Hosting emergence with hospitality

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Introduction

This special issue follows from the location of our 2015 conference, which took place in Moscow, the capital of a country that is often referred to as 'emerging'. What does it mean to be 'emerging', we thought, and (how) can this concept be mobilised to mean something else? When we speak of an 'emerging' country/market/economy, 'emerging' – a politically correct version of what was previously called 'lesser developed' – refers to an entity that has supposedly opened its doors to growth-oriented capitalism and is catching up with the 'developed' countries of this world. In our view, this conception of 'emergence' is problematic in at least two ways.

First, it creates divisions by maintaining a hierarchy of 'developed' and 'emerging' countries, in which the latter are positioned as lagging behind. Regardless of whether these are mainstream business magazines or critical left-wing journals, such divisions are constantly reproduced: developed – developing, core – periphery, First World – (ex-)Second/Third World, North – South, West – East. There are, of course, geopolitical and cultural differences that have implications for analysing certain areas separately (e.g. Alcadipani et al., 2012; Gorbach and Salamanyuk, 2014), as well as for epistemologies to do this from, without succumbing to the global coloniality of knowledge (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Castro-Gómez, 2007; Tlostanova, 2012). However, 'the "West" – that damned word! – names this disjunction' (Badiou, 2008: 60), suggesting that the path the 'developed' countries have taken is the only possible option for humanity.

Second, 'emergence' entails a capitalist teleology. However, as they face entangled ecological, economic, social and political crises, which can be referred to as

'multiple crisis' rooted in the capitalist system itself (Brand and Wissen, 2012), the 'vanguard' countries have lost sight of their telos. The recent US elections and the Brexit referendum, as well as the rise of the far right in Europe and the US are all harbingers of a dramatic change in the perspective. Alongside this, the ultimate goal of capitalist growth is becoming increasingly unclear. Vitality is being squeezed out of human lives, while austerity, precarity (Standing, 2011) and inequality (Piketty, 2014) are increasingly on offer. The countries that have stepped onto the path of 'emergence' by adopting some form of neoliberalism are not necessarily in bloom either (e.g. Dale, 2011). Furthermore, it is no secret that such emergence takes place at the expense of certain localities and groups of people (Escobar, 1995; Badiou, 2008).

Ironically, one crucial concern is whether there are any alternatives to the world that has 'emerged' in this way. With its publication on the 100-year anniversary of the Russian Revolution, this special issue offers an occasion for reflection. This remarkable event created room for radical alternatives and progressive change to arise, such as the Soviet environmentalism of the 1920s (Gare, 1993) and the implementation of women's rights in the Soviet Union, including equal pay and abortion rights, much earlier than in the 'Western' countries. At the same time, with growth dominating the economic and social agenda, combined with authoritarianism, it 'emerged' into a social, economic and environmental disaster. As such, even though 'anti-emergence' seems to be the only response to 'emergence' in terms of capitalism and economic growth, we do not want to dismiss the word itself. Instead, we argue that a different understanding of the notion of 'emergence' can help us to (re-)imagine alternatives and open a myriad of mutually enriching ways of thinking – the focus of this issue.

The rest of this editorial unfolds as follows. First, we outline the different conceptualisations of the notion of emergence. Second, based on the approach adopted in this special issue, we follow Derrida in offering to rethink emergence with hospitality. Third, we ponder over the contributions that have come out of adopting this approach in practice and the contradictions of the process. Finally, we outline the contributions.

Emergence without politics?

'Emergence' comes from the Latin *e-*, which means 'out, forth', and *mergere*, which means 'to dip'. As such, the term suggests openness, undecidedness and multiple potentialities. For example, it may be defined as 'the process of becoming visible after being concealed', with *emergere* in Latin also meaning 'bring to light' (Oxford dictionary, online). This suggests multiple ways to think about emergence, which

is what we invited this issue's contributors to do. We did so without suggesting a focus on certain streams of literature or research traditions, thereby staying true to the openness that the etymology of the word entails. However, we are well aware that some conceptual literature has dealt with emergence in the fields of philosophy, sociology, and, indeed, organisation studies. In this section, we offer an overview of the term in light of the earlier literature and argue that, although insightful as a philosophical concept, it lacks engagement with politics.

The British ethologist and psychologist Conwy Lloyd Morgan initially coined the concept in 1923, although it can be traced to earlier philosophers like Leibniz and Shelling (Gare, 2002). Emergence has been conceptualised through either a diachronic or a synchronic understanding. A diachronic understanding of emergence refers to the appearance or development of a phenomenon, while a synchronic understanding focuses on the relationship between the properties and powers of the whole and its parts (Elder-Vass, 2005). Thus, in the 'emerging' economies/markets/countries discourse, a diachronic emergence takes place, with countries that were not previously part of the global market entering it, i.e. establishing market-oriented systems and experiencing fast economic growth via economic liberalisation (Hoskisson et al., 2009). However, it is emergence in the synchronic sense that has received most attention in the conceptual literature (Elder-Vass, 2005; Sawyer, 2001).

In the conceptual discussion of synchronic emergence, a key question is whether the whole can be explained solely by its parts. Is the whole larger or different from its parts? Alternatively, is the whole simply the sum of the individual components? 'Individual emergentists' maintain that society is nothing but the collection of individuals. This position is mostly defended by economists as well as some sociologists, including F.A. von Hayek, one of the 'founding fathers' of neoliberalism, who argued that higher-level social phenomena emerged from individual actions (see Sawyer, 2001). This understanding of emergence resonates with the 'emerging market economies' discourse in which the individualist ethos is complementary to economic liberalisation. The calculable and elsewhere-tested recipes that are forced upon 'emerging' entities often do not work. Moreover, they exclude ideas, practices and people not seen as fitting into these recipes, thereby testifying to a complete disregard for specific contexts.

In sharp contrast, the 'collectivist emergentists' insist that the whole cannot be explained by the properties of its parts (see Sawyer, 2001). A common example is water, which consists of hydrogen and oxygen but has properties that are different from both of these elements (Elder-Vass, 2005). Sawyer (2006: 148) uses the examples of collective music creation, especially jazz, and improvisational theatre to demonstrate how the outcomes of each of these activities are unpredictable,

contingent and not fully explainable by the group's components. For him, emergence is a collective phenomenon. In their own unique ways, the contributions to this issue offer different approaches to exploring emergence beyond an individualistic mode of reasoning.

Emergence has also been connected to questions of organisation (e.g. Lissack, 1999[*]). Elder-Vass (2005) argues that organisation is actually *central* to emergence, as it brings the 'more than' into the mere collection of elements, allowing emergence to take place. Relatedly, Sawyer (2006) stresses the self-organised character of emergence, which he refers to as organising without the organiser, as seen in a flock of birds flying in a V-shape or an orchestra not necessarily in need of a conductor to perform. Although readers of *ephemera* will immediately connect such self-organisation to political questions of organisation (e.g. Bell, 2014; Stoborod and Swann, 2014), this connection is manifestly lacking in most conceptual discussions of emergence. Indeed, it is surprising that 'emergence' is mostly used in descriptive and somewhat rigid ways, even in explicitly critical strands of thought.

This point echoes Protevi (2006), who notes that scholars have been too preoccupied with the synchronic understanding of emergence. In contrast, he uses Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy to zoom in on a diachronic understanding, and he speaks of emergence as the 'novelty' that is located outside of the existing system. For us the point here is not to call for a prioritisation of understanding emergence in the diachronic sense. As noted earlier, diachronic emergence might as well denote a shift to capitalism, as experienced by 'emerging economies'. However, the connection of emergence to going outside the existing system resonates with us and, in fact, points to where our interest in the concept lies. This connection can be found in some scholarship, where emergence has been mainly associated with going outside the dominant systems of thought. It has helped highlight the inseparability of the physical and the mental, of nature and society, and of nature and culture – in other words, it has been used to problematise the many schisms by which today's societies, as well as sciences, are divided, and recognise the wholeness of the world (e.g. Gare, 2002; Pueyo, 2014).

Gunnarsson (2013) pushes this discussion even further and uses the concept of emergence to understand nature and culture as inseparable, but without one being subsumed by the other (see also Soper, 1995; Malm, forthcoming). In so doing, she not only critiques the tendency to conflate nature and culture when arguing for their connection, but also voices the ambition for feminist research to

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[*]   This is what the whole journal *Emergence: Complexity and Organization* is devoted to, the first issue of which we are referring to here.

understand the political and, consequently, drive social change (see Gunnarsson, 2013: 18). The attempt to mobilise the notion of emergence to address the problems and possible transformations of our troubled world is exactly what unites the contributions to this issue. However, to be able to unpack the various views on emergence driven by these intentions, the concept needs to be met with 'hospitality'. Hence, we must remain open to new understandings of emergence and think creatively about how it can be conceptualised. Next, we explore the very possibility of remaining open by drawing on Derrida's discussion of hospitality.

Rethinking emergence with hospitality

With the intention of moving organisation studies toward a new location, we hosted the 2015 *ephemera* conference in Moscow. The aim was to explore different understandings of emergence. This issue, which stems from the Moscow conference, uses the concept of emergence to explore alternative politics, epistemologies and ontologies. By virtue of casting our eyes on these issues, we are, in fact, going back to the genesis of *ephemera*. The original vision for the journal, as stated in its very first editorial, was to 'produce a space for the articulation of *alternative models of critique*' insofar as critique 'challenges orthodoxies, questions power relations, [and] disrupts the normal' (Böhm et al., 2001: 4, original italics). To achieve this goal, Steffen Böhm, Campbell Jones and Chris Land – the journal's founders – hoped that *ephemera* would facilitate a dialogue that would 'interrupt and erupt' (*ibid.*) by creating a space for critical discussion around organisation. For us, emergence is linked to attempts to explore alternative terrains for engaging in various practices, obtaining knowledge, organising politics and understanding the world around us.

Along these lines, we wanted to seek out other ways of exploring the concept of emergence, which offers fertile soil for grappling with alternatives due to its polysemy. Nevertheless, this endeavour entails a certain impossibility. While we intend to introduce alternative perspectives on emergence in organisation studies and academia more generally, we might simultaneously be laying the premises for how such a conversation would take place. In other words, we want to remain open to new ways of thinking about emergence, but we might have already presupposed what those ways of thinking entail. Such an approach would proceed on the basis of having unconsciously prepared for the unpreparable, expected the unexpected and foreseen the unforeseeable. However, in order to truly remain open to new ways of thinking, we must receive the unexpected, tolerate the unforeseeable and accept the fact that we might be taken by surprise.

No one is more aware of this 'aporia' or 'self-engendered paradox' (Norris, 2002: 49) than Jacques Derrida. In his discussion of hospitality – the event of receiving the arrivant or the guest – Derrida makes the following argument:

> The absolute arrivant must not be merely an invited guest, someone I'm prepared to welcome, whom I have the ability to welcome. It must be someone whose unexpected, unforeseeable arrival, whose visitation—and here I'm opposing visitation to invitation—is such an irruption that I'm not prepared to receive the person. I must not even be prepared to receive the person, for there to be genuine hospitality: not only have no prior notice of the arrival but no prior definition of the newcomer, and no way of asking, as is done at a border, "Name? Nationality? Place of origin? Purpose of visit? Will you be working here?" The absolute guest [hôte] is this arrivant for whom there is not even a horizon of expectation, who bursts onto my horizon of expectations when I am not even prepared to receive the one who I'll be receiving. That's hospitality. Hospitality is not merely receiving that which we are able to receive. (Derrida, 2007a: 451)

Here, Derrida reflects upon the impossibility of remaining open to the other. If our horizon of expectation has certain preconfigured expectations of who the guest will be, or what he or she will say or do, then no genuine hospitality can take place, as we are only able to recognise the guest on the basis of those expectations. Hence, we are neither open to what the other represents nor able to receive the unexpected. For this reason, genuine hospitality, according to Derrida, can only take place when we are confronted with someone whom we are unprepared to receive. Derrida further remarks:

> The arrival of the arrivant will constitute an event only if I'm not capable of receiving him or her, only if I receive the coming of the newcomer precisely when I'm not capable of doing so. (2007a: 451)

In other words, it is only on the basis of a fundamental impossibility that hospitality can take place. It is important to emphasise that the fact that Derrida considers the event impossible does not imply that it never takes place. Quite the contrary, the event does occur, perhaps more often than we think. The main point is that, in the words of Derrida, 'I cannot say the event in theoretical terms and I cannot pre-dict it either' (*ibid.*: 452). Genuine hospitality manifests itself when we least expect it – when our preconceived beliefs are challenged or when we are confronted with something that transcends our current expectation horizon. What, then, are the necessary conditions for this to happen? How can we, as scholars, allow new insights to enter our field? How can we, paradoxically, remain open so that the event can take place?

For Derrida, an event entails the emergence of the new. However, what does it mean to invent the new? Invention of the new, Derrida emphasises, involves embracing the 'new, original, unique', which requires us to '[break] with

convention' (2007b: 1). Moreover, invention 'inserts a disorder into the peaceful ordering of things' (*ibid*.). At the same time, Derrida notes that in order for an invention to be acknowledged as new, it has to be 'evaluated, recognized, and legitimized by someone else' (*ibid*.: 5). Any new insights must comply with expectations about what is considered original, unique and inventive. Herein lies a paradox. On the one hand, any invention has to transcend established social conventions in order to avoid merely repeating the old. On the other hand, any invention has to appeal to the established order insofar as it is recognised as inventive. In other words, an invention has to simultaneously transcend and conform to a system of conventions. In turn, any attempt to invent the new must confront a paradox: the new is possible insofar as it is impossible.

This paradox is embedded in the academic discourse in which we partake. Although we strive for innovative research, we remain within an academic tradition that operates on the basis of conventions for what is considered, for example, 'excellent', 'relevant' or 'impactful' (Butler and Spoelstra, 2012; see also the recent special issue on 'The labour of academia', Butler et al., 2017). Any discourse, especially the academic one, remains governed by rather rigid conventions that deem certain utterances appropriate and others inappropriate. These are fundamental assumptions about what is right and wrong, true and false, rational and irrational – de facto, what is acceptable and what is not. This is particularly evident in the literature on, for instance, emerging economies. Paradoxically, having confronted truly unforeseen and complex phenomena (like post-colonial independent India or post-Soviet neoliberally reformed Russia), the respective fields of inquiry came up with nothing better than measuring them against the yardstick of 'developed' countries – that is, with the West. This was an outcome of operating within what Derrida terms the 'binary oppositions' that govern our thinking.

In academic discourse, we always have certain expectations of what serves as a rational argument, what constitutes a solid concept and how persuasive academic writing should look. There are methodological standards, criteria of consistency, structures of argumentation and specific terminologies to which academic writing should adhere. Any discourse, as Böhm et al. (2001) recognised, following the work of Foucault, is embedded in power relations. Therefore, it is neither necessary to abandon those conventions nor easy to do away with them. Nevertheless, we should be aware of the fact that academic work, including organisation studies, proceeds with certain presuppositions, and that any new insights must both transcend and conform with those presuppositions. They will invariably confine experience to certain preconceived oppositions that prevent alternative modes of reasoning from emerging (Cooper, 1986).

In line with Derrida, we posit that our task in not only this special issue but also the field of organisation studies and academia in general is to 'destabiliz[e] foreclusionary structures' (Derrida, 2007b: 45). This allows for the release of new modes of experience and new ways of looking at the world – in short, that which is yet to come. The challenge is driving a wedge between the oppositions that inevitably define the field. This is not a dialectical pursuit of arriving at synthesis. Quite the opposite – we must learn to live with aporias. On the one hand, the understanding of emergence that we offer here is about openness, undecidedness and multiple potentialities. On the other, for this understanding to assume a comfortable position within organisation studies, it has to be brushed against what we know to be conventions of the discipline. To put it differently, we face the impossible task of being a good host to emergence.

On the possibility of being a good host

The self-engendered paradox that Derrida identifies is common for both scientific and social-scientific epistemologies. Yet, while the paradox is somewhat accounted for in such fields as quantum physics, the social sciences, including organisation studies, lack a coping strategy. The radical twist that we dare to introduce here is to let emergence, so to speak, host itself. Indeed, when offering his metaphorical language of hospitality, Derrida makes it tempting to further indulge in musing with it. One cannot help but notice that the setup to which Derrida alludes in his analogy is very specific, arguably of a petit bourgeois kind. Imagine, instead, that you have a guest who does not expect much and brings their own booze, and that you do not suffer from any philistine qualms. That is the kind of guest we expected when wondering 'Whither emergence?'.

In the case of apolitical deployment of the concept of 'emergence', we witness a conspicuous inability to challenge 'the peaceful order of things' and a rather ardent desire to subject emergent phenomena to the conventional framework of knowing and interpreting. How does this issue allow us to think and act differently? It is not straightforward, but not impossible. The key is to allow emergence to navigate between the Scylla of reproduction of convention and the Charybdis of putting anything under the banner of new and innovative. This implies that we have been guided by the following less metaphorical considerations.

Fundamentally, we refrained from adopting an expert position suggesting that 'we' are the ones who represent Western/developed academia. It was also paramount for us to avoid creating yet another collection of contributions that would represent a different (from Western) point of view, for this would have undermined the idea of the world as one. Our approach aims to transcend the divisions mentioned

earlier by thinking beyond the dualisms between developed and developing, core and periphery, First World and (ex-)Second/Third World, North and South, and West and East. In this way, the issue is performative. This being noted, the marker of 'emergence' inevitably opens up spatial contexts to non-Western areas of interests. Albeit some scholars might not be domiciled in these respective geographies, which highlights the futility of any attempt to demarcate between 'here' and 'there'. As a result, when we task ourselves with creating the basis for new ways of thinking about emergence, it is vital to avoid traps of exotifying, romanticising or othering. Although this special issue covers contexts that are conventionally referred to as 'emerging', we insist on engaging with them as parts that make up a whole.

A more explicit approach to becoming a good host that would satisfy Derrida's criteria for genuine hospitality to some extent would be to adhere to an 'open-door' policy. Contributions could channel through, but we would not know their take on emergence. *ephemera* has always been open to submissions that are 'experimental modes of representation'. Yet, it is important to remain aware of the challenge of thinking beyond established formats and conventions. In preparing this issue, while keeping the doors open and remaining open to surprises, we witnessed apprehensions of the theme of emergence that made themselves comfortable within the offered space: a play, a comic and unconventional polemic. At the same time, it is crucial that openness is not confined to a particular *special* issue.

A final consideration relates to making decisions, which cannot be avoided. Merely succumbing to an 'anything goes' approach would risk devaluing all knowledge claims. This would also undermine Derrida's requirement for validation of innovative disruptive knowledge. Thus, although this is considered commonplace, we urge scholars who are ready to take part in our pursuit of 'genuine hospitality' to be truly self-reflective about the degree to which the field of enquiry is really open. In addition, despite the openness and multiple possibilities that the etymology of the word 'emergence' suggests, it is not simply a useful philosophical concept that helps clarify positions within critical research – it is also a political commitment. This is a thread and intention common to the contributions to this issue.

Overview of the contributions

Now that we have declared our epistemological and political commitments, it is time to see whether the contributions that found their way through our open doors have managed to make themselves feel at home. We are not going to introduce the contributions in the order of their appearance in this issue or in any other pecking

order. Instead, we are going to waltz between them, as they rather naturally share topics relevant for conversation, like good guests would at a drinks reception.

We move first to the buzz of legitimate discontent over the totalising liberal conceptions of 'emergence'. The article by Maitrayee Deka takes us geographically to the 'I' in a praised BRICS quintet and goes straight to the heart of the problem with economistic grand narratives of emergence, which always overlook the finer details. On the basis of her rich fieldwork material gathered from the 'labyrinth *like* bazaars' of Delhi, the author critically evaluates the nature and impact of the 'Make in India' programme. This top-down governmental programme designed to bolster India's manufacturing sector and attract foreign investments completely disregarded the knowledge and skills of the actors in the informal economy, who nurtured an ethos of turning obstacles inherent to Indian economy and society into opportunities. This was achieved through what Deka calls practices of 'tinkering' or 'improvisation' – the sort of grass-roots ingenuity reflective of a much more heterogeneous social world than the state pundits were willing to recognise. Their vision, instead, was that of an imposing lion (the logo of the 'Make in India' programme) that safeguards formalisation of the economy according to a particular imperative of neoliberal globalisation.

Srivatsan Lakshminarayan picks up on those zoological obsessions of policymakers and explains that roaring tigers, lions, confident elephants and other beasts are ways to package up a country and sell it on the global financial market. By providing a detailed analysis of macroeconomic policies, the ins and outs of 'haute finance' and various mediated discourses of growth and competitiveness, this contribution tackles the core mechanics of ruthless international competition. The main observation here is that in the post-reform India (and by no means it should be treated as a unique and isolated case) all the powerful actors are paddling a very narrow and instrumentally economic understanding of what constitutes emergence. By employing the work of Karl Polanyi for his critical analysis, Lakshminarayan warns that such parochialism sweeps through the diversity and humanness of collective histories and geographies and results in 'the non-reflexive advancement of performative growth over its subjective and substantial alternatives'.

Thus far we have got two very poignant accounts of how distinctively jejune, reductive and yet very potent narratives of emergence dictate the terms on which peoples and entire geographies have to advance. In fact, they even colonised the language with which we could tell different stories, articulate different understandings and conceive of an alternative world. Journalists, politicians, lay public, as well as academics have been so taken with this only existing way of

telling the stories of catching up with the developed world that any attempt to escape them is bound to face difficulties.

The grand narratives of growth and emergence that Deka and Lakshminarayan bring to our attention are extremely strong. In fact, they are so strong that they tend to become omnipresent, making it very difficult to build narratives that are not centred around them, regardless of whether those narratives aim to praise or critique. This is demonstrated in Matilda Dahl's contribution, which zooms in on the phenomenon of M-pesa mobile money in Kenya – a way to exchange money using mobile phones that existed even before Swish. Dahl experienced the technology first-hand while working in one of the mobile money booths, where she engaged with people within and around M-pesa. However, she does not wish to offer insights into the business's success nor provide a counter-narrative to it. Instead, she tells a *different* story, a story that is difficult to tell due to predefined ways of thinking and writing. In telling this story, she shares her thoughts and frustrations, but actively chooses not to make a knowledge claim, thereby leaving the story incomplete. This allows for the story to unfold in readers' minds in a myriad of ways. This introspective piece, which is infused with personal affect, testifies to the difficulties anyone willing to escape a well-rehearsed emergence narrative would encounter.

If emergence is to be taken outside the existing system, as we invited our contributors to do, then one would have to go beyond traditional tropes and conventional focal points. In this regard, Dahl's rejection of making a point about emergence may be seen as creating a crack that might open up the concept to other understandings. Bayo Akomolafe and Alnoor Ladha, in their piece, focus on precisely this crack and conceptualise emergence as the 'onto-epistemology of not-knowing'. In their provocative (by academic standards) article, the authors take inspiration from a wide range of sources, including popular culture, psychedelics, quantum physics and, notably, the work of Karen Barad. They reject the linear and calculable understanding of emergence as catching up in terms of economic growth via economic liberation. More importantly, they reject pre-conceived recipes for social change, suggesting that 'knowing' and claiming to know inevitably close off some potentialities and, consequently, emergence. Instead, they 'reimagine emergence as a radical indeterminacy that unsettles the grounds upon which the exclusionary discourse/practices of neoliberal expansionism as emergence are built'.

We read the approaches of Akomolafe and Ladha, and Dahl not as surrender or recognition of the futility of efforts to enact change, but as a call to keep our eyes open, regardless of whether we are trying to organise alternatives, undertake research or engage in other praxes. At the same time, it is as important to open

our eyes to and make sense of existing phenomena that may help to engender a better world.

Neera Singh brings to our attention the community forestry initiatives in Odisha, India, where affects, emotions and subjectivities shape up the practices of commoning. Being key to forest protection, they make commons a lot more than just an organisational form. She argues for thinking of the commons as 'affective socio-nature relations' and practices of commoning as a means of nurturing this relationship. Thus, if we open our eyes, it is actually possible to see manifestations of emergence that are already happening. Emergence, in Singh's study, can be found in the 'lived practices of dwelling in the environment and making it home', with human beings, too, being seen as 'emergent rather than fixed and immutable'.

Without undermining affect's potential to bring social transformation of the kind that many readers of *ephemera* would like to see, it is important to remember that affect can also be used to pursue capitalist goals or certain organisational agendas (see Karppi et al., 2016). This is highlighted in Nicolas Bencherki's piece (this issue), which examines the case of military wives, and how their self-organising attempts are either discouraged or inevitably claimed by the military organisation depending on how they fit with the organisation's image. The military is by no means an alternative organisation that threatens capitalist emergence. However, this example should stimulate thinking about any groups or organisations positioning themselves as alternative or anti-capitalist – regardless of whether they are collectives, cooperatives or commons. Even organisations with the 'best intentions' tend to put organisational interests at the fore by, for example, sanctioning open critique or appropriating individual actions for organisational ends. Such subordination of people makes even politically just alternatives problematic and is far from encouraging of social transformation.

Nicolas Bencherki uses the French philosopher Gilbert Simondon's concept of the pre-individual to rethink the relationship between organisations and their members. Traditionally, social sciences in general and organisation studies in particular have either considered organisations as the aggregation of individual actions (individualism) or systems that constitute their members (holism). With the concept of the pre-individual, Bencherki circumvents the dualism between holism and individualism, and suggests that we should pay attention to the pre-individual processes that constitute actions. To illustrate this approach, Bencherki offers an analysis of the documentary *Nomad's land*, focusing on the relationship between the army and a group of military wives. His analysis suggests that we should remain sensitive to the politics involved in individualisation processes and look at how actions are always configured by pre-individual forces.

The contributors to this issue have different takes on emergence, and trying to pinpoint the 'right' one is not our task. This openness, we suggest, hints in the direction of active politics. This can be best demonstrated by art, as art does not necessarily posit where or what the 'truth' is, but creates affect and invites people to think and feel. This issue offers a whole set of contributions devoted to art and artistic interventions, highlighting the centrality of art in imagining and acting for a different world. However, the art world itself is not without problems, with precarity, marketisation and, as Autonomous Artists Anonymous vividly demonstrate, the vicious circles of signification and commodification at the forefront from an early point in one's life as an artist. According to this collective, even explicit political statements on art always run the risk of being captured within them, feeding into capitalism's value creation. Emergence instead arises from the engagement with art itself and is seen as 'new forms, sensations and affects which operate outside and beyond signification and cognition, and which can provoke change, within us, between us and in how we live together, in and of the world'. As such, there is hope in art's radical potential via the refusal to commodify it or the affects it creates. This has clear political implications without screaming about politics.

We think this is exactly what the artistic contributions to this special issue do. In order to avoid overburdening them with our interpretations and in line with the understanding of emergence in this issue, we keep their descriptions brief. Brian Showalter Matlock's play on hierarchy and cooperation brings together thinkers and strands of thought from different times in dialogues on these themes or the lack thereof. Eileen Laurie's comic takes us to an academic conference in Rio (what an emergent destination!), with climate change happening in the background and jellyfish paying a visit. Both the play and the comic drive our attention toward particular themes – hierarchy and cooperation, and climate change – and are political in this sense. However, they do not point fingers in overly obvious ways, leaving the space for thinking and imagination, as well as emotional and affective responses from the readers.

We have not been fully able to stick to our promises, however, adding some interpretations and pointing some fingers. More broadly, despite claiming openness when introducing the contributions, we have still said quite a lot. After highlighting undecidedness and multiple potentialities, we have insisted on taking stances and acting politically. This speaks to the topic of Andrei Botez and Joel Hietanen's note, which reflects on the paradox associated with following Gilles Deleuze and explores the possibilities of enabling new thought to emerge. While Deleuze explicitly takes issue with the idea of one final truth and embraces the idea of thinking differently, the reception of his philosophy has turned him into what the authors call 'the "official philosopher", the oracle that speaks the non-truth'.

This poses a fundamental challenge for those who choose to draw inspiration from Deleuze's philosophy in their own scholarship, as one can only remain loyal to Deleuze's legacy by betraying it. These authors emphasise that thinking requires violence, and that without this violence new thought cannot emerge.

This point resonates with us. We are willing to open up the concept of emergence and host its different interpretations while also trying to think and make our voices heard. Violence has certainly been committed, but it is up to our readers to decide whether the sacrifice was worthwhile.

This special issue is rounded off by reviews of recent books that have been carefully tailored to the subject of the issue. They offer additional forays into a multifaceted understanding of emergence and augment the view presented in the issue's original contributions. Think of them as a book stall that you happen to notice while leaving a post-conference discussion.

Beata Sirowy's review of Santiago Zabala's *Why only art can save us* is another contribution highlighting art's key importance for social change. Drawing on Heidegger's thought and, to some extent, on critical social theory, it argues that art can foster a return to *Being*, which is currently dominated by technology and instrumental rationality. This *Being* would be in a non-reductionist perception of the world and human existence. Empty aestheticisation of art will not awaken it, but there is much more hope in art that creates a sense of emergency and an awareness that a different world is possible.

Marco Checchi reviews *Vulnerability in resistance* – an edited volume that is comprised of a series of essays that engage with the interplay between vulnerability and resistance. Those essays take us to a variety of geographical and political contexts. Departing from and being largely indebted to the work of Judith Butler, the contributions in this book make various attempts at rethinking the nature of vulnerability and its occurrences on a diverse political landscape. The book, as Checchi hints, can propel further reflections on what possibilities for resistance can be created and spotted once we realise that power is vulnerable too.

In Martin Parker's review of David Bell's thoroughly scholarly monograph *Rethinking utopia* we get to the question that is always on many sceptical lips when, like in this issue, different and ultimately better worlds are being argued for. Namely, is this not all a bit unrealistic? The answer is 'no', if we follow the argument of the book, which rejects the usual thinking that eventually renders utopia as a desire, as something which is never here and now, a 'nice idea' for which we are always longing. The point of the book, which this issue is

wholeheartedly willing to solidarise with, is that utopia is a collective practice of creating new forms of affect in the prefigurative present.

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