau's work into an analytical framework of logics of critical explanation, however, takes a central position in the methodological design. The logics framework builds on the idea that a social science explanation involves the mobilization of three types of logic: social, political, and fantasmatic (Glynos and Howarth, 2007). The notion of fantasmatic logic is inspired by the Lacanian use of fantasy, and aims to understand why particular practices and regimes 'grip' subjects and what either sustains social order or weakens its hegemony. Ekman specifically refers to Glynos's work on fantasy in an organizational setting.

At risk of oversimplification, logics could be described as the articulation of a set of 'organizing principles' for discourses. Here Ekman describes how two discourses are at work simultaneously in the media companies. On the one hand, a *contractuality discourse* that emphasizes traditional (modern) orders of hierarchy and authority that strive for clarity in terms of the division of labour, impartiality, and fairness, and that regulate relations between employees and managers as well as between subjects within these groups. On the other hand, an *authenticity discourse* that privileges (post-bureaucratic) self-realization, rebellion and authenticity, and mutual trust. All of these things were active simultaneously in the everyday work of the knowledge workers, and are described as forming contradictory work environments that place employees and managers in conflicted positions. An illustrative example is how some parts of the workforce were deemed qualified by their education and formal merits, while others were deemed qualified by 'X-factor' and sheer passion: this added to the complex conditions for 'making it' as a creative knowledge worker, let alone the difficulties of identifying what the qualifications actually *are* for managers and employees.

Ekman describes the organizations' lack of language with which to call contradiction by its correct name and the difficulties that arise from this. Here, the notion of logic provides a meta-language that is identified as missing in the organizational contexts. Ekman argues that 'through a logic of projection, both contractuality and authenticity could maintain their positions as legitimate and important discourses without having to rule each other out' (216). Work provides a life-project for those who hold to this logic, and Ekman describes how managers and employees vest themselves in ideological fantasies, such as 'the chosen one'.

Discussion: Authority and autonomy intertwined

What then is the contribution made by Ekman's empirically informed analysis and the way it becomes intertwined with the assumptions built into this methodological work? More particularly, what *does* the methodological construct with and to the analysis? Given the outcome of Ekman's data analysis, I will reflect on what it tells us about social inequalities in knowledge-work environments.

The impression when having read *Authority and Autonomy* is that the backbone of the book is the descriptive, empirical material. The ethnographic data are telling illustrations of how everyday knowledge work becomes laden with emotional work. The empirical material is clearly central for grasping the ways in which knowledge work aligns with the narratives that posit self-realization to be utterly meaningful for the workers at the same times as it is exploitative of their emotional attachments to their work. These readings in Ekman's empirical material tempt me to think about what the breakdown narrative does for what Ekman calls the logic of projection. Could the knowledge-work companies in the study, for example, be described as (a milder version) of the 'reflexive and masochistic' corporate culture analysed by Cederström and Grassman (2008)? These media organizations — or even the more general narratives of knowledge work introduced in Ekman's study — seem to call 'on the employees to identify with — and enjoy — their symptoms' in self-torturing ways (Cederström and Grassman, 2008: 43). Enjoying one's symptoms to the full, whether it is a broken shoulder or Tuesday agony, becomes a symbol for having a career as a proper creative knowledge worker. However, it becomes clear in Ekman's study that the masochistic characteristics of the job at the Danish media companies are most often coupled with a sincere pride in working there, something that does not seem to occur at the masochistic organizations Cederström and Grassman write about. Does the logic of projection in Ekman's study conceptualize a 'Nordic style' of knowledge work where the strong contractual law on working environments co-exists with the warm organizational embrace of self-realization discourses about individual freedom, neoliberal governance, and flexibility (see also Børve and Kvande, 2012)?

The different faces — fair as well as foul — of such self-sacrificing professional cultures of knowledge work have been observed in various national and organizational contexts. Among others, the works of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), Archer (2008), Shore (2008), and Storey et al. (2005) should be mentioned; studies that reveal the dual nature of the ideals of the simultaneously self-managing and cracked-up knowledge worker, where entrepreneurial spirit is highly valued. The ability to stage a come-back after a wipeout proves the

strength of the individual and individualized work, and makes sincere dedication to one's work a great asset. The descriptions of knowledge work in other contexts than the Danish media companies in *A&A* contribute further to the avoidance of the 'sweeping diagnosis' for organizational life, and illustrate how characteristics in varied organizational settings agree in some ways and differ in other ways. It is therefore unfortunate that a more detailed interrogation of the literature in direct relation to the analysis of the data is avoided in the empirical chapters. In the instances where other authors are referred to, Ekman does not engage with their work (e.g. 164, 172), a strategy that jeopardizes the 'thickness' of the analysis and leaves important contributions to relevant theories less visible to the reader.

Another hazard is that dwelling on individuals' self-interpretations overly long could give the impression that discourses and logics are located at a level of analysis where *the subject* becomes equal to *the individual*, with the effect of locating the analysis of power relations in relationships between particular individuals rather than in wider social patterns. This disposition may lead to an overemphasis on the individual 'agent', even though the author looks at the role of power and discourse. Although West (2011: 429) has argued that we generally could linger longer in the empirical world of social practices if we are to do the critical agenda of the logics framework full justice, we also need to make sure that empirical descriptions do not rule out the middle-range analytical steps.

On the one hand, there is the issue of messing with analytical categories and endeavouring to reject dualisms and enforce contingencies, and on the other hand, there is the study of the contradictions of knowledge work along 'an axis of manager and employee, and an axis of societal dispositions and individual agendas' (62). The metaphor of the axis gives the impression that 'societal dispositions' and 'individual agendas' operate in different corners, while discourse theory encourages the problematization of dualistic models of structure and agency. Moreover, two predetermined categories that organize the analysis emerge — *employees* and *managers*. It is intriguing that these contractual categories are privileged, because one of the arguments Ekman makes is that the analyst should not take for granted who will take the role of employee and manger in each situation. Values connected with work are then analysed from the 'manager perspective' and the 'employee perspective' (see 198-9, Table 6.1). The methodological introduction also gives the impression that a conflict between employees and managers is presumed (70). One problem that emerges from the decision to stick to these two categories from the very beginning is that it privileges particular types of differences and conflicts, namely the ones based on organizational-hierarchical differences, which do not provide much evidence of the similarities that could shed light on the complexities that Ekman sets out

to explore. This becomes particularly apparent in the conclusions, especially regarding social inequalities:

> Seen from a perspective of social inequality, the trends favor versatility, flexibility, and adaptability and they thus represent a potential exclusion of people with low tolerance for ambiguity, with a focus on depth rather than scope, and with limited talent for improvisation. (227)

Important as this may be, differences between employees and managers may only in parts explain the implications of this finding. For example, differences within each of the groups of employees and managers risk being downplayed. Ekman concludes that those who 'chose to stay' in creative knowledge work could avoid burnout by introducing 'pockets of "checking out" and "recharging" between the periods of high intensity' (217). Here, the notion of 'choosing to stay' could be further problematized. For example, given these conditions, which subjects will be privileged or more likely to be able to create such 'pockets'? Were such privileges only linked to the categories of manager and employee, or were there other important aspects to consider? Despite the use of discourse theory, the argument slips towards a rhetoric about the existential aspects of knowledge work and the ones that 'chose to stay'. Failing to get your act together (like Michelle in the introductory passage) is the same as leaving, failing, losing your job and your professional identity, and disregarding everything you have previously invested in them. When it comes to the analysis of the implications for social inequality, the extensive literature on the subject could safely be invoked even more. I particularly think of gender and intersectional research on organizations and their effects on the lives of knowledge workers involved in them (see for example Archer, 2008; Hovden et al., 2011; Lindgren and Packendorff, 2006; Shore, 2008).

I have read this book from the position of an academic with my own interest in social inequality and working conditions, and as an academic, I also spend my own working life in a knowledge-work setting. Just as Ekman hopes, this is an engaging book and well worth reading. There is no doubt that Ekman pinpoints the centrality of personal and organizational breakdown of which many of us struggle with on a daily basis, but I also think that people could identify with this narrative across many types of organizational scenery, not only those that are usually understood in terms of knowledge-work settings. Nevertheless, it is crucial to pin down its specificities in terms of knowledge work whenever knowledge-worker subjectivity becomes a key signifier for living the good, modern life. With its flexible time cultures and strong connotations of creativity and self-realization, knowledge work occupies a prestigious position in a world of work that socially and culturally privileges those who can make it there (Gorman and Sandefur, 2011). It becomes clear that the performance-orientated,

individualized, competition-based audit cultures do not stand in contrast to more 'traditional' and idealistic, fantasies about professionals; it breeds them. Self-indulging and self-sacrificing subjectivities are sought after, but are always dependent on multiple, possibly dispersed, and sporadically willing 'investors': employees, managers, customers, audience, us, them, we, you.

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