ephemera: *theory & politics in organization*

The effect of affect

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The effect of affect: Desire and politics in modern organizations
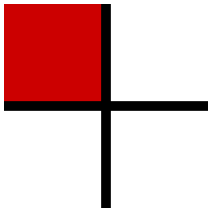
Kate Kenny, Sara Louise Muhr and Lena Olaison

This open issue consists of a number of contributions, which at first glance do not seem to be linked by any particular theme. Examining the different approaches to *theory & politics in organization* that are taken by the eclectic collection of papers featured here, however, it appears that the theoretical notion of the *affective* emerges again and again, as central to the politics of organization. The notion of affect is as such nothing new to *ephemera*. Worth noticing is for example Clough et al.'s (2007) careful theorization of 'affect-itself', which was part of a special issue dedicated to exploring immaterial and affective labor (see Dowling et al. 2007). Also worth mentioning is the special issue on theory of the multitude (see Virtanen and Vähämäki 2004). The pieces in this issue therefore nicely pick up on an on-going debate in *ephemera* and illustrate, each in their own way, how an attentiveness to affect helps us to deepen our understanding of the ways in which organization and the political intertwine. This can be seen in relation to the micro-practices of organizations; to the compelling ideologies that inscribe our workplace lives; and to the methods adopted by organization studies scholars.

Inspired by the collection of papers, the panel discussion and the book reviews that appear in this issue, we next introduce and situate the notion of the affective. We do this largely through Judith Butler's discussion of desire and politics, an approach that appears to resonate with many of the articles that follow. We hope that this represents a questioning and exploration of 'the effect of affect' in contemporary organizations, even beyond this collection.

Desire for the political: The notion of affect

The notion of affect parallels different authors' investigations into the operation of power and discourse. For many, desire and affect necessarily inscribe the operation of the political (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Stavrakakis, 2008; Žižek, 1989). These approaches have, in turn, informed a number of organization studies (e.g. Bojesen and Muhr, 2008; Driver, 2005; Harding, 2007; Hoedemaekers, 2009; Kenny, 2010; Stavrakakis, 2008), in which desire is treated as an integral part of the ways in which powerful norms and discourses come to be reproduced.

In the wider realm of social theory, Judith Butler's work is noted as being one of the more rigorous and theoretically rich examples of this approach to studying power (Hall, 2000). She marries poststructuralist insights from Michel Foucault with Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis, to arrive at a concept of identification that is at once power-laden, social and affective in nature. This prominent poststructural philosopher's contributions to the areas of feminism, queer theory, political philosophy and ethics are widely recognised (Lloyd, 2007).

In relation to the question posed here, Butler begins with Foucault's account of how power/knowledge relations come to be reproduced in everyday life. For Foucault such networks of power tend to propagate a view of the world that becomes naturalized over time, and this is sustained by the repeated practices of subjects; discourses are upheld by their re-enactment in everyday life at the 'local level':

> The rationality of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed (the local cynicism of power), tactics which, becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base of support and their condition elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems. (Foucault 1990: 94-95)

Of course, this idea of Foucault's has informed thousands of studies within the organization sphere; critical management perspectives centred around understanding discourses of work and capital from a Foucauldian perspective for the past twenty years (see for example Knights and Willmott, 1989). For the purposes of our argument, we wish to point to one aspect of this account of normative reproduction; Foucault notes that each citation of a given norm contains within it the potential for its alteration, but in an unpredictable way: a conception he refers to as the *alea* (the Latin word for 'dice') or chance (Foucault, 1981). Thus, as we engage with particular social norms in daily life, our actions contain the potential for imperfect repetitions of these norms, leaving them open to subversion and the emergence of unintended consequences. The question that Foucault leaves unanswered, in his consideration of *alea*, is precisely how and why this happens at the level of the subject (Foucault, 1981). This question has troubled many Foucauldian scholars including Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982), who conjecture that his untimely death in 1984 might have prevented the philosopher himself continuing the project of explicating the ongoing 'techne (technique) of the self', a project he had begun with gusto in his later life (Foucault, 1991: 348).

Butler's early work represents an explicit engagement with this question, by posing it against a backdrop of psychoanalysis, feminist theory and linguistics (1990; 1993). She comes to regard the psyche as providing a useful missing link:

> Foucault is notoriously taciturn on the topic of the psyche, but an account of subjection, it seems, must be traced in the turns of psychic life. (Butler, 1998: 18)

Thus she embarks upon developing such an account, exploring:

> how the formation of the subject involves the regulatory formation of the psyche, including how we might rejoin the discourse of power with the discourse of psychoanalysis. (Butler, 1998: 18)

Specifically, Butler's Foucauldian/psychoanalytic examination of processes of identity in this work grounds its insights in the concept of *turning*. Turning has its antecedents

in the philosophy of Hegel and the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan. Butler conceives of it as:

> the peculiar turning of a subject against itself that takes place in acts of self-reproach, conscience and melancholia that work in tandem with processes of social regulation. (Butler, 1998: 18-19)

There is an element of the unknown in this turning, an aspect that can neither be predicted nor explained (Butler, 1993: 122; 1998). It is this 'unknowingness', Butler conjectures, that enables power-knowledge relations to be re-enacted in ways that appear unpredictable and random: to yield the unintended consequences inherent in their reproduction. Central to this account of normative re-enactments are the concepts of recognition and affect. Embedded in these acts of 'self-reproach, conscience and melancholia' are processes of desire.

Drawing on Lacan among others, the notion that subjects require the address of the other for their constitution in social life is a recurrent feature of Butler's work (Lloyd, 1998). As does Lacan, Butler builds on the Hegelian claims that 'desire is always a desire for recognition' by others and that 'to persist in one's own being is only possible on the condition that we are engaged in receiving and offering recognition' (Butler, 2004: 31). Butler's contribution is to take a Foucauldian approach to this Hegelian argument. Firstly, we can only receive and offer recognition by *engaging with the norms* of recognition:

> If there are no norms of recognition by which we are recognizable, then it is not possible to persist in one's own being, and we are not possible beings; we have been foreclosed from possibility. (Butler, 2004: 31)

Subjection to such norms of recognition is thus essential to our persistence as beings. This dependency on the recognition of others locates us 'outside of ourselves', in a 'broader sociality' and 'this dependency is the basis of our endurance and survivability' (2004: 32). As Butler observes, our fundamental need for recognition even causes us to subject ourselves to norms that could cause us injury:

> Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, and because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially. (Butler, 1998: 104)

We are inescapably linked to those around us for acknowledgement (Hancock and Tyler, 2001; Roberts, 2005). Importantly, this shows the political nature of recognition: the way in which we feel compelled to identify with norms that may be injurious to ourselves or to those we care about. Central to this compulsion is the notion of affect. Spinoza's early influence on Butler's work contributed to her idea of the political importance of a passionate connection to others. In this work she finds that:

> a conscious and persistent being responds to reflections of itself in emotional ways, according to whether that reflection signifies a diminution or augmentation of its own possibility of future persistence and life. (Butler, 2004: 235)

In *Undoing Gender* Butler draws these ideas together to develop the concept of a 'liveable life' (Butler, 2004). We fundamentally require the recognition of a symbolic Other, which manifests itself in the presence and discourses of others, in order to

survive as subjects. Intense feeling, be it love or its keenly felt absence, is thus central for Butler in understanding subjection to normative ways of knowing. In apprehending our relations with the world and with each other, we must, she argues, recognize the:

> Passion and grief and rage (we feel), all of which tear us from ourselves, bind us to others, transport us, undo us, and implicate us in lives that are not our own, sometimes fatally, irreversibly. (Butler, 2004: 20)

For this reason, grief, rage and other powerful emotions are what inescapably link us to other people, to lives that are not our own. Butler's *passionate attachment* refers to her view that the passion by which we experience our embeddedness in other people makes us vulnerable to them, but likewise inescapably constituted by them. Through reading Lacan via Foucault and others, Butler's concept of passionate attachment is an explicitly political one; in addition to enabling our survival, this dependency we have on others also contributes to our own subordination. For these reasons, passionate attachment is inescapably ambivalent in its operation and must be viewed in the context of whatever power-laden matrix of discursive interests one finds oneself at a given juncture. For Butler, our inescapable, emotive dependence upon others forms a key aspect of the ways in which we subject ourselves to particular normative frameworks.

Desire, theory, politics and organization

Butler's critical, psychoanalytic perspective has lately helped authors understand the operation of the political within organizational settings (Driver, 2005; Harding, 2003; Hodgson, 2005; Kenny, 2009; Loacker and Muhr, 2009; Roberts, 2005). In a similar way, the centrality of desire and affect to the operation of power certainly accompanies the papers published in this open issue.

Sofia Laine describes activists from the *Free Hugs Campaign* at the World Social Forum in Belém who, through their practices, employ 'distinctive bodily techniques and styles' in order to occupy space in a conscious way, as part of transmitting their messages (243). In doing so, Laine firstly advocates a form of organization research methods that involves the researcher's 'feeling and learning' the people being studied, with her own body as well as through those around her. This implies a commitment to fully engaging with research participants, and draws attention to the affective nature of the research interaction. Such an embodied, 'passionate' engagement, if we deploy Butler's terms, will without doubt incorporate the problematic or harmful, as well as the joyous and rewarding. However, it may well yield a closer understanding of the particular context, political and otherwise, that pertains to research participants. Secondly, Laine demonstrates how new media such as video and digital methodologies can be deployed in studies that attempt to transmit the feeling of such 'passionate' engagement; conveying more deeply the phenomenon being researched.

For Alexander Styhre, a way of combining spoken language with literary techniques is needed among organization studies authors, something provided by French writer Celine's unique methods. Via Celine's 'three plains of engagement', Styhre proposes to free organization theory, making it more 'passionate, that is, an intense and expressive pursuit', approximating a 'post representational writing that reinstates pathos' (258).

Overall, his approach appeals to the affective experience of reading and writing organization. Moreover, the writer Celine explicitly avoids the temptation to make judgements on particular values or qualities that are being observed. Nor does he explain what he is seeing. Rather life is presented as it seems to sometimes appear: farcical and meaningless, blind to any social norms of behaviour or conduct. The 'affective effect' is one of dry and detached cynicism; standing back from the world as one sees it. What Styhre arrives at then, is a new literary style, or timbre within organization studies: one of cynicism and cool distancing. This affective stance has, for Styhre, political implications; he argues that too much is lost in searching for inner meanings in phenomenological approaches to studying the social sciences that are frequently adopted; detachment is preferred.

Oliver Mallett and Robert Wapshott address an empirical problem: the notion of how one works in an organization with which one disagrees. In this article, the idea posed above emerges: that processes of identification with power are infused with affective relations. How, wonder the authors, do people cope with the pain and confusion of being employed by a firm that is apparently doing disagreeable things, but which one cannot leave? In exploring the ways in which employees experience such 'self conflict' (271), they propose a narrative approach to identity in order to help make sense of peoples' experiences. To illustrate their theoretical contribution to debates within organization studies, one that draws on Ricouer, the authors deploy film as a device that enables the writer to express 'dynamic, complex' processes of identity work. In short, the authors enable a more nuanced way of illustrating the pain and struggle inherent to conflicting work roles, and demonstrate the richness of the proposed theoretical approach.

For Sam Dallyn, the concept of ideological investment is key to the central arguments in his paper. He is concerned with the association between the concept of innovation and the ideology of financialization. Situating innovation as a financial 'buzzword' he invokes the excitement of a new discursive shift among people who use it, implying that there is something compelling about the spread of this phrase through the social, in particular in the government and university sectors upon which he focuses (289). We know from other authors that ideologies carry affective pulses (Stavrakakis, 2010; Glynos, 2010). Relatedly, in developing her approach to understanding the political, Butler draws on Althusser, the theorist that informs Dallyn's views on ideology. For Butler, psychoanalysis can help us to understanding exactly the moment of interpellation described by Althusser; what happens when the subject is called by power and 'turns around' in recognition. As Butler notes however, affective investments in powerful discourses can be negative, and Dallyn illustrates this with his account of how this pervasive buzzword 'masks' and ostensibly increases problematic 'processes of commercialisation and financialisation' (289). He invokes the pain of the financial crisis, arguing that this is a context that forces us into a moment of decision; we must rethink the content of the term innovation immediately, he argues, because its current links with the narrow pursuit of profit are, simply, contributing to an implosion of the capitalist system. Moreover, the affective timbre of Dallyn's appeal is clear, he concludes his piece by demanding transformation, now! Dallyn calls for a shift in our understanding of innovation, to one that emphasises the transformative nature of the

process. He argues that this might some day move us towards a form of innovation that incorporates social justice and equality.

Interestingly, this desire for change, and resulting demand for transformation, appears in the panel discussion included in this issue (308). In the course of the conversation, a former practitioner asks, 'what is now to be done'? She demands that the academics in front of her suggest some form of change: an emancipatory project. This desire for answers is evaded and rebutted by others throughout the discussion. Panelists argue that it is preferable and more helpful to reflect upon the issues than to demand answers now. This evasion of the impetus for change is interesting. In relation to Dallyn and the panelists, it is possible that the necessity for 'doing something' arises in the moment of crisis: the moment of no return. Perhaps in the context of the panel, this moment has not yet arrived, and so this desire is deemed irrelevant. More generally, the panel discussion centres on the issue of power and the body, and on how particular discursive forces act to compel people into the regulation of their physical selves. We hear how techniques of this nature increasingly draw upon the affective, and how responses to such techniques are often infused by desire. For example, the discussion begins with Torkild Thanem noting that the question, 'what might I hope for?' is a much more seductive point of departure for discussing Critical Health Care Management, than 'what ought I to do?' The former question resonates with Butler's dilemma of how to construct a viable account of oneself in a situation of limited self-knowledge (Butler, 2005). For her, the explicit ethical context of 'what might I hope for?' becomes a much more relevant question than impossible questions about 'what I ought to do'. In this way, notions of the affective and desire (for freedom, for improvement) underscore the tone of the discussion. This is seen again when panelists move on to debate more explicitly the increasing politicization of the body, for example in relation to whether obesity can be seen as a political matter.

In the first book review, Philip Roscoe reads Jones and Spicer's *Unmasking the Entrepreneur*. The theme of affect again emerges; psychoanalysis and Lacan's conception of desire are, among others, important frameworks for Jones and Spicer's project. Their analysis shares similarities with Dallyn's discussion of innovation as the new 'buzzword', a connection Dallyn himself makes in his paper. According to Roscoe, the authors 'set about producing a much needed critical account of the entrepreneur and its place in contemporary society' (319). Roscoe further writes that 'at the heart of their account lies an unspoken understanding that linguistic categories have a real and defining power over material outcomes. For Jones and Spicer, a reconstruction of the entrepreneurial enterprise must therefore come through a critique and rebuilding of the language that surrounds entrepreneurship' (322). This project has, Roscoe concludes, not come to its end with this book. More work and additional accounts are needed – from Jones and Spicer, but furthermore from the many perspectives on entrepreneurship that Roscoe opens up towards the end of his review. This must, he argues, occur before we can count on any transformation towards a more socially productive entrepreneurship, something many seem to be longing for.

Leon Tan gives an account of Brinkerhoff's *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement* in the second book review. Brinkerhoff's study provides a great variety of cases convincingly describing how diaspora communities use Internet

technologies for social organizing. Also in this book, according to Tan, passion and desire are driving forces for change. He believes that transmitting feelings is a crucial part of the case descriptions, a point that parallels Laine's arguments (in this issue). Tan writes that Brinkerhoff 'attempts to capture not only the semantic content of online interactions between diasporans, but also their emotional reactions. Emotions are, after all, the basis for affective bonds that motivate families and communities to maintain and nurture ongoing connections across the Internet after separation from each other by migration across geopolitical borders' (325). Tan is convinced to some degree but returns several times to the general difficulty with social analysis, particularly with regard to processes of identification and social formations, something he feels could have been dealt with more thoroughly in the book.

Overall therefore, while we do not wish to force some sort of consistency across the contributions in this issue, it is interesting that the theme of affect and power appears to emerge as a common theme among them. Viewing the issue as a whole, perhaps we are reminded about the necessity of an attentiveness to affect in the study of the politics of organization, well expressed in the following quote from Butler's work:

> We are, from the start, given over to an other: this makes us vulnerable to violence, but also to another range of touch, a range that includes the eradication of our being at the one end, and the physical support for our lives, at the other. (Butler, 2004: 23)

This excerpt encapsulates the primacy of affect in Butler's account of subjection to norms. We are given over to those around us such that other people are, fundamentally, the undoing of us, and simultaneously the making of us.

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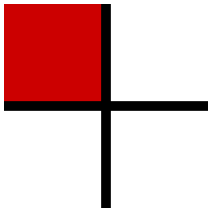Harding, N. (2003) *The social construction of management*. London: Routledge.

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Grounded globalizations of transnational social movements: Ethnographic analysis on *Free Hugs Campaign* at the World Social Forum Belém 2009*

Sofia Laine

abstract

This article shows one way to study radical social movements in transnational political meetings through bodily and emotionally grounded global ethnography. Using the *Free Hugs Campaign* and how it appeared in the World Social Forum Belém 2009 as an example, the writer shows how the use of one's own body, combined with the visual and digital methodologies when conducting global ethnographic research, may be a useful combination for the global social movement research. The article states that a (radical social) movement is understood when the body of the researcher has grasped it. The article also states that the global ethnographer would benefit from using his/her own video clips like quotations: to illuminate the situation to the reader, to support the arguments of the work in which it is being used, and to provide direct information about the field under study. Making the video available in the same media that the global social movement uses, the researcher will deepen his/her understanding of how the global social movement uses the global public sphere (here, the YouTube) to build a global movement.

This article aims to show how global ethnography is a useful approach to the investigation of global social movements. In this kind of an approach the researcher's own grounded knowledge from the field is combined with digital information on the transnational social movement: its actors and its actions. The focus of this paper is on methodology. By using the *Free Hugs Campaign* as an example of global social movement and grounding it in the World Social Forum (henceforth WSF) Belém 2009, the article shows why global ethnography needs to be done at multiple-sites, visually (including digital ethnography) and with emphasis upon the importance of emotion and embodiment.

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In this paper my perspective on social movements is performative. As Ron Eyerman (2005: 43) argues, social movements can be seen as strategic political performances, which are presented in public to some addressed audience. Methodologically, when the social movement is analysed as a performance, the focus is on corporeality, presence and the pre-discursive (especially vision, embodiment and emotions). As Eyerman puts it:

> Performance theory gives central place to emotion and emotions, as both actors and audiences must be moved if a performance is successful. The adoption of performance theory allows us to better address questions concerning what happens when people enter a movement, how this affects their actions and the actions of others, and to ask how social movements move. (*ibid.*)

When thinking performatively one needs to focus on the data itself and on the personal experience from the field (Gergen and Jones, 2008: 14). My aim is to explore how to grasp those activists who employ distinctive bodily techniques and styles 'to occupy space while expressing political messages, visions, and identities', as the work of Jeffrey Juris (2008: 329) puts it. In addition to this, methodologically, the performative also refers to the researcher's different bodily techniques and styles as a means of understanding and gaining knowledge about global social movements. As Lis Engel (2008: 8) describes:

> This means that we, as embodied qualitative researchers, must attune ourselves to the event as openly and fluidly as possible, and then express the felt meaning in relation to human practices and possibilities through embodied scenic description, inviting a critical dialogue and embodied understanding in relation to human practices, possibilities and existential meaning.

The structure of this paper is as follows. I begin the journey from global ethnography by stating the importance of combining multi-sited, digital and visual methods within the researcher's own grounded experiences. After that I will take the reader into my 'field' and reconstruct the moment wherein I experienced the 'free huggers'. I then continue following 'the Thing' (i.e. *Free Hugs Campaign*) to YouTube and reflect upon my findings in the light of visual and digital ethnography. This will lead us to the methodological core of this article wherein I argue for the importance of analysing radical global social movements from an embodied and emotional perspective in order to capture *a local collective self-presentation* as well as from the social media sites such as YouTube where *a global collective self-presentation* of the movement is performed (cf. Eyerman, 2005: 50). As I will show, the key to the bodily knowledge lies in what is called *kinaesthetic empathy* (Gieser, 2008; Sklar, 1994; Ylönen, 2003) – an emphasis, which has not yet been made within the literature.

Global ethnography

What makes ethnography global for Michael Burawoy (2000a: 29) is its 'extension from micro to macro, from local to extralocal, from process to forces'. In research practices the situation in 'the field', at a specific time and place, acts as a key-event for the researcher to extend his/her perspective from the local to the global, by, for instance, taking the researcher to certain web sites, e.g. to YouTube, as was the case in my research. Global ethnography is therefore a multi-sited ethnography (*ibid.*: 30; on multi-sited ethnography see Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995). Although the single moment

analysed in this article took place in the Youth Camp in the WSF Belém (2009), my previous ethnographic field work in the WSF Bamako (2006) and the WSF Nairobi (2007) had already pre-shaped my knowledge of this kind of an event. Transnational political meetings are crucial spaces for global ethnographers since they frequently bypass the nation state, and their ideas adopt a worldly focus (see also Burawoy, 2000a: 33). The WSF is an interesting site for global ethnographical research, therefore, as it is the biggest worldwide autonomous regular platform for civic activism, gathering transnational activists and social movements together in the same space for a limited but crucial period.

Burawoy (2000b: 341) spurs global ethnographers on to construct perspectives on globalization from below, and he calls this kind of approach *grounded globalizations*, where the researcher sets out from real experiences in order to explore their global contexts. In this study I had returned from the WSF Belém to my quiet office with hours of video and interview recordings, fieldwork notes, photos, documents, brochures, newspapers and memories. Just a few minutes of the total trip and just 17 seconds out of 6 hours of video recordings made me open YouTube and start to explore the *Free Hugs Campaign*, as it was one of the strongest bodily experiences during the forum days. In the first place, I strongly just followed my intuition, when trying to make a sense of *the Thing*. While conducting multi-sited ethnography George E. Marcus (1995: 105-111) sees that the researcher may follow the people, *the Thing*, the metaphor, the plot or story, the life or biography – or the conflict. In this case I follow *the Thing* that is the *Free Hugs Campaign*. For Marcus *the Thing* mainly stands for material objects even though he also mentions world music and world beat mapping as potential would-be examples. The terms 'global civil society' and 'global social movements' started to appear at the time of Marcus' writing (Kaldor, 2003: 583). One of these movements, groups, networks and organisations that engage in a global or transnational public debate is the *Free Hugs Campaign*. This study weaves together these various compelling strands.

I hence agree with Burawoy (2001) and Gille and Ó Riain (2002) when they insist that global ethnography requires a multi-sited form of research. Relief from the local setting allows the researcher to more readily follow *the Thing* (Marcus, 1995: 106-108). Nevertheless, what I have found missing from these sorts of multi-sited settings is an effort to connect to issues within digital ethnography, on the one hand, and embodiment, on the other. This is all the more surprising since the movements themselves use such a 'dual politics', i.e. they develop new technological practices at the same time as challenging dominant cultural codes of neo-liberal globalization and political participation (Juris, 2008: 289-290). Secondly, it seems that global ethnography is strongly linked to the digital, especially virtual world. The new social media tools – that have also generated YouTube communities – link the people (here the 'free huggers') all around the world. The global ethnographer should therefore carefully research these virtual sites and other information related to the issue. The virtual world is not enough for the global ethnographer: the researcher needs to have grounded experience of *the Thing*, he/she needs to have the embodied experience of *the Thing* from some location at some certain time.

Visual ethnography becomes increasingly important in this kind of a global ethnographic setting as video clips and photos ground the study by showing the fieldwork site (i.e. where the embodiment and grounding took place) to the readers. They are samples of the location and time, of what the context was and what happened there – from one perspective.

## Free Hugs in the WSF Belém as a starting point for the study

The ninth World Social Forum (WSF) was held in Brazil in the city of Belém, located next to the Amazon region, between January 27 and February 1, 2009. It was my third experience of these huge mass events where tens of thousands of participants strongly believing that 'another world is possible' had organised hundreds of events – seminars, workshops, exhibitions, stands and performances – to show their work, to build networks for future actions and get visibility to their missions. From the beginning of my study, I have been focusing on the youth participation and intergenerational dynamics of the 'open meeting place' as the WSF is often named (see more e.g. WSF Charter of Principles; Caruso, 2007: 147-197). Although there is always in the WSF a special youth activism location called 'Youth Camp', not all the young participants stay in or visit the camp, and vice versa, not all the 'campers' are young. Still, almost all the previous studies focusing on the young people's participation in the WSF analyse the Youth Camp (mainly Juris, 2005, 2008; Juris and Pleyers, 2009; Morrison, 2006; Nunes, 2005; Pleyers, 2005, 2008; Wood, 2008). What is also common to these studies is the notion that the Youth Camp has traditionally been marginal, located in the periphery of the venue site but at the same time it has been the most creative in its practices. Most importantly there has been a plurality of the participatory forms of political exchange (Juris, 2005: 261) as well as alternative forms of political, social and cultural production taking place. Despite all its innovations the Youth Camp has remained marginal, nearly invisible to the main actors in the International Council – in the strong hands of the 'old political generation' (Nunes, 2005: 295).

Picture 1: Main street in the UFRA district, cutting the Youth Camp area, in the WSF Belém 2009. (Photo: Sofia Laine, compare also to Juris 2008: 237)

In Belém the forum site was located in two different university districts that clearly disconnected the grassroots activists from the cosmopolitan activists. The latter mostly had their sessions in the seminar rooms on the UFPA district, in an area evocatively entitled 'Professional Rooms'. Here the invited speakers, mostly middle-aged men, were giving their speeches for hours in front of the

closely listening audience, disturbed only by the sounds of the security helicopters. It was the 'other' university district UFRA[1] where environmental and indigenous issues, as well as the Youth Camp, were placed. In order to get to any of the activities (meeting rooms, stages, auditoriums, etc.) in the UFRA district, everyone needed to pass the Youth Camp or take a boat from the UFPA. Not only hundreds of young people but also whole families of the different tribes of indigenous people mostly coming from the Amazon region had carried tents and blankets to the camp site. As most of the WSF participants preferred to walk through the UFRA area, there was a steady stream of people walking on the main street crossing the Youth Camp (see Picture 1 and Video 1). This had an effect on the dynamics of the camp: in the daytime some of the young people were selling jewellery (most of it which they made themselves), whilst some of the indigenous people offered traditional skin paintings for a small fee (see Picture 1).
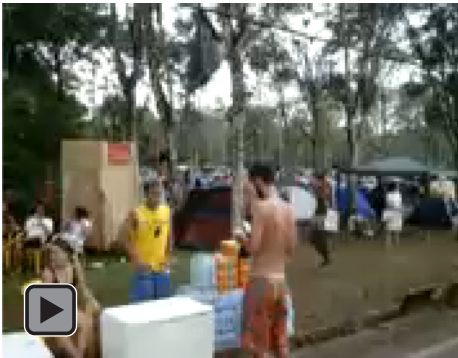
Video 1. Source: YouTube.

The division of UFPA's 'adult and other professionals' and UFRA's 'young and other radicals' goes hand-in-hand with Michal Osterweil's (2005: 23) definitions of the two different logics and ways of participating in the forum. The first group Osterweil (*ibid.*) calls 'universlizing globalist' – this is a figure who doesn't let go of the *form* of old political categories but simply renames them. What were visible in the UFRA were the actions of the 'Place-based globalist' who challenges the mono-cultural logics in all aspects of life by inventing new political forms and objectives that might be considered micro-political and that can quite literally only be addressed in-place (*ibid.*).

When I was in the UFRA observing the Youth Camp on a heavily-raining afternoon – looking after the actions of the 'place-based globalists' and shooting pictures under my umbrella – I was able to '*catch a Thing*' (Marcus, 1995). It was rush hour: when the last sessions had ended and hundreds of people were walking to the main entrance. When reaching the Youth Camp area the street was suddenly blocked and I recognised a big sign written in Portuguese but with a Spanish translation: 'Free Hugs'. The wet campers hugged everyone who tried to reach the entrance gates, in the spirit of the globally spread *Free Hugs Campaign*. At the same time the tropical wind carried a sweet aroma from the nearby canopy where a bunch of youngsters were cocooned. 'Welcome to the Woodstock of the 21st century!' was the first hilarious thought[2] after getting soaked under my umbrella. Without further reflections upon this situation I started to shoot a video of the huggers with my pocket digital camera.

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1   See UFRA and UFPA districts from Google map: http://maps.google.com.br/maps/ms?hl=pt-BR&gl=br&ie=UTF8&oe=UTF8&msa=0&msid=111999244558643048715.00045c60c73c39acba68 0 marked with lilac colour.

2   See also Conway (2008: 60).

Video 2: Free Hugs at the WSF Belém 2009. Author's own video.

As is evident from the video clip, I got my second hug while recording. In addition to the celebration and craziness of the moment I also realised there was something that touched me. The hugging felt like a support after the 'lonely' observation walk. The place was crowded of course, but I was walking by myself and didn't have any dialogue with anyone else. The action of hugging told me that we all are on the same side, all the participants of the WSF are together here, and no one is alone (see also Eyerman, 2005: 46). I had not experienced anything similar in the previous WSFs – and I had not faced the *Free Hugs Campaign* before, though I was aware of its existence. As everything happened so suddenly, and since the activists were in the middle of executing their action, I didn't interview them. It was precisely this seeming limitation, which served as an opportunity to re-direct the analysis and methodological innovations to the non-linguistic, i.e. visual, digital, motional and emotional, dimensions (see also Yazicioglu and Firat, 2008).

The importance of embodiment, rootedness to the location and time has been described by Paolo Freire (2005: 41-42) as a condition for radicalism. Here I use the term radicalism as a general term for those favouring or seeking political reform or revolution. In order for a researcher to understand radicalism, s/he needs to embody it. As will be demonstrated below, this need for embodiment in turn results in the need to use alternative (even radical) methodologies. Jefrey Juris (2008) captures a sense for this double-bind with recourse to his notion of 'militant ethnography':

> Militant ethnography thus refers to ethnographic research that is not only politically engaged but also collaborative, thus breaking down the divide between researcher and object [...] Furthermore, militant ethnography also generates embodied and affective understanding. As anyone who has participated in mass direct actions or demonstrations can attest, such events produce powerful emotions, involving alternating sensations of anticipation, tension, anxiety, fear, terror, solidarity, celebration and joy. (*ibid*.: 20-21)

What makes the Free Hugs episode in the WSF Belém more than a single social protest is that it unites with thousands of similar activities around the globe – and this way it lasts longer than a single protest and can be called as a social movement (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009: 3; Opp, 2009: 41). Social movements are often described as collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, powerholders, or cultural beliefs and practices (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009: 4). Single actions of social movements promote solidarity among the activists, seek to reach broader publics for

their causes through the media and gain support from third parties (Owens and Palmer, 2003: 337). Sidney Tarrow defines transnational activists as

> people and groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in contentious political activities that involve them in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts. What makes them different from their domestic counterparts is their ability to shift their activities among levels, taking advantage of the expanded nodes of opportunity of a complex international society. (2005: 29)

What is common to social movements is their aim to reach publicity – not necessarily in the mainstream media but in other public spheres as well, such as different internet sites. *Free Hugs Campaign* is a transnational social movement that uses the new social media, especially YouTube channel to sustain collective actions around the globe. In the case of the *Free Hugs Campaign* it becomes clear why it is necessary to look at social movements from three different angles: as collective social participation; as movements of the bodies and as emotional movements. First, and the most analysed dimension in the international relations, are *the social movements* and their collective political participation in the different events. The *Free Hugs Campaign* is a transnational social movement, a global phenomenon, spreading through the internet, especially through YouTube. Many participants in the WSF Belém were already familiar with the *Free Hugs Campaign* when they saw it on the venue site. The actors of this transnational social movement are identifiable as they carry a 'Free Hugs' sign with them – that is also visible from my video clip. The 'Free Hugs' sign is a collective action frame (Tarrow, 2005: 61) that the movement organisers have constructed to attract supporters, signal their intentions and gain media attention.

Researching free hugs at multiple sites

The *Free Hugs Campaign* started as a one-man-project in Australia, in the city of Sydney, in the year of 2004. The mission of 'Juan Mann', a young adult, was to 'reach out and hug a stranger to brighten up their lives' as explained on the official web page of the *Free Hugs Campaign.*[3] The story continues:

> In this age of social disconnectivity and lack of human contact, the effects of the *Free Hugs campaign* became phenomenal. As this symbol of human hope spread across the city, police and officials ordered the *Free Hugs campaign* BANNED. What we then witness is the true spirit of humanity come together in what can only be described as awe inspiring.

Such a local phenomenon went global because of YouTube – a video of Juan Mann and his *Free Hugs campaign* was posted in September 2006 and very quickly became very popular all around the world. In response, people in Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa, North and South America started to imitate the campaign, to shoot similar videos of their actions, and to upload them to YouTube. The movement travelled across the planet as far as the WSF Belém, where I experienced it. Now the original video has been viewed over 70 million times and there are thousands[4] of similar videos from Uganda,

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3   [www.freehugscampaign.org].

4   There are almost 6400 videos in YouTube tagged with 'freehugs' and most of these are videos from different Free Hugs demonstrations around the world.

San Francisco, Helsinki, Tokyo etc. including my own recording. My work then continued in Finland in the form of visual and digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008). Why I chose this particular video and the Free Hugs clip from my video data bank for further analysis was also an ethical choice. Videos are ethically complicated data, even when shot in a public district of some positively tuned action. The 'free huggers' were having their campaign in the WSF Belém to get some positive visibility for the campaign. But not all people like to get hugged. Within ethnographic work, it should be kept in mind that not everything can be literally translated into text (Holm, 2008). To bring the richness of the field in front of the reader's eyes, one should remember that the text can itself be a performance of the research process: a collage, a montage, with photographs, blank spaces, poems[5] and much more (Denzin, 2001: 29). Video is particularly malleable in this regard and should therefore be combined with other forms of text (Pink, 2007a). Film and photography is essentially no more subjective or objective than written texts (Pink, 2007a: 1) – viewers will always bring their own cultural perspective to the images presented to them (Heider, 2006 in Pink, 2007b: 251).

Technological development has profoundly effected the techniques used in social research. Dhijraj Murthy (2008: 837) encourages us to widen beyond personal and physical ethnography field work into digital ethnography. This can be done, for example, by analysing videos stored in YouTube, which have a connection to one's own research or even by uploading one's own videos to YouTube. This method has been used extensively within Kansas State University's 'Digital ethnography on YouTube project'[6] led by Michael Wesch. Adam Monroe[7] from Wesch's research group argues that YouTube has created a global forum where anyone with internet access can communicate with anyone else, across any distance. He sees the *Free Hugs Campaign* forming a global community by sharing and commenting upon its videos on YouTube. YouTube is the third most popular website on the internet[8] and therefore a strong actor in the global media. YouTube changes the power structures in the media world as its use is free of charge and it is free for the users to download videos to the site, comment others' videos with text or a video message. This way YouTube is also much more interactive media than the traditional mass media (i.e. newspapers and the TV programmes), creating new forms of self-consciousness and self-reflection (Wesch, 2008). The official Free Hugs video was for months the most watched video on YouTube. Last, what is also important to notice here is the fact that the young generations are the most active[9] users of YouTube – they are also the most active in

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5   Visit the biographical note where I reflect from the performative perspective my fieldwork experiences in the EU Presidency Youth Event in 2006 (see more Laine and Gretschel, 2009; Laine, 2009).

6   [http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/].

7   [http://mediatedcultures.net/youtube.htm].

8   [http://mostpopularwebsites.net/].

9   The 'active' refers here to multidimensional use of the YouTube site and I refer here to the statistics of the Sysomos' study that looked at the demographics of bloggers who embed YouTube videos on their own sites (i.e. blogs). In general, 20-to-35-year-old bloggers embed most of the videos (57%), followed   by   teenagers   (20%)   and   bloggers   over   35   (20%). [http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/whats_hot_on_youtube_and_who_is_embedding_those_vi.p hp].

organising the *Free Hugs Campaign*s around the world that is visible from the YouTube videos, which was also the case in the WSF Belém.

As YouTube is loaded with similar hugging episodes from all over the world, my act of uploading the short clip can be seen as 'a collaboration with social actors in the production of visual representations' (Banks, 1995). By using the video clips I give a voice and space for the movements once again: showing how politics is played, danced and acted out. 'Image is not the reality but at least it is its perfect *analogon*', as Roland Barthes (1977: 17) describes. By using photographs and videos my aim is to inform the reader, to paint the scene where the embodiment happened, to surprise the reader's emotions and to let the object (in the picture or in the video) speak to the viewers (Barthes, 2000). Photographs and videos can be performative as well. Performance in this context can be seen both as a form of investigation and as a form of representation (Holm, 2008: 2). By placing my video on YouTube, I became part of the social movement I research. The research process can therefore be even viewed as a sort of co-performance with participants. My video, and by extension this paper, are now part of the global performance of the *Free Hugs Campaign*.

Kinaesthetic analysis

In this article, I want to underline the fact that *the movements of bodies* is central to the strategies of certain social movements. Researchers must take issues of embodiment into account: changes of localizations of bodies, body parts and objects or changes in their extensions all become crucial in this regard (Parviainen, 2008: 5). Within this particular study, hugs are political actions, political communications that might be captured best on camera.

A hug is a form of physical intimacy, one of the most common human signs of love, affection and support, that is practiced without stigma around the globe. The origin of the word 'hug' is unknown but its early meaning in the sixteenth century was similar to German 'hegen, to foster or cherish' (Davis, 1983: 248). Hugging is also used as a form of healing (e.g. Davis, 1983; Weze, et al. 2005). And we shouldn't forget the tree huggers and the other forms of more political hugs, where the Hugs for Haiti campaigns are one of the newest forms. In the Hugs for Haiti campaign the hugs are given for the fundraising in the catastrophe aid, i.e. the immaterial good is used to increase material charity. As I have traced this kind of campaigns at least from Finland and the US, it's already evident that the political hugging is appearing in new forms around the world[10]. The analysis of a motion has also to do with the language question. Not all the participants in the transnational political meetings can express their thoughts fluently in English or other major languages used in the event. Therefore, the common body language can even have an increased significance in these kinds of spaces: participants can communicate using transnationally well-known body language.

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10 In addition to this, on YouTube it's possible to find a video where two young men are giving Free Hugs, Exclusive Hugs for $1 and Hugs for Haiti. [See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlNJNuxjJNM].

> The notion of movement can be used as both verb and noun, a performance perspective, however, calls attention to an experience of moving and being moved and to the centrality of ritual and the emotion fusing of identities. (Eyerman, 2005: 45)

I agree with Parviainen (2008: 7) that 'within our capabilities of moving and understanding movement, we are an inherent part of the moving world, moving and being moved'. Movements, especially when situated in the transnational political meetings, are strategic. These events are needed for the performers to question our embodied limits of morality (Parviainen, 2008: 3). They also give light to the vulnerability of the body as a political tool in activist work.

> There is a close etymological connection between the words 'motion' and 'emotion'. Movement relationships and interactions with other humans, animals, places or objects, even fleeting ones, are charged with affect and emotions. (Parviainen, 2008: 5)

A dancer, a dance therapist and a researcher Maarit Ylönen (2003: 60) has studied the memory of her own body as a methodology to handle the knowledge from the ethnographic field work: how to study intimacy, touch and motion and the understanding of these three. The knowledge that rises from the body memory is not logical or rational but marginal where the past and the present are simultaneously presence – strongly combined with emotions. The key to my kinaesthetic analysis was Ylönen's concept of *mirroring*, wherein one's own body not only imitates the movements of the others' but communicates with them: body tunes to the surrounding energy, to the movements of others by using a *kinaesthetic empathy*. Here the empathy is a specific way to recognize other people that becomes evident from the emphatic body stands – here by hugging a stranger who wants to hug me as part of his/her political mission. This kind of empathy is important in order to understand something that is strange to the researcher him/herself. Kinaesthetic empathy is a bodily attitude that enables identifying with the other (here the 'free huggers') and reaching the understanding of something unfamiliar that the researcher hasn't experienced before (Gieser, 2008: 299; Parviainen, 2002; Ylönen, 2003: 77).

The body is a site of both oppression and resistance (Parviainen, 2008: 3). My hugging act – as well as the recording – was signals of empathy and support for the 'free huggers' campaign. Their action healed the 'oppression of loneliness' that I felt just before facing their action. We communicated with our bodies to each other. The closeness and the supportive atmosphere around the action where joining in the common radical movements (here the hugs) raised a pleasure of being. Researchers' own body is a challenging research tool from the perspectives of credibility and transferability (Ylönen, 2003: 63). The video recording may be helpful while showing the moment of the analysed actions – at least from one angle. If the traditional mass demonstrations are left aside, the use of body as a core of the argumentation is a strategy mainly conducted by the youth and young adults (see also Laine, 2009). This has to do with the western tradition of the controlled bodies and how the civilization equals to self controlling your own body image. The older we get the better we have learned what the culturally accepted forms of moving our bodies are (Ylönen, 2003: 69). The actions of the social movements raise emotions both among the actors and the observers (Jasper, 2009: 182–183). Helena Flam (2005: 19) has argued that when social

movements wish to shock the onlookers out of their everyday routine, they offer at a same time a radically different emotional re-framing of reality. She continues:

> As challengers of the *status quo*, social movements re-interpret specific aspects of social reality, call for new, obligatory emotions and feeling rules and wish to draw on these to mobilize individuals for collective action whose aim it is achieve social change. (Flam, 2005: 19)

The moving body is strongly connected to emotions but also to mind. In the Free Hug Campaign the body movements have a clear message, a goal and a direction. While raising emotions it has also an intellectual and a strategic side: young participants of this social movement need to plan their action beforehand – and here they need a common spoken language and common understanding of how to carry out their action. And if they want to contribute to the global Free Hugs community they need to decide who will video record the action, edit the data and place the end product to YouTube.

Summary and conclusion

We might use the terms *expression*, *experience*, *recognise*, *deepen* and *communicate* (Engel, 2008: 26–28; Shreeves, 2006: 238–239) to illustrate the different phases of the research process outlined above, a research process which can be viewed as a progression along two full circles. First there was the *expression* in the WSF Belém of the Free Huggers that I *experienced* and shortly after *recognised* as meaningful. Back in my office I *deepened* my understanding of the global social movement and *communicated* my recording to the media that the Free Huggers use (i.e. YouTube). At the same time the same video recording in the YouTube is a new *expression*. To place the video in the YouTube was a new *experience* and by using the same methods as the actors of the global social movement I could *recognise* and *deepen* my understanding of how the global social movement use the global public sphere (here, the internet) to build a global movement. And here, in this research article my aim is to *communicate* the research process, to state that in order to understand the second circle, one needs the grounded experience of *the Thing's* expression – or performance – from the first circle.

> There is no original reality which casts its shadows across the reproduction. There are only interpretations and their performances. (Denzin, 2001: 30)

The *Free Hugs Campaign* was analysed here from the performance theory perspective that underlines the links between the mobilisation, emotions and embodiment and turns the attention to the choreography of protest (Eyerman, 2005: 49). As the *Free Hugs Campaign* is a global social movement, its strategy aims to support both the local and global presence: *a local collective self-presentation* was the single act I faced in the WSF Belém and it is visible from my recording and *a global collective self-presentation* that can be viewed by watching the Free Hugs videos from the YouTube. Both collective self-presentations are part of the process of collective identity formation (Eyerman, *ibid*.: 50). What I have been arguing in this article is that ethnography needs to use diverse methodologies (here body knowledge, video and YouTube) and different knowledge/s (kinaesthetic empathy) in order to capture 'the kinaesthetic intelligence' and 'bodily knowledge' that is inseparable from contemporary political argumentation. Body motions and emotions root the global social movements in the place and time

while the shared ideology and identity of the global social movement spreads and connects the members of the movement in YouTube videos. I have argued that global ethnography needs to be grounded (i.e. embodied emotional experience of *the Thing* from certain space and time), multi-sited (shows the similarities and differences), visual and digital (global virtual communities). The video recorded by the researcher of the activists' action adds up with the activists' own videos on YouTube and concretely shows to the readers the location and time, how *the Thing* appeared when the researcher faced it. The visual and digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008) convinced me of their importance when conducting global ethnographic research on the radical social movements. The Free Hug videos enlarge the audience of potential supporters and opponents, who may be moved – but the direction of the emotions of the viewer is not controllable by the social movement actors or the video maker. The experience and the expression both of the event and the picture/video are always unique (Engel, 2008: 6).

My main argument concerning the use of video is that the global ethnographers would benefit from using their own video clips like quotations: to illuminate the situation to the reader, to support the arguments of the work in which the video is used, and to provide direct information about the field under study. Also here, when using pictures and video clips in the research report, the researcher's embodiment and experience from the field is evident (Pink, 2007a). It should be carefully kept in mind that the readers and video watchers don't have the embodied experience from the field. The question of where the video data is maintained is also relevant: who has the access to the video and to the research report. Uploading the data clip to YouTube might offer a more accessible and engaging format for sharing research and reaching communities outside academia. In particular when doing research on the WSF, researchers find a lot of pictures and videos of the events from YouTube. It is especially popular among young people globally to share videos and to store their own recordings openly. In addition to the developed video technology, the decreased prices of the cameras as well as the user-friendly manuals combined with simpler compatibility with computers have made it possible for an increasing number of global citizens to use and distribute video footage.

But the visual and digital ethnography of the *Free Hugs Campaign* is not enough and neither is the visual and digital participation in this global social movement. In addition the researcher needs to place him/herself in the embodied and moving experience of the informant, i.e. the researcher needs kinaesthetic experience alongside the observation. The experienced relationship where the researcher is able to learn to understand the researched requires comprehensive use of oneself: the empathetically tuned reflexive body of the researcher faces the body of the activist in space and time. Kinaesthetic empathy as a bodily attitude is important in order to understand something that is strange to us, to learn something new. Global ethnography should be grounded within the deep somatic experience of the kinaesthetic empathy where the observer (researcher) follows the movements of the observed and this way gains new knowledge. The reason for the absence of this kind of an embodied method may lie in the relatively undeveloped capacity of researchers to reach this kind of embodied knowledge. Deidre Sklar argues (1994: 14) that the researcher can develop this capacity if he/she sees it as an important approach. Perhaps western culture teaches us to observe moving objects (e.g. TV, internet, films and theater) from a distance, thereby not allowing one's own body to move with the body of the observed. YouTube and other social media tools

might help break down this dichotomy (actor – observer) whereby the observer may become an actor, too, by adding his/her own story to the flow of actions[11] and by commenting upon actions of the others. Qualitative experience is dynamic and as such intertwined with our bodily sensitivity and kinaesthetic repertoires of being (Engel, 2008: 7). A (radical social) movement is understood when the body of the researcher has grasped it.

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the author   This summer I have learned what politics is.
That some are more important than others.
That two persons control the daily rhythm of 200 others.

The Minister arrives, gives the speech that someone else has written and leaves.
The Commissioner arrives, gives the speech that someone else has written, answers a few questions, places himself in the family portrait, sits in the room decorated with pink curtains.
The Commissioner demands the small flags of the EU and Finland to be placed on the table before the press event can start.

Personnel and secretaries run around the hotel in a mortal terror.

This is politics.

When the commissioner leaves, I drink the rest of his mineral water.
(July 2006)

E-mail: sofia.laine@youthresearch.fi
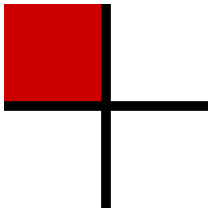
Céline and the aesthetics of hyperbole: Style, points, parataxis and other literary devices

Alexander Styhre

abstract

Organization theory is, like any other scientific program, also a form of literary project. Being able to express new ideas, images, or beliefs with the help of a concept, metaphor, or model is an accomplishment in its own right. Céline, the pen name of Louis-Ferdinand Destouches, was one of the greatest French writers of the twentieth century. Céline was part of a long-standing literary tradition that made the hyperbole a central literary technique, combining sophisticated French prose with a spoken form of language, the language of rage and mockery. Céline's famous 'three points of suspension' enabled him to present the social world as unfolding on a single plane wherein different events are connected horizontally rather than vertically. For organization theorists, the literary style of Céline is appealing because it denies any innate values and qualities but rather seeks to report what is being observed without explaining it. Appropriating some of his literary techniques and devices may thus help to free organization theory from representational epistemologies, making organization theory writing a more 'passionate' (i.e. an intense and expressive) pursuit.

Introduction

> I am not a man of messages, I am not a man of ideas, I am a man of style.
> Céline (2003:10)

> Peut-être Céline demeurera seul de nous tous.
> Jean-Paul Sartre, in 1946

> Hast du Verstand und ein Herz,
> so zeige nur eines von beiden,
> Beides verdammen Sie dir,
> zeigest Du beides zugleich
> Friedrich Hölderlin

'If you have brains and a heart, show only one or the other, for you will get credit for neither should you show both at once', the German poet Hölderlin advises (cited in Hirschman, 1998: 104). No one practiced such separation between emotionality and intellect more effectively than Louis-Ferdinand Destouches (1894-1961), better known under his *nom de plume* Céline (a name he took from his mother and grandmother), who

was the most important French writer besides Marcel Proust during the twentieth century. Céline is pure fury, pure emotionality. Throughout his life he was, in his own view, '*l'artiste contre tout*', the artist against everything. While the modern condition, shaped by colonialism, genocide, world wars, environmental destruction, and exploitation of humans, but also human accomplishment and advancement, have been accounted for by, for example, the Frankfurt School theorists (most prominently Theodor Adorno) in terms of disappointment and cynicism, Céline represents something different – a staunch rejection of mankind *tout court*. While Adorno tends to deplore a loss of bourgeois values and norms regarding, say, musical preferences and *savoir-faire,* there is absolutely no such elements of nostalgia in Céline's account. Céline's nihilism is complete, non-negotiable, hard and impenetrable. Being part of a long-standing tradition of literature that makes the *hyperbole* a key literary technique, beginning with the Menippean satire of the ancient period and continuing with the genre of romantic grotesque in the medieval period (Bakhtin, 1981; 1968), Céline needs to be understood as a modernizer. As opposed to conventional bourgeois literature, Celine seeks not to capture any higher values, morals, or purposes in life in his texts, but rather to portray life as he perceives it: as totally meaningless, as a farce, as a violation of all standards and norms, as a scandal. When reading Céline's work, it is easy to envisage a full-fledged cynic, a social outcast, frantically jotting down literary passages in his chamber late at night after a full day's work in his medical practice.

This paper attempts to position Céline's literary style in a specific tradition of literature and points to some of the merits of this style and how they can be translated into organization theory writing (see e.g. Beyes, 2009; Czarniawska, 2009; Kornberger, Rhodes and ten Bos, 2006; Land, 2005; De Cock, 2000; Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux, 1994). More specifically, it points to the merits (or at least possibilities) of using hyperbole as a literary technique to advance alternative views of organization. Organization theory is here treated as a literary genre having its own literary traditions and literary tropes and styles. At the same time, organization theory remains open to external influences and, as the legitimate style of writing changes over time, new influences and resources are brought into the discourse. Therefore, organization theory needs to address literature as being an important source of influence when inscribing and writing organization.

This paper is organized as follows. First, some biographical notes on Céline are provided, followed by a discussion of his literary style. Thereafter, the uses of hyperbole in both popular management writing and more scholarly literature will be addressed. Finally, some concluding remarks regarding the significance of Céline's literary works and their importance for organization theory will be made.

Céline's style

Life and influences

Most biographers emphasize Céline's anti-Semitism and his general anti-social behaviour (Hewitt, 2003; Hindus, 1997;), and some commentators see a writer with few literary qualities and whose jokes demand 'a pretty weird sense of humor' (Winegarten,

2001: 290). As Komins (2004: 85) rightly remarks, 'Céline's biography haunts his literary production'. In contrast to this view, Céline served most of his life as a general practitioner in the working class suburbs of Paris where he cared for the sick and the penniless. Not accepting any payment from patients with little or no money and paying for the medicine for paupers from his own pocket, *docteur* Destouches was especially renowned for his gentle care with children and the elderly. The literary figure Céline may have been portrayed as a nihilist and a monstrous being, but *docteur* Destouches served his community. Living a remarkably eventful life, ending in the early 1960s in the suburb of Meudon just outside of Paris, Céline's biography is a history book of the European twentieth century including many countries, events, occurrences and personalities (for instance Mussolini, who Céline met when working for the League of Nations in Geneva in the 1920s, and Mata Hari, whose visa application Céline handled when working for the French authorities in London during World War I). Still, it is not being part of the European twentieth century experience that makes Céline a remarkable figure but rather his ability to capture the *Zeitgeist* of the most dramatic and blood-stained century to date, the century in which the potentiality of human evil for the first time was accompanied by unprecedented technological possibilities, leading to the first industrialized genocides in history. Prior to Stalin's great terror in the 1930s and the Nazi Holocaust in the 1940s, Céline, a decorated World War I veteran, expressed his great contempt for the state of mankind. More specifically, Céline manages to bring a new element into the tradition he belongs to: force.

Céline wrote and spoke like a cynic. He wrote to 'protest against the horror and meaninglessness of modern life – actually, indeed of life', as George Orwell (1962: 15) said. With other noted contemporaries, such as Henry Ford, Céline shared anti-Semite beliefs, although the term 'Jew' in his texts (for example, in the notorious three pamphlets published in the late 1930s) denotes all non-French influences, as Ekerwald (2004) suggests. Céline embodied great many paradoxes: as a man of the world who travelled to Africa and North America and worked for international organizations, he still maintained deeply provincial attitudes and spoke proudly of his Breton family background; he was a cynic who dedicated his career to curing the poor and the sick; as a literary celebrity, he despised the intellectual and academic elites – Céline speaks in condescending terms about the 'Goncourtiers', the literati who aspired to win the prestigious Goncourt Prize – and maintained an aggressive attitude towards virtually everyone. Céline is by any standard an enigma and therefore he is also an immensely fascinating figure. If we judged people on basis of their acts and accomplishments rather than their statements and declarations, such an analysis would be beneficial for Céline. Still, one must judge the literature produced and not the character of the writer. Céline was apparently not exactly a charming character, dressed like a *clochard* and with dirty nails, always ready to share a poisonous remark – his reply to Sartre's accusation of anti-Semitism is reputed as a masterpiece in public flogging – but his two first novels *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932, English translation 1934) and *Death on the Installment Plan* (1936, English translation 1938) are important modernist literary works.

The post-war period is filled with literature that is strongly indebted to Céline's work. All the beatniks and Ken Kesey owe Céline a lot and Charles Bukowski's *The Post Office* (1971) and Michel Houellebecq's *Whatever* (1999) may be seen as following in

Céline's tradition of cynical observations of everyday life and work. If we make Menippean satire the common thread in this stream of literature, then Thomas Pynchon also needs to be brought into the group of followers of Céline (Best and Kellner, 2001: 25; Herman, 1999; Ames, 1990). Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), one of the most complex and innovative literary works in the post-World War II period, clearly shares many themes with Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. While Céline's novel is located at the first of the 'Great Wars' and Pynchon's in the second, the war is envisaged as a zone of totally unexpected and curious events and occurrences; perhaps the war is the modern carnival, the world turned upside down. Just as Céline's prose is overwhelming in its ability to flow across the pages, so is Pynchon capable of orchestrating stories that are 'unbelievable', yet make sense in all their absurdity.

Style, points, parataxis

Céline's scandalous success *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, his debut novel, was nominated for the 1932 Goncourt Prize but for some highly debated reason lost to what today is a totally forgotten work. Open up *Voyage au bout de la nuit* – for Komins (2004) a highly innovative mix of parody, *Bildungsroman*, and picaresque novel – and the reader notices from the first line that this is something entirely new: it is a statement, a declaration of independence, a window to the future (see Sturrock [1990] for an overview). 'The novel's [*Voyage au bout de la nuit*] innovative syntax, eclectic vocabulary, and, especially, its frenzied pace present difficulties to readers who are accustomed to cohesive modes of writing', Komins (2004: 75-76) remarks. The novel's very opening testifies to a new form of writing, breaking with conventions in affirming a spoken form of prose:

> Here's how it started. I'd never said a word. Not a word. It was Arthur Ganate that made me speak up. Arthur was a friend from med school. So we meet on the Place Clichy. It was after breakfast. He wants to talk to me. I listen. 'Not out here', he says, 'Let's go!' We go in. And there we were. (Céline, 1952: 3)

> Ça a débuté comme ça. Moi, j'avais jamais rien dit. Rien. C'est Arthur Ganate qui m'a fait parler. Arthur, un étudiant, un carabin, lui aussi, un camarade. On se recontre donc place Clichy. C'était après le dejeuner. Il vaut me parler. Je l'ecoute. «Restons pas dehors! qu'il me dit. Rentrons» Je rentre avec lui. Voilà. (Céline, 1932: 12)

Luce (2006) emphasizes that Céline's style of writing, from the outset, divided the readership into admirers and adversaries:

> His [Céline's] was described alternately as a breath of fresh air, a rancid effluvium, a fresco of satire. It was once mean and gross with flashes of dignity, cynically sincere a net in which human emotions were caught, an appropriate form with which to discuss the stench of human wretchedness. Impoverished in syntax, it was a reaction of formalism. (Luce, 2006: xiv)

The publication of *Voyage au bout de la nuit* was a major literary event.

Thinking of Céline as being not an entirely isolated figure but as being part of a long tradition of writing that makes the hyperbole its key literary mechanism (Ekerwald, 2004), then this literary technique should be examined in greater detail. In Julia Kristeva's (1982) study of the 'abject', the embarrassing or shameful element that is part of any subject and that cannot be dispensed with even though there is a strong sense

of shame on part of the subject, Céline's notorious anti-Semitic pamphlets published in the late 1930s and early 1940s are examined. In Céline, Kristeva (1982) sees something 'nocturnal', the fall of man, the end of things – a recognition of the abject. One of the mechanisms in Céline's style of writing is what Kristeva refers to as 'points of suspension' or 'exclamation points', points that connect sentences into a serial narrative where one sentence continues without being interrupted…Céline here manages to uphold a restless and continuous flow, almost exhausting the reader…there are no proper periods, only points of suspensions… one sentence leads to another…the text become frantic…it twists and turns…sentences become shorter…like some distorted version of James Joyce or Virginia Wolff's works, capturing a 'stream of consciousness', what William James (1890/1950) referred to as 'the stream of thought'. The suspension points serve to produce an image of continual change and lack of places sheltered from the frenzy of life; it is a most effective literary innovation. '*Mes trois points sont indispensables*', Céline declares (2006: 107) – 'my three points are indispensable'. Komins (2004: 67-68) notes:

> One can almost imagine the nod of a head, a grimace, a sigh, or a wiggling finger where the *trois points* appear. When caught in the written clamor and furious pace of his texts, the *trois points* bind us to the page. We might even conceive of them as a type of emotional glue that sutures us to the madness that constitute Céline's written world. (Komins, 2004: 67-68)

We may here compare to how Marcel Proust conceives of the colons in St. Luke's Gospel, serving as marks where the writer still lingers on in the text, similar to Céline's three dots:

> Often, in St. Luke's Gospel, when I come upon the 'colons' which punctuate it before each of the almost canticle-like passages with which it is strewn, I have heard the silence of the worshipper who has just stopped from reading out loud so as to intone the verses following, like a psalm reminding him of the older psalms in the Bible. (Proust, 2008: 88)

The three points of suspension thus keep the reader from derailment, bringing the narrative forward. Céline wants to fuse force and emotionality into language. In one of his letters to Milton Hindus, his 'pseudo-biographer', Céline makes this announcement:

> '*Re-sensitize the language so that it pulses more than it reasons* – that was my goal. I'm a stylist, a colorist with words; but not like Mallarmé, searching out words with extremely rare meanings, I want ordinary words, everyday words. Vulgarity and sexuality have no part in all this – they are just accessories'. (Céline, cited in Hindus, 1997: 93)

Céline is thus capable of making language a medium of *life*, not of reason. In accomplishing this, language is no longer neatly separated into discourses, but rather these discourses are brought together, being folded into one another, replicating, overdubbing, becoming multiple: 'In many ways the uniqueness (and perhaps the genius) of Céline's work revolves around this extraordinary linguistic mélange – the ways in which each text rather seamlessly incorporates widely divergent levels of discourse', Komins (2004: 67) suggests. Céline is, in his own mind, not a man of ideas but of *style*, seeking to make language a matter of life, of flesh and blood, rather than stale reason.

Lanham (2003) distinguishes between *hypotaxis* and *parataxis*, wherein the former style of writing makes causal connections between two statements: 'X in terms of Y'. For

instance, the sentence, 'her face was wet because she had been crying' is hypotactic. Parataxis, on the other hand, '[l]eaves connections – causal, temporal, whatever – up to the reader', Lanham (2003: 43) says. Julius Caesar's statement '*Vini, Vidi, Vici*' is paratactic. Caesar does not say 'When I arrived at the scene of the battle, I made a thorough analysis of the situation, ultimately helping us defeat the enemy'. Instead, the reader is given an account of three discrete events (arrival, perception, victory) from which the reader/listener must create his or her own storyline. Hypotaxis is the style of more elaborate literature while parataxis is, Lanham (2003) suggests, more closely associated with the cognition of small children, who see discrete events but do not necessarily make causal connections between them (see e.g. Vygotsky, 1978). Céline's uses of the three points of suspension rest on a paratactic style: a series or flow of events that are not ever fully causally connected or understood as interrelated events. It is a style that *points to* events but does not seek to make sense out of them or anchor them in any meaningful analytical framework (such as what Jean-François Lyotard calls the *grands récits*, social progress, the scientific domination of nature, liberation of man, in brief the grand narrative of the Enlightenment tradition). Céline is a skeptic; events unfold in time and space but thinking of them as having some inner meaning or being interrelated is a frivolity, a self-deception. From this perspective, Céline's skepticism is paratactic.

This flow of impressions in combination with the aesthetic of hyperbole is Céline's contribution. While hyperbole is of Greek origin, the points of suspensions are his own innovation, surprisingly little attended to in the literature. Perhaps this is what Céline will be credited for in the future, namely his ability to innovate a new literary device of the same importance as, for example, the semi-colon or the hyphen.

Organization theory literature and the hyperbole

Lanham (2003: 1) points to the Platonist tradition of thinking, reinvigorated by Newtonian science, as the principal reason for us believing that '[o]nly ideas matter, not the words that convey them'. Says Marcel Proust (2008: 119): 'Style is not an embellishment as certain people think, it is not even a master of technique, it is – like the colours with painters – a quality of vision, the revelation of the private universe that each one of us can see and which others cannot see'. Elkins (1996) is also critical of the common sense view regarding any reasonably complex discourse as being filled with unnecessary 'jargon':

> Stephen Hawking's history of time and James Glieck chaos theory…are not just simpler versions of the original sciences but entirely different enterprises that make different claims and lead to different questions. The same may be said of omitting the jargon that makes some texts in humanities opaque: when that is done, the subject itself changes, and a readable version of Martin Heidegger or Jacques Lacan. (Elkins, 1996: 14)

Style matters: it makes a difference in terms of collapsing the iron curtain between ideas and 'the words that convey them'. Style is instead the 'quality of vision' of the artist. 'Writing, embedded within an entire economy of signs, is...constitutive of meaning rather than a passive medium for restoring the presence of language to thought', Lenoir (1998: 5) says, discussing Jacques Derrida's philosophy, questioning the idea of a

value-neutral and transparent language. Without style, in other words, there is no proper thinking.

In the next two sections, the uses of hyperbole in popular management texts and the potential of using hyperbole in scholarly accounts of organizations will be discussed, pointing to the significance of style in making an argument and pursuing specific images of organization.

Popular management writing: Hyperbole as rhetoric

One domain where the tradition of hyperbole has been carefully maintained and given a key role is that of popular management books, the so-called 'management guru genre' (see e.g. Collins, 2003; Clark and Greatbatch, 2002; Jackson, 2001; Case, 1999; Grint and Case, 1999). The genre of management guru literature has a long tradition (see e.g. Gilbreth, 1911; Gantt, 1913; Sloan, 1964) but it would be adequate to say that the period from the 1980s until the end of the 1990s is the golden age for popular management books. This is also the period in which neoliberal doctrines and the belief in the market as the principal economic mechanism take on their hegemonic role. Alan Liu (2004) makes the connection between management guru literature (and more specifically Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*) and new age (quasi)religious beliefs. The 1980s are generally perceived as conservative times but they were almost revolutionary in questioning the role of the welfare state. However, it was no 'revolt of the people' but of 'capital' (Duménil and Lévy, 2004). Enterprising behaviour and a firm belief in both oneself and underlying economic rationalities regulating the economy and, increasingly, society were of central importance. New Age teachings instructed that one should always turn inward to find the strength to move on; what works for me is right, and no clergy has the authority to sell me their version of God or other divinities. The particular management writing genre that was produced during this period of time, perhaps best represented by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman's *In Search of Excellence* (1982), a book aimed at redeeming the American capitalism after falling short against the Japanese on a number of key performance indicators, did not spare any resources to boost self-confidence, strengthen beliefs, and create enthusiasm among the managerial cadres and stakeholders. Thomas Frank's *One Market Under God* (2000), a critique of what he refers to as 'market populism', points to the conspicuous hyperbole and exaggerations of the texts in the genre of popular management writing:

> Anybody who had any experience with the management theory industry can tell similar stories: of quotes and dates widely misplaced, of an alarming and misinformed credulity about science, of anecdotes that prove nothing, of patently absurd syllogisms, of meaningless diagrams and homemade master narratives. (Frank, 2000: 176)

Rather than pursuing a more integrated argument that seeks to make sense out of complex managerial challenges, much of the popular management literature offers, Frank (2000: 177) suggests, 'theories of art and learning so elementary they could have been lifted from the back of cereal boxes'. Hammer and Champy, the management guru writers who advance the concept of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) certainly use such alarmist hyperbole to state their point in their best-selling *Reengineering the Corporation* (1993):

> America's largest corporations – even the most successful and promising among them – *must* embrace and apply the principles of business reengineering, or they will be eclipsed by the greater success of those companies that do. (Hammer and Champy, 1993: 1-2)

In Michael Hammer's *The Agenda* (2001), a book seeking to further advance the idea of the process-based organization developed in *Reengineering the Corporation*, hyperbole is the predominant literary style. First, Hammer presents his view of the new customer-driven economy as something entirely new for American companies:

> Executives of the most powerful companies in the world now tremble before their independent and demanding customers. They know customers have the power and that they will use it. Welcome to the customer economy. (Hammer, 2001: 5)

In Hammer's view, virtually everything is wrong with American corporations and his ranting makes use of many horror stories from his work as a consultant. For Hammer, very little is competently conducted in American companies:

> Departmental managers are narrowly focused on their own turf, while top managers are too far away from the actions to comprehend the work being done on the front lines. (*ibid.*: 56)

> Errors proliferate in a processless environment. Sharing neither a common vision nor a common terminology, departments miscommunicate, leading to mistakes that require rework or that alienate customers or both. The absence of process also makes companies clumsy and sluggish. (*ibid.*: 56)

Hammer knows that selling his arguments demands a kind of storytelling that portrays major corporations as being in free fall, only to be saved by savvy management consultants who know – in contrast to managers – what to do to turn around corporations on the verge of collapsing. This hatred of large corporations, at the heart of the shareholder value ideology (Ezzamel, Willmott and Worthington, 2008; Engelen, 2002) developed within the neoliberal political and economic doctrine (see Ho, 2009: 104-106) is what propels Hammer's (2001) argument. It is a text filled with sarcasm, emotionality, and hyperbole, all aimed at envisioning American industry as weak and degenerated. In this respect, Hammer's *The Agenda* is representative of the popular management guru literature genre. While Céline's authors are protesting against the meaninglessness of life, the popular management guru literature is protesting against something entirely different, namely that which is perceived as poor managerial practice and substandard financial performance. Céline's discourse is ethical in portraying the predicament of modernity, but popular management guru literature is overtly political, advancing the neoliberal agenda: market orientation, customer power, anti-bureaucratization, and shareholder value as the overarching corporate governance principle.

Hyperbole both regarding the challenges facing Western industry and the benefits of using prescribed managerial methods are central rhetorical elements in the popular management literature. In addition, when management practices fail to deliver expected results, it is management and not the practices per se that is too blame. Without paying homage to Céline or any other authors for that matter, popular management guru writing is a literary genre shaped by hyperbole and exaggeration.

Scholarly writings on organization: Hyperbole as style

Czarniawska (1997: 144) associates rhetoric filled with hyperbole and the abundance of *pathos* with political speech: 'Hyperbole is favored: threats are described as black or sinister, while promising developments are depicted in all the colors of the rainbow'. Scholarly writing is, on the contrary, commonly associated with the very absence of pathos, with de-emotionalized and distanced vocabularies accounting for what has been observed. The scholarly tradition of what Robert Boyle called 'modest witnessing', joint observations of experiments, prohibits any overtly emotional accounts of experimental findings (Shapin, 1994: 124). Hans-Jörg Rheinberger sees this gradual erasure of the actor from the domain of scientific authorship as a relatively recent phenomenon:

> All of them [scientific genres] avoid the 'I' as nominative case, and often even the pluralistic we. This was not generally yet the case before 1900. Today, we find no 'I' anymore in these texts. Their grammatical structure suggests that the facts of the objects speak to the initiated laboratory worker or to a wider circle of readers. All along the above-mentioned authority gradient is a strict commitment to the passive voice, from which there is no escape. The supposed commitment to objectivity is built right into the language in which the scientist is allowed to speak to his or her fellows and to a wider audience Therefore, and in a certain sense, authorship as a warranty to speak appears to be, in scientific writing, always already crossed out. (2003: 311)

The 'active voice' of the scholar is today, Rheinberger suggests, 'only permitted at the outer fringes of the spectrum of writing science', in historical reflections and anecdotes, in congressional openings and commemorations, and in scientific autobiographies. Under these conditions, Rheinberger says, 'the scientist may take the freedom to expose his or her personal view, something that has no place in the regular canon of scientific writing' (*ibid.*). The ideal of scientific writing is thus one of modesty, objectivity, and necessity: the scientist, when going public, as French molecular biologist and Nobel laureate François Jacob argues:

> 'describe[s] their own activity as a well-ordered series of ideas and experiments linked in a strict logical sequence. In scientific articles, reason proceeds along a high road that leads from darkness to light with not the slightest error, not a hint of bad decision, no confusion, nothing but perfect reasoning'. (cited in *ibid.*: 315)

The difficulties that have faced the scientist for years or even decades are eliminated from the narrative; what faces the reader are merely the inevitable facts produced by the scientific community: 'Scientific papers are not designed to promote an understanding of alternatives, but to foster the impression that what *has been done* is all that *could be done*' (Knorr Cetina, 1981: 42). Scientists as fact-makers are thus using a *pathos*-free rhetoric to impose the image of an unproblematic production of truth.

However, the social sciences and organization studies are not only producing facts but are also seeking to tell stories that make sense to the reader. While the sciences are bound to their regimes of representations (theories, numerical representations, calculuses, etc.) and an epistemology that tightly couples facts and inscriptions, the social sciences are also literary genres (Czarniawska, 1997). Rhodes (2009) introduces the term 'post-representational theory' to denote literary genres that transcend what he calls 'realistic representations'. In this post-representational theory, the purpose of writing is to constitute the writing subject vis-à-vis the Other as much as it is a

'description' of the order of things. Says Rhodes: 'Writing is…a matter of writing the self…The object and addressivity of the text create the writing subject – create the *I* from the rendering of the Other' (2009: 659). In this regime of writing, a post-representational literary tradition that is potentially capable of breaking with inherited epistemological traditions and embracing pathos and expressionism, there are new possibilities for inscribing organizations. Hyperbole may be an effective literary trope that advances alternative images of organization. Céline developed a highly idiosyncratic style characterized by blatant cynicism and hyperbole, capable of emotionally affecting the reader. A post-representational theory of organizations, a genre of organization theory that affirms hyperbole and other literary tropes, may enable alternative views. In popular management guru writing, hyperbole has been part of the promotion of specific managerial programs and arrangements and there is ample evidence of the impact of proposed management packages such as BPR and TQM. Organization theorists may also benefit from using hyperbole and other literary tropes to broaden the scope of narratives about organizations. While the popular management guru writing resorts to hyperbole to justify or even sell management training programs and management concepts, a scholarly discourse that makes use of hyperbole would on the contrary seek to advance alternative perspectives on organization. The scholarly discourse is thus less preoccupied with political objectives than with developing a literary style that emphasizes certain elements of organizational realities at the expense of others; it represents a *perspectival epistemology* that emphasizes situated knowledge and local practices.

Discussion and concluding remarks

Céline does not seek to capture any underlying meanings or concealed ideals or other innate structures. For him, life is on the surface, what is seen, what is experienced, what is accomplished and evolving as a series of connections and associations. Literature is not 'good', as his adversary Jean-Paul Sartre suggested; nor is it 'evil', as Georges Bataille responded. Instead, literature is *human* – beyond good and evil, life resonates through literature, through language. It is, with Céline, an extension of life. Literature's role – if it has a role to play at all – is to capture life, life as *event* (Manning, 2010). Céline's literature is not 'figurative', in terms of portraying people in very detailed terms, nor is it abstract and impressionistic. It is a form of storytelling that unfolds along the 'rail' of the three points of suspension where the one event unfolds into the other, taking the reader to places and occurrences.

Organization theory is in many ways like any scientific program, a literary project. 'Literary' here is not used in the restricted sense of *belles-lettres*, but rather as the totality of norms and standards for how to legitimately express scientific knowledge-claims. A regime of statistical methods could also constitute a literary project. In the more sociological branch of organization theory, there is a continuous demand for new concepts, terms, and innovative forms of expressing theoretical propositions and empirical observations regarding the practice of organizing. New modes of expression are perhaps a rare thing but it is still demanded to maintain a viable scientific discipline. When Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit* was first published in 1932, it was an immediate success, perhaps primarily because of its direct style of writing, a form of

sophisticated literary French in combination with a vernacular language imported from the streets and the cafés, the bars and the bazaars. Perhaps for the first time, spoken language and a literary style were combined and bought together into one unity. It is always complicated to learn from outstanding literary works, but what one may learn from Céline is that the frenzy of everyday life of modernity, its immediate and sometimes even brutal expressions, may be combined with literary prose; the two are necessarily part of the same plane of language. The one presupposes the other.

This paper has aimed at making a contribution to organization theory in terms of discussing the literary style of Céline, one of the most important modernist authors. When developing alternative literary genres in organization studies, the cynical and skeptic tradition of thinking represented by Céline may serve as a source of influence, opening up new modes of thinking and styles of writing. Operating in a post-representational theory of organization, the inherited prohibition against pathos – pathos is Céline's most significant mark – may be overcome and new ways of writing organization may be enacted.
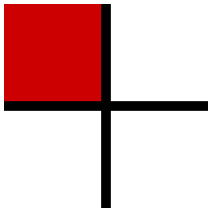
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The challenges of identity work: Developing Ricoeurian narrative identity in organisations

Oliver Mallett and Robert Wapshott

abstract

In this paper we develop Paul Ricoeur's approach to 'narrative identity' to explore questions of complex and conflictual identity work in organisations. We read Ricoeur's self-reflexive conception of narrative mediating between two 'poles' of identity within his discussion of a threefold, hermeneutic process of mimesis involving prefiguration, configuration and refiguration. With reference to the film *Infernal Affairs* (2002)*,* deployed as an 'extreme case', we demonstrate how these ideas can aid understanding of identity work in challenging organisational contexts. We argue that a narrative approach is useful for understanding the processes involved in identity work in organisations, especially around occupational roles where employees' work requires them to act in ways that cause tension with their pre-existing sense of self. In doing so, we contribute to discussions of identity in organisational contexts and demonstrate the value of Ricoeur's ideas.

Introduction

Organisations can challenge our conceptions of ourselves, they can provoke us into reassessing our personal identities (Watson, 2008). They have been defined by their attempts to marshal the internal strivings of employees, presenting a range of roles we are expected to assume, adapting our manners and characteristics as appropriate (Kreiner et al., 2006). There is potential for conflict embedded in this adaptation as different senses of our character are presented for interpretation (Collinson, 2003). Such transitions or adjustments may therefore become a source of deep tension for workers and this paper seeks to explore the complex and conflictual identity work required.

Narrative identity approaches suggest a theoretical approach to this identity work, presenting a self-reflexive framework for an individual's conception of themselves and their interactions (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995; Watson, 2009). Theories of narrative processes facilitate understanding of the identity work involved in organisations, encompassing multiplicity and ongoing versions and revisions of our selves (Brown, 1998). In this light, the philosophical work of Paul Ricoeur (1984; 1985; 1988; 1992) offers a fascinating contribution to discussions of identity in management and organisation studies. We explore the value of Ricoeur's ideas by discussing an extreme case of identity work in organisations, the cult Hong Kong film *Infernal Affairs* (2002),

directed by Wai-Keung Lau and Alan Mak.[1] Analysing the organisational context that drives the film, we integrate Ricoeur's self-reflexive conception of narrative as mediating between two 'poles' of identity with his discussion of a threefold, hermeneutic process of mimesis (prefiguration, configuration and refiguration). We demonstrate how these ideas can contribute to the vocabulary and theoretical discussions of identity work in challenging organisational contexts.

Identity and organisations

The relationship between our sense of ourselves and our work is complex (Glynn, 1998), not least when there are mismatches between this sense of who we are and the demands of our job role or organisation (Dukerich et al., 1998). This is not restricted to those engaged in 'dirty work' (Beech, 2008). Work and organisational life regularly present provocations to our conceptions of ourselves, to our personal identities. Some writers anticipate that individuals experiencing such mismatches will resolve the conflicts, for example through personal adjustment, forming a sub-culture with like-minded colleagues or exiting from the organisation (see Meyerson and Scully, 1995; Glynn, 1998; Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). However, not all of these avenues are open to everyone, especially in times of economic uncertainty when resigning or not being a 'team player' could lead to unemployment. Many people may be trapped in situations where their personal values and sense of self conflict with the demands of their job.

Organisations are often defined by their presumptions and their attempts to marshal the 'internal striving' of individuals (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). These aims can come to interfere with the relationship between self-evaluation and self-concordance in pursuit of organisational goals, a relationship that forms an important element of job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2005). Organisations present a range of roles that an employee is expected to assume, adapting their manners and characteristics as appropriate. There is a potential conflict embedded in this adaptation as different senses of one's character are presented for interpretation. By prescribing and proscribing actions, ways of thinking and self-presenting, working life exerts influence over us (Kärreman and Alvesson, 2004). Adapting to new or changing organisational roles requires identity work, an adjustment as we understand our relation to our role and all that it entails. The demands of such transitions or adjustments may become a source of deep tension for workers required to act in ways that conflict with their pre-existing sense of self or values, provoking significant and complex professional image construction (Roberts, 2005) that could lead to a confused social identity (Hogg and Terry, 2000; Kreiner et al., 2006) and great insecurity (Collinson, 2003).

Researchers have drawn on workers' accounts or explanations of how they have come to be in certain occupations as a means of engaging with the complexities around identity (Hytti, 2005). These accounts seek to retain the complexity, or messiness, of

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1   (a) Please note that our paper contains plot-spoilers; (b) We discuss the film on its own terms and do not account for additional revelations about the characters that emerge in the prequel (Infernal Affairs 2) or sequel (Infernal Affairs 3). See Marchetti (2007) for a detailed discussion and analysis of the trilogy.

working lives, resisting any temptation to edit events in search of a cohesive or compact story of people's experiences (Steyaert, 2007). While these scenarios are acknowledged in the literature as being complex and stressful, limited attention has been paid to exploring the processes engaged in by people trapped by such situations. For these individuals, discrepancies between their actions at work and a sense of their selves more generally can have significant implications (Watson, 2008). This paper theorises the nature of identity processes that seek to address these tensions.

We are interested therefore in identity, and identity work, in process (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Beech, 2008). This reflects the changing nature of individuals who regularly (re)assess their sense of self (explicitly or implicitly) in response to their personal desires but also to the provocations and challenges of organisations (Ybema et al., 2009; see also Sims, 2003). Organisations provide spaces of heightened 'self-presentation and labelling by others, between achievement and ascription and between regulation and resistance' (Ybema et al., 2009: 301). It is the symbolically-charged nature of the organisational environment that has implications for the identity of the individual. It is an important aspect of the lived experience of organisations to understand the ways in which we reconcile conflicts within this heightened, hyper-sensitive context.

It is the processes involved in this temporary (and temporal) nature of a multi-faceted, (r)evolving identity that we explore in this paper. We want to move beyond static pictures of individual identity, that aspect of identity taken up in many studies examining a cross-section of an *ongoing* project of revision, negotiation, retreat and (re)invention. Identity is not an ever-fixed mark, it is something that has multiple face(t)s, constantly in process, referring back whilst projecting forwards, negotiating and adapting in the present and therefore 'articulated only in the *temporal* dimension of human existence' (Ricoeur, 1992: 114, our emphasis). We therefore offer a theoretical framework for exploring the types of conflict and the processes encountered in identity work in organisations, arguing for the particular value of a (Ricoeurian) narrative approach. Specifically, we will suggest that this approach is helpful in understanding the identity work of people who are stuck in occupational roles requiring actions that conflict with their pre-existing sense of self. First, we will therefore briefly outline the current debates surrounding narrative identity in the organisation studies literature.

Narrative identities

The 'narrative turn' in organisation studies witnessed in recent years has provided researchers with a means of gaining rich insights into complex topics (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000; Czarniawska, 1997; Cunliffe et al., 2004; Rhodes and Brown, 2005). The situated study of individual identity narratives in organisations has been explored by Brown (2006; Humphreys and Brown, 2002a; 2002b; 2008), revealing organisations as sites of multiple and, at times, competing narratives. Labels such as 'occupational identity' have been shown to mask the complex and composite nature of what they seek to describe, which can be revealed through reflexive narrative approaches (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995) that engage with 'plurivocal native interpretations' (Brown, 1998: 36).

However, as an emerging field, there are differences to be found in the scope or emphasis associated with the concepts of 'narrative' and 'story' (Brown et al., 2008; Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). For the purposes of clarity, in this paper we distinguish between narrative (a process) and story (the artefact produced by narrative processes). 'Narrative' is the way in which information is gathered, organised, interpreted and presented in the formation of stories. Narrative, in this sense, allows a refined understanding of complexity and the processes of change, a more 'concrete rendering of causality' (Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001: 998). 'Narrative' is generally considered specifically diegetic. This telling of our self-stories is particularly appropriate when considering self-reflexive, individual identity narrative processes.

Narrative identity approaches have been criticised under the banner of 'narrative imperialism' (Phelan, 2005), the suggestion that narrative theorists have expanded beyond their means, that they attempt to explain phenomena such as identity within too restrictive a set of concepts, thereby simplifying complex processes. In answer to such criticisms, Eakin (2006) conceptualises narrative identity as one (among other) mode(s) of self-identity. It is in this vein that we are concerned with narrative as a process through which identity work is engaged in producing multiple, synchronic stories of our lives and our conceptions of ourselves. This approach seeks to embrace fluidity and multiplicity (Ezzy, 1998; Rhodes and Brown, 2005), it encompasses the 'temporal, relational, and cultural, as well as institutional, material, and macro-structural' (Somers, 1994: 607), it is not concerned with a unitary, factual or dogmatic 'life story'. It is in this sense, as a form of organising information and interpretations, that we believe a Ricoeurian narrative approach can develop recent debates in the academic literature around the particular processes of identity work occurring in organisations where sustaining a unitary, and relatively fixed, sense of self may prove challenging.

Paul Ricoeur and narrative identity

The philosopher Paul Ricoeur pursued an 'uncompromising commitment to a conflict of perspectives' (Kearney, 2004: 8), developing a hermeneutic approach to the study of meanings and linguistic mediators in areas such as religion, ethics, time and the self. His conception of 'narrative identity' has encouraged citation as a potentially helpful aid to understanding identity in organisational contexts (Brown, 2001; Coupland, 2007). However, while these writers have suggested the potential of Ricoeur's ideas, we concur with their view that this potential has yet to be fully utilised. The value of Ricoeur's work is demonstrated in its development in terms of understanding authentic leadership (Sparrowe, 2005), entrepreneurship (Hamilton, 2006) and otherness in organisational change (Durand and Calori, 2006), but 'narrative identity' as a concept has received only limited critical attention in organisation studies (Jabri, 2004, 2009; Hamilton, 2006). This paper seeks to move this debate forwards by demonstrating the theoretical potential for a narrative identity approach to understanding identity work in organisations.

At the heart of Ricoeur's conception of narrative identity is a distinction between *ipse* and *idem* identity, that is between 'the self' and 'the same' (1992: 117-8). *Who* I am changes with time, the ways in which I act, perceive and interpret may alter from moment to moment (*ipse identity*). However, I remain the same person throughout my

life, the lone protagonist of my autobiography and, in this respect, there is a sense of sameness and unity to experience, memory and expectation (*idem identity*). In everyday life, how I act, what characteristics I exhibit, may vary a great deal, but there is a 'permanence-in-time' which means that I remain the same individual. Ricoeur (1988; 1991a) believed that the failure to distinguish between these two types of identity has obscured attempts to understand personal identity. It is this contrast that allows Ricoeur's approach to cope with the multiplicity inherent in our identities, where we act differently, present ourselves differently and conceive of ourselves differently, depending on need, context and goals. Individuals who experience life in an episodic, non-narrative way (Strawson, 2004) will nonetheless retain some form of sameness (excepting severe psychological damage or impairment). They will not entirely reinvent themselves afresh in every passing moment. Nor is identity fixed; the creation of our narrative identities is a process without end (Ricoeur, 1991b).

To sustain a consistent sense of unity in one's personal identity, self-reflexivity therefore produces two distinct 'poles'. Where the idem (same) and the ipse (self) identities overlap, Ricoeur emphasised his conception of character: 'the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of a human individual as being the same' (1992: 119). That is, the cumulative, only gradually shifting aspect of identity that is derived from the acquired habits and identifications 'sedimented' over time to establish paradigmatic 'rules' for one's self. In contrast, keeping one's word reflects 'the extreme gap between the permanence of the self and that of the same' (1992: 118), that is, between the ipse and the idem. Keeping one's word is concerned with what is held on to voluntarily, providing the sense of 'self-constancy' that helps to overcome the tensions evoked from competing identifications and behaviours that form the spectrum of difference in the gap between ipse and idem. This does not suggest one coherent autobiography of one's life but a competing, overlapping, subsuming multitude of narrative voices that are gathered together by identity work.

It is in this gathering together that we suggest the narrative construction of a sense of oneself (or selves) is taken from 'the outside', as a self-reflexive, hermeneutic interpretation. To delineate the nature of this process, Ricoeur (1984) drew on St Augustine's conception of the 'threefold present' (the past, present and future experienced together in one moment) and Aristotle's mimesis (as imitative of action). Ricoeur proposed that mimesis$_1$ (prefiguration) creates certain expectations and frameworks for understanding based on prior experience. This new understanding is reached through mimesis$_2$ (configuration), in which events, actions or other phenomena are emplotted. This then informs future understanding, mimesis$_3$ (refiguration), producing a virtuous circle of hermeneutic discovery and adaptation. By developing mimesis from a starting point of the threefold present, Ricoeur allows for a mimetic process that encapsulates past and present, 'interweaving' both fictional and historical narrative modes, moving away from traditional mimetic replication and towards a diegetic, interpretive understanding.

Ricoeur does not explicitly enlist his three stages of mimesis to develop the conception of identity in *Oneself As Another*, but we will argue that an approach to narrative identity is developed when clearly understood in relation to this process. This provides a form of dynamic, polyadic reflexivity (Laitinen, 2002; 2007) that engages with shifting

external influences and opens up a narratively-mediated opportunity for a continually (re)negotiated plurality of meaning. For example, whereas Cunliffe et al. (2004) suggest that amendment to Ricoeur's conception of narrative is required to cope with the convergence of multiple, or polyadic, plots produced by memory and imagination, we suggest that Ricoeur's 'interweaved' (1985: 160) history and fiction through the process of configuration allows us to develop just this sense of a dynamic multiplicity. We will return to this proposal later in the paper.

A Ricoeurian approach develops earlier concepts of the contradictions inherent in complex, multi-faceted identity by enabling a unity of purpose and understanding to the self-concept (Ezzy, 1998). As Ezzy outlines, where Mead conceived of memories and anticipations perceived as objects that are organised by the individual to provide meaning, Ricoeur provides the process of configuration. By enacting a hermeneutic circle that engages making sense of events with the lived experience of the individual, a plot 'is not merely imposed but is produced by a complex moving back and forth between events and plot structure until both are fitted together' (Ezzy, 1998: 245). In making this link between narrative process and lived reality, whilst establishing a dialectical relationship at the heart of identity, Ricoeur's approach understands knowledge of oneself to be interpretive. It is this interpretation that seeks to provide stability in the face of conflict, complexity and uncertainty.

Following Ricoeur's (1991a) conception of self-knowledge as an act of interpretation, we propose an emphasis on the viewing of one's actions as though from the outside, that we perceive ourselves from the perspective of the other. Narrative processes produce what we will refer to as autrebiography (Coetzee, 1992). The autrebiography is the story of one's self as an other. For Coetzee this manifests in a series of semi-autobiographical novels[2] that represent a particular type of reflexivity as narrative that fictionalises whilst it draws on historical sources and devices, attempting to produce a particular type of (possibly heightened?) truth. We propose that all identity narratives bear some resemblance to this approach.

This paper therefore seeks to make a significant contribution to the development of Ricoeur's ideas in organisation studies by providing a broader narrative approach to identity work. It is this development of an approach to identity based on narrative processes, drawn from a reading of not only Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* but also *Oneself As Another* and other (later) works, that has not yet been fully utilised in organisation studies (Coupland, 2007). In developing Ricoeur's ideas in an organisational context, we will demonstrate their value through the analysis of a heightened case of identity work engaged in by the two central protagonists in the film *Infernal Affairs*. We will briefly introduce this film before beginning our analysis of the function that narrative processes perform in identity work through discussion of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration.

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2   Most recently *Summertime* (2009).

Infernal affairs: 'I'm a cop!'

Set in present-day Hong Kong, *Infernal Affairs* pits two of Asia's biggest stars (Tony Leung Chiu-Wai[3] and Andy Lau[4]) in a deadly cat and mouse game of deception. The story follows Leung's role of Chen Wing Yan (Yan), a police officer who has spent his entire 10-year career undercover amidst Hong Kong's criminal fraternity, and Lau's role of Lau Kin Ming (Ming), a gang member who was placed in the Hong Kong Police Academy as a cadet and has since risen through the ranks. Having established the two protagonists in their respective roles, the drama gathers pace when both police and criminal organisations discover that they have each planted a mole in the other's operations. The race is on to unearth the respective moles. In the action that follows, we come to understand the difficulties experienced by both Yan and Ming in living out their undercover lives, as they attempt to reconcile their conflicting organisational roles with their sense of who they think they 'really are'. This is played-out amidst a tense battle between both the individual protagonists and their respective organisations, heightening the pressures on each of the central characters' identities.

Yan's undercover career requires him to participate in criminal activities such as extortion and gang violence, leading to multiple arrests. Alongside these activities, Yan passes information to SP Wong, one of only two people who know that he is a police officer (the other is the senior officer who recruited him). Throughout the film we observe Yan's difficulties in reconciling his sense of himself as a police officer with his association and involvement with criminal activity. Ming's experience is, initially at least, almost a mirror to that of Yan; he is a young criminal with a clean record selected by gang boss Sam to enter the police force as a way of protecting his operations from disruptions by law enforcement. As events unfold we watch Ming grapple with his job, trying to satisfy his gang boss while at the same time protect his own interests as his career takes off within the police force. These organisational environments create pressures, expectations and influences on individuals with implications for the employees in question and the organisation more widely.

Our choice of *Infernal Affairs* is both pragmatic and aesthetic. While other films have explored similar territory, such as Philip Davis' (1995) *I.D.*, *Infernal Affairs* plays out more clearly the identity tensions we are interested in.[5] Furthermore, *Infernal Affairs'* focus on the lives of Yan and Ming make it more suitable for our analysis than *Infernal Affairs 2* or *3*, which explore other themes and characters (see Marchetti, 2007). The film presents the tensions provoking identity work as a living hell, providing the film's title (Law, 2006). It reveals two protagonists responding to strong organisational pressures in different ways, exhibiting different aspects of narrative identity work.

In seeking to explore the value of Ricoeur's theoretical framework to the study of identity in organisations, we will use *Infernal Affairs* as an 'extreme case' of identity

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3   Star of films including *Happy Together*, *Hero*, *In The Mood For Love*, *2046* and *Lust, Caution*.

4   Star of films including *As Tears Go By*, *Days Of Being Wild* and *House Of Flying Daggers*.

5   We have chosen the original telling of the Infernal Affairs story rather than Martin Scorcese's remake (*The Departed*, 2006) somewhat arbitrarily, but find the former aesthetically more pleasing, with lead performances that contribute a greater sense of nuance to the identity issues under discussion.

work. This approach provides a greater visibility for the dynamic, complex processes involved (Eisenhardt, 1989; Kreiner et al., 2006) together with the crucial role of identity work within and outside the formally defined boundaries of the organisation (Watson, 2008). As such, the film provides a valuable opportunity for theoretical development (Yin, 2003). Our use of the film is not to suggest that its contents represent a valid empirical data set from which insights can be generalised; instead we use it as a springboard for developing a theoretical discussion of narrative identity work in organisational contexts (Spicer, 2001; Born et al., 2006; also see Phillips, 1995).

We can now explore how a Ricoeurian approach to narrative identity can help us to understand the identity work presented in the film and, in turn, the identity work processes experienced by those in occupational roles that require them to act in conflict with their pre-existing sense of self. We will do so by looking at the processes of prefiguration, configuration and refiguration in turn, discussing how they relate to identity work and the hermeneutic creation of autrebiographies, illustrating our arguments with examples from the film.

1. Prefiguration: Implicit frameworks for understanding

Mimesis$_1$ (prefiguration) is the knowledge arrived at through prior experience that provides a pre-narrative understanding. There are expectations of the self and of narrative conventions more generally, there is a semantic knowledge which is brought to bear on experience, a 'conceptual network' such that a sequence and causality can be conferred on events. Further, Ricoeur argues that there is an important symbolic element to prefiguration, that human action can be narrated (and 'read') because 'it is already articulated by signs, rules, and norms' (1984: 57). There are pre-narrative expectations of what, for example, a police career 'looks like', the type of form it will take. The same is true of a criminal career. It is these pre-understandings (together with broader narrative-convention understandings) that the character of Yan draws upon in constructing his identity narratives.

Pre-narrative understandings are traditions, the taken-for-granted forms to be found in new experience, the assumed way to make sense of events. In this sense they compose what has become sedimented in one's approach to understanding experience. However, Ricoeur (1991b) contrasts this with innovation. Not every new experience will lend itself to being understood in these forms and, while certain narrative 'rules' such as cause and effect, are likely to remain, innovation may be required in confronting new forms of understanding. In conflict-driven identity work, gaps or contradictions in prefigurative knowledge can cause problems.

The conflict with the accepted forms of police careers and behaviour is dramatically played out between Yan and his police handler on the roof of a skyscraper overlooking the sprawling cityscape and beautiful coastal backdrop. SP Wong warns Yan about the excesses of his gang-related behaviour and the frequency of his arrests. He asks Yan if he is going crazy, 'Have you forgotten you're a cop?', provoking Yan's retort that the behaviours required by his day-to-day circumstances cannot always be consistent with his 'real' identity as a police officer. Yan is exasperated:

> Yan: What do you want me to do? Remind myself daily I'm a cop? Shout, 'Drop your gun, I'm a cop', even while I'm dreaming?

It is made clear to us how rootless is Yan's sense of self. All that is providing a foundation is the undercover story and, as we will see, such stories are in flux and prone to review, they are not set in stone. He received no 'undercover training' and has no role models for how he should act or how he should interpret these actions. He is therefore required to almost constantly innovate identity narratives in response to these challenging circumstances. When trying to reconcile the paradoxes of his actions, Yan takes up multiple perspectives in constructing stories to explain these actions to himself as well as to his superior, whilst attempting to maintain a sense of his 'true' identity.

When not acting true to one's self-perception, however briefly, this alter(ed) ego pushes away from the prefigured understanding of the self. Yan's story of subterfuge, of lack of criminal intent, becomes more difficult as sources of support become less frequent and his involvement in criminal behaviour deepens. It is this accumulation of traits and habits that causes distress for Yan. In many organisational settings we can be asked to act 'out of character' for long periods of time, this is certainly the case for Yan who spends the majority of his time acting as a criminal. In his years undercover he has caused a great deal of suffering and, to the extent that these modes of behaviour have become sedimented, they have become virtually a 'normal' part of his character and his way of interacting with and interpreting the world. SP Wong's criticisms suggest he believes that Yan releases his frustrations through his violent acts and he certainly benefits from his thefts. Who is to say these acts are not 'real'?

Character and self-constancy (keeping one's word) are the two poles of identity that stand in a temporal, dynamically dialectical relationship to one another. This conception of the role of narrative in the dialectical processes relating ipse and idem identities has not yet been fully utilised in organisational research. Yan develops a (hi)story of his undercover operation to define his sense of self in opposition to many of his actions in the gang organisation. Morally he can refer to a sense of 'greater good', diegetically the criminal acts must be configured within a story of subterfuge and as lacking real intent. The act of seeking to reinforce one's sense of self, reasserting the story necessary to mediate the gap between idem and ipse identities, can be seen when one of Yan's senior officers dies. Having selected Yan for the undercover mission while at the Academy, he was one of only two officers to know about Yan's role (together with SP Wong). Yan, dressed in his Triad 'uniform' of all black with black leather jacket, salutes as the funeral cortege passes. Yan's actions convey a sense in which, despite his daily behaviours, he retains the identity of a cop.

2. Configuration: Emplotting autrebiographies

Where prefiguration establishes narrative expectations, configuration (mimesis$_2$) describes the process of emplotment which 'brings together factors as heterogeneous as agents, goals, means, interactions, circumstances, unexpected results' (Ricoeur, 1984: 65). In this way, Ming's actions, such as revealing information about the police's undercover operations to his gangster boss, are emplotted, taking up their position in the story of his career. The film suggests Ming's inner tensions arise through deciding which story is 'true' (i.e. which he subscribes to). Ricoeur argued that configuration

'opens up the kingdom of the *as if*' (1984: 64), it is here that narrative allows for experimentation, the development of new stories, the trying-on of new senses of the self.

To explore this ambiguity, the film observes Ming's relationship with his girlfriend. Mary wants to write a novel and she explains her latest idea to him:

> Mary: I can write about a man with 28 different personalities
>
> Ming: Are you talking about me?
>
> Mary: Be serious. Think about it. A man with 28 personalities. That means he starts acting the minute he wakes up. He doesn't know which one is the real him.
>
> Ming: Isn't it scary?
>
> Mary: Yes, very scary.

Configuration is the process by which we come to reshape our experiences, both from external and internal sources (Ezzy, 1998), as part of our personal narrative, it 'draws a meaningful story from a diversity of events or incidents' (Ricoeur, 1984: 65). If we briefly (and crudely) assume that Ming has 'multiple personalities', these can in fact be considered as competing narratives. Through emplotment, Ming 'confers an intelligible configuration on a heterogeneous collection composed of intentions, causes, and contingencies' (Ricoeur, 2005: 100), he creates interpretive stories through syntagmatic sequences mediating between concordance and discordance to produce a 'concordant discordance' (1984: 69-73). The first story, to simplify, is that in which he has a certain moral sense which has begun to assert itself, causing him to begin to try and uphold the values held by the police and fulfil the character suggested by his outward behaviour in this organisation. This is in contradiction to an alternative story in which he is keeping his word to the criminal gang and, ultimately, serving their interests.

Each act (such as bringing about the demise of his criminal boss, Sam) can be configured into each narrative, the prior actions of his past interpreted in terms of a projected future, in both terms as a form of career advancement. It is this process of emplotment that guides the complexities of (experimental) narrative formation. Moment by moment, Ming can choose which narrative he inhabits: talking to Sam by phone, he is a criminal, but as he turns to face his police colleagues, he smilingly takes up the role of a fellow officer. This follows a similar pattern to the symbolic weight of an item such as Ming's police badge, which he plays with at his office desk, before commencing his search for the mole, face up: police officer; face down: criminal mole.

Discussing her idea with Ming, and we assume not yet aware of his double-life, Mary ponders: 'Even though he is good, he's done bad things. How should it end?' The question prompts some introspection from Ming, although it is not made explicit whether he sees himself like the character in Mary's book, struggling between good and bad, or as someone who is quite comfortable with the path he has chosen. There is a clear prefigurational understanding of what makes a successful career, arresting criminals for law enforcement or uncovering police information for criminal gain

(principally, Yan's identity as the mole). Configuration is concerned with reconciling this prefigurational knowledge with experience, interpreted as historical or fictional.

Ricoeur argues that the two modes of history and fiction are interweaved, and this overlap and cross-referenced interpretation provides an important characteristic of the types of narrative identity work discussed in this paper. Historical narratives conform to particular (prefigurational) narrative forms and traditions in order to be understood, they are presented with some degree of fictionality to give them sense, to make them seem alive. Similarly, fictional narratives are presented with historical characteristics, events are presented as though they were historical for the narrator (Ricoeur, 1988: 190). For Ricoeur (*ibid.*: 192), 'human time' is refigured 'upon this overlapping, the quasi-historical moment changing places with the quasi-fictional moment of history'. We therefore suggest that our autrebiographies, our self-reflexive creation of stories from the perspective of the other, are composed of fictional histories and historical fictions.

The interweaving of historical and fictional modes in autrebiography is what we propose underlies the process of configuration (mimesis$_2$). That is, the process by which understanding is experimented with in terms of succession and causality is amended, updated and revised in line with the historical conventions bound up in the configurational act. What is to be gained by highlighting these aspects is the particular place they have within a narrative framework. As innovation is required in the process of identity work confronted with conflicting demands and job roles, the overlaying of history and fiction, the experimentation with different configurational structures and representations, allows us to attempt to reconcile the challenges to our sense of same-self (or, in a Ricoeurian sense, character). This is the process we find Ming engaged with in the film.

Externally, we see Ming explain and, internally, potentially configure his actions within these accepted narratives. He utilises his progress within the police force to apprehend dangerous criminals and win the support of his colleagues. At the same time, these actions can be explained to the criminal gang as a way of maintaining his cover. Thus, his actions take their place, configured within two competing stories presented to different audiences. While events and actions can be configured within either narrative, they are, ultimately, mutually exclusive and a decision will need to be made by Ming at some juncture. It is the tension around this decision that guides Ming's development throughout the film, reaching its dramatic conclusion in the film's final scenes.

3. RefiguRation: Reading ourselves

Finally, creating the hermeneutic circle of self-interpretation, there is a temporal element 'onto which narrative time grafts its configurations' (Ricoeur, 1984: 59). Ming's configuration of his position only makes sense within a temporal framework of past, present and future, it can only be understood when 'read' as part of a particular story. The configuration of his narrative identity appears to reach some form of stability when, fulfilling the duties of his role in the police force, Ming establishes an ambush that brings about the downfall of Sam and his gang. With his conception of himself apparently refigured (mimesis$_3$), Ming returns to the police station where he receives his police colleagues' applause and is given a cup of the department's best coffee to

indicate that he is now a member of the team. This helps to demonstrate the fluid, inconsistent and potentially paradoxical nature of identities in organisations.

Ricoeur's threefold mimesis suggests how such an analysis could be viewed hermeneutically. Ming has a pre-narrative understanding that informs his conception of his narrative identity within the 'space' of both the criminal organisation and the police force. Not only does this prefiguration inform one's understanding of how a narrative is configured and a sense of the need to 'progress' in a career as one's life moves forward, but our previous experiences suggest particular routines with which we need to conform. Following the innovative configuration's engagement with the challenges of the organisation, a narrative understanding is reached and the sense of oneself or of others is then *refigured* accordingly. It is at this point that we find 'the intersection…of the world configured [through emplotment] and the world wherein real action occurs' (Ricoeur, 1984: 71). The process of narrative *configuration* or emplotment becomes the central point in a hermeneutic circle of understanding and revision between action and the 'text', each informing and refining the other (Ricoeur, 1981, 1984).

In our Ricoeurian approach, we all remain the protagonists in our own autrebiographies: we are the central force in the narratives that are constructed out of our perception of our experiences and actions. But we are also their readers, learning and refining our understandings. These hermeneutic narrative interpretations can be suggested in several scenes in *Infernal Affairs* where Yan visits a psychiatrist, arranged for him by SP Wong, in response to the troubles he's experiencing after 10 years undercover. Yan tends to use these sessions to sleep, affording psychiatrist Dr Lee time to practise solitaire on her computer. However, as the 'treatment' progresses so does their relationship. As Yan prepares to leave following another hour's sleep he tells Dr Lee a secret, 'I'm a cop', to which Dr Lee, observing Yan's gangster clothing, smiles, joking: 'I'm a cop too'. In responding to the apparent absurdity of Yan's confession, Dr Lee reinforces a sense that his undercover cop narrative is a fiction, one that cannot compete with the weight of evidence that contradicts it. Yan's difficulties suggest that, viewing himself from the 'outside', he may be coming to a similar conclusion himself.

Refiguration informs future pre-narrative understanding, completing the interpretative intersection between action (experience) and text (narrative identity). It 'marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader…the world wherein real action occurs' (Ricoeur, 1984: 71). However, Ricoeur refutes any suggestion of a 'vicious circle' by suggesting a *spiralling* understanding, progressing to different 'altitudes' (*ibid.*: 72), refining meaning in a manner derived from his broader hermeneutic approach (Fisher, 1997). The creation (and revision) of narrative helps us to come to new understandings about ourselves and the challenges of our organisations. It is in this way that, submitting to a particular narrative, identity work provokes new action. This is the completion/beginning of the hermeneutic of identity work, the revision and creation of new understandings of the world and the self, the formation of new prefigured understandings.

It is through these processes that conflicts and tensions are mediated and new, accommodating narratives are hopefully authored that bring concordance to the tensions of discord. In an extreme sense, this intersection between the narrative process of the

individual and the extant world of action can be viewed as a moment of 'revelation' where understanding is reached (Tilley, 1997). Faced with contradictions and uncertain desires and demands, we are required to innovate new understandings or narrative compromises. We are concerned here with the everyday, minor epiphanies of identity work. Elements of this process are revealed in *Infernal Affairs*.

Following the death of SP Wong at the hands of gangsters who Ming has tipped-off, he looks for clues among the dead man's belongings, finding the cell phone previously used to contact the undercover police officer. Ming is therefore able to contact Yan, inviting him to the station in order to relieve him of his undercover mission. Yan takes up the offer and, when he is safely sat in police headquarters, Ming asks him what he wants in reward for his long service undercover. Yan's reply is deceptively simple:

> Yan: I just want an identity. I want to be a normal man.

However, continuing the cat and mouse mirroring throughout the film, while Yan is briefly left alone in the office, he discovers evidence indicating that Ming is the criminal mole in the police force. Returning to an empty room Ming realises that Yan has unearthed his own secret and so deletes the official record of Yan's identity as a police officer. By doing so, he has removed any historical trace of Yan's existence undercover. Yan's narrative identity, his identification of himself as a cop, now has no historical basis, no physical or trace relation to anything 'standing-for' the reality of his past. This extreme situation in the struggles of identity work in the organisation represents a break in the hermeneutic circle of Yan's autrebiography.

Authoring an autrebiography is, ultimately, a reading of oneself, an interpretation from the outside, and its sources can be varied, influential and potentially conflicting. It draws on both historical and fictional modes and an interweaving of the two together. Historical sources and accounts are drawn upon in the creation of identity narratives as facts that are juxtaposed and developed. These historical traces come to 'stand-for' (Ricoeur, 1988: 100) a sense of the 'real'. Such sources carry traces of reality but take their place within a narrative through the same devices as fictional elements. Fictional sources are also configured into the identity narrative(s) when they are 'tried out', tested within a narrative laboratory used to explore different interpretations and discover a sense of 'best fit' (Ricoeur, 1992). It is in the act of refiguration that historical and fictional modes are interweaved, that an act of reading or interpretation is deployed in creating the historical fiction/fictional history of an autrebiographical narrative.

For both Yan and Ming there is a key historical event that helps define or support their interpretation of their narrative identities: the assignment of their undercover missions. However, there are no historical traces of these events. How they come to interpret their subsequent behaviour and actions can now be configured in any number of ways and, as with many memories, what is history and what is fiction can quickly become unclear. Did Yan enjoy his cocaine use and the thrill of his criminal activities? If so, is he no longer a cop? Ming has created a fiction for his police colleagues that he has broken a criminal gang, but is there some truth to this fiction? It is within the organisations to which they belong that they can find support for their identity work. However, in the film, both protagonists live their lives outside of a settled organisational context and are short of reinforcements. Isolated in this way, as their identity claims become tenuous,

their narrative refigurations, removed from historical sources, are left to roam freely through unstable fictional experimentations and 'out of character' actions.

Conclusion

At the film's climax, Yan calls Ming to the rooftop where he had previously met his police superior, SP Wong. It is clear that Yan is not simply seeking to expose Ming's deceit as he has already provided evidence to Mary. When Ming seeks to strike a deal with Yan in return for his own freedom, he asks him again what he wants. Yan, unmoved, replies: 'I want my identity back'.

As the film illustrates, organisations frequently attempt to marshal the internal striving of individuals towards the organisation's ends. They present a range of roles an employee is expected to assume, adapting our manners and characteristics as required, provoking tensions when there are mismatches between our cherished sense of ourselves and the demands of our employers (Dukerich et al., 1998). Work and organisational life regularly present provocations to our conceptions of ourselves, to our personal identities; they are sites of frequent identity work where we attempt to moderate between the desires and demands of our internal and external influences. This paper has offered a theoretical framework for addressing the types of conflict and the processes involved in identity work in organisations, arguing for the particular value of a Ricoeurian narrative approach.

The detailed engagement with identity as process, facilitated by Ricoeur's ideas, reveals how identity work can be a conflict-ridden process in search of stability. This paper has shown the potential of a particular 'Ricoeurian' approach to these processes in which narrative performs an important mediating function in bringing concordance to discord between the ipse (self) and idem (same) identities. This function is one of self-reflexive, hermeneutic interpretation understood within a temporal framework of the remembered past, experienced present and anticipated future.

We have outlined the narrative processes through which identity work is conducted. Building on the foundations of accumulated, prefigured understandings, narratives are configured, drawing together different events, actions and characteristics into a coherent story. Moreover, through the epiphanies of autrebiographical insights, further actions are impacted upon as narrative understandings are refigured. Such an interpretative process, the creation of what we have referred to as autrebiographies, is particularly relevant in an organisational context where such potentially stark contrasts as one's personal self (Yan, committer of criminal acts) and organisational self (Yan, undercover police officer) may provoke significant challenges.

While we have sought to explicate Ricoeur's ideas through the extreme case of undercover police work and gangland violence, we believe that the theoretical approach we have proposed for understanding identity work has significant value for less dramatic occupational contexts. We might all recognise some aspects of our work that require us to behave in ways that conflict with our sense of self while at work. Responding to the conflicting evidence of our sense of identity, ongoing identity work

is required to formulate and sustain some believable and verifiable sense of who we are. Narrative identity work understood as a hermeneutic process of self-reflexive interpretation helps us to grasp the mediation occurring between the conflicting demands and thus the evidence of our own behaviour that we are faced with.

There is an important role for prefigured and refigured narrative knowledge, understood as a hermeneutic circle that provides almost constant revision, (re)writing and (re)reading of the narratives of the self in a spiral of reference and understanding between narrative and action, between the past, the present and the future. This creates an ongoing dialectic between self-constancy and the relatively fixed 'character' of the individual. It is character, in terms of the particular dispositions of the individual that provides a stubborn adherence to preconceived ideas of one's own identity and how one believes one should act. These insights might help practitioners to consider the significance of the very real difficulties encountered by staff in job roles that conflict with personal values, beliefs or other, less morally sensitive aspects of their sense of who they are.

The formation and sedimentation of the habits and traits that form character's dispositions in an organisational context can relate to areas such as training, gaining experience and interaction with one's colleagues (both real and imagined), inside and outside the organisation. Individuals may benefit from being given space for narrative experimentation and having both the necessary historical and fictional resources at their disposal, facilitating and supporting the types of process discussed in this paper. This may, for example, be particularly relevant for mentoring or appraisal processes where employees might be able to articulate the conflicts they experience such that support strategies or alternative job roles can be developed.

Beyond our analysis, further research might explore empirically how the tensions present at the heart of *Infernal Affairs* are experienced in practice and the types of story produced as narrative attempts to cope with the tensions encountered. This may be especially valuable when a job role demands actions inconsistent with a person's pre-existing sense of self. The pursuit of such projects could usefully develop the role of historical and fictional narrative modes in autrebiographical work as a means of understanding the experiences and coping processes undertaken by people in such difficult occupational contexts.

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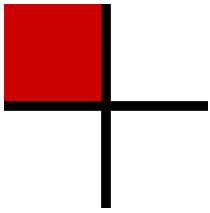
Innovation and financialisation: Unpicking a close association*

Sam Dallyn

abstract

In this paper I seek to examine the rather neglected association between innovation and the ideology of financialisation. I begin by exploring the existing critical work on the concept of innovation in the organisational literature. I then draw out a different account of innovation by examining the role the concept plays within the ideology of financialisation and situate it as a financial buzzword. I also briefly examine the social and political importance of innovation as a financial buzzword by drawing on examples of how it is used by government and the university sector. In unpicking the concept of innovation and its ideological association with financialisation in given instances, I hope to show that it is a pervasive buzzword that masks and often actually helps to facilitate increasing processes of commercialisation and financialisation in particular social fields.

Introduction

> Inventions, ideas, new products, and new services are worthless, without a downstream process that turns them into something that convinces people and firms to become customers. (Corrado, 2007: 3)

Innovation is a contemporary concept that is incorporated into a vast array of different discourses.[1] It occupies a plethora of different fields and has led to a burgeoning literature in business and organization studies (for some selective examples see Abrahamson, 1991; Damanpour, 1992; Fagerberg, Mowery and Nelson, 2005; Hellstrom, 2004; O'Shea, 2002; Slappendel, 2004; Wolfe, 1994). In this paper I want to better situate the concept of innovation by selectively exploring the role the discourse of innovation plays in relation to finance. I will argue that innovation is a buzzword that often serves to give a positive gloss to processes of financialisation.

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1 By discourse I refer loosely here to the 'ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena' (Hajer, 1993: 45). There tends to be a particular ensemble of concepts that encompasses the discourse of innovation such as the knowledge economy, creativity, investment and a variety of others.

By the term buzzword I refer to a fashionable piece of jargon (Collins, 2000a). A buzzword is a concept that is difficult to pin down to any singular unambiguous meaning but which possess a certain positive gloss. In this article I intend to draw on and develop the understanding of buzzwords in management literature by pointing to their political importance and their relation to ideology, through an analysis of the concept of innovation. Innovation is often invoked by government departments and university administrations as something inherently desirable, as the root to economic success, yet its precise meaning tends to remain ambiguous. It is for this reason that I call innovation a buzzword.

This in turn brings to the fore questions of ideology, while innovation and its broad association with newness and creativity tends to be seen automatically as a good thing, I propose that we need to develop a better understanding of the ideology innovation is supporting in different contexts. Ultimately I argue that in the literature on innovation there is a lack of sustained analysis of innovation as a concept in terms of the roles it performs and its functions in particular socio-political discourses. There has been some critique in management literature of the assumption that innovation is necessarily a good thing, which has been characterised and critiqued as pro-innovation bias (see for example Kimberly, 1981). Some innovations may not be either particularly efficient or progressive as Abrahamson (1991) explores. However, there is a real lack of critical analysis of what innovation actually *means* in different socio-political discourses in the contemporary period and the ideological associations it has. For this we need to undertake a critical interrogation of the concept itself in its different uses. As Suchman and Bishop (2000: 331) note, innovation has always been 'a highly political construct taken up by specific actors and made to work in particular ways'.

Furthermore, this presents a pressing political problem as the concept of innovation has spread into such a wide variety of different fields. We now have various university departments across the UK and worldwide devoted to innovation, and an important UK government department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).[2] My key argument here is that the idea of innovation often serves as a support to processes of financialisation. By financialisation I mean the spreading of credit to ever wider sections of the population (see Martin, 2002) and then the processes of re-packaging and betting on these credits and loans, through devices like securitisation and derivatives (see Bryan and Rafferty, 2006). The obsession with innovation in relation to finance can also be seen as something which will potentially lead to another burst of speculation, the same kind of frenzied speculation that was largely responsible for the recent financial crisis (see Perez, 2002). The association between innovation and finance is expressed most clearly in Schumpeter's (1934) *The Theory of Economic Development*, where the two concepts are closely intertwined.

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2   This department has recently been renamed the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS), the term university apparently no longer warrants a separate mention in the title. If anything this serves to further strengthen the ideological association between innovation and finance and business at the level of government. This important association is one I will seek to outline through the course of the paper.

Within contemporary capitalism at a business level we have seen a certain 'routinization of innovation', an attempt to organize continuous innovation (Thrift, 2005: 7). Innovation here is essentially about the constant adoption of newness be it a system, policy program, device, process, product or service (Damonpour, 1992: 376). When one takes such a broad definition, innovation appears to be a fairly nebulous concept without anything inherently desirable about it but the term also does seem to possess a certain relentlessly positive glow. There are a variety of different guises and associations that innovation possesses in given instances some of which are more positive than others and some not so tied to the ideology of financialisation. Therefore I am stressing that we need to engage in a *context specific* unpicking of innovation and the ideological associations it has in given instances. There remains a possibility then that innovation might be imbued with different ideologies in different contexts, which is why we need to examine its meanings in a context specific way. For example, innovation might be associated more with public goods or sustainability in particular instances.

Innovation then is a concept overloaded with different meanings, however here I examine how innovation tends to be understood and used within dominant social and political discourses in contemporary society. The UK government definition of innovation, for example, cited in a recent white paper is 'the successful exploitation of new ideas' (DIUS, 2008: 13). Key to this conception of innovation is clearly the commercial value of new ideas and processes, so that they can be 'exploited' to yield capital. In the following critical analysis of innovation I will build on some of the recent work on the financialisation of different aspects of life (see Beverungen et al., 2009; Bretton Woods Project, 2010; Erturk et al., 2008; Leyshon and Thrift, 2007; Martin, 2002; Perez, 2002: Roberts, 2009) by looking at how the concept of innovation serves to support it. In making this contribution to the critical literature on financialisation I will lay the foundations by engaging with some of the existing critical work on innovation.

Given that innovation has many different associations and meanings in different contexts it is important to be clear about the precise scope of my argument in the paper. I intend to work through the three following propositions: 1) that while the existing critical literature exploring the concept of innovation is insightful, if small, it would benefit from a consideration of ideology, which would help in unpicking the different political associations that the discourse of innovation has in particular instances. 2) That there is an important and long standing association between innovation and finance that has been rather neglected in recent innovation studies with one or two exceptions (see for example O'Sullivan, 2005). 3) At a political level the concept of innovation has been invoked to support what I describe as the ideology of financialisation.

In drawing out the associations between innovation and financialisation, I will begin by exploring some of the limited but often insightful critical work on the concept of innovation in organization studies. I will then outline the position of innovation as a financial buzzword that is often selectively used by financial companies to give a positive gloss to financial practices. In the third section, I draw out and characterise what I describe as the ideology of financialisation and examine in what ways it is linked to the concept of innovation. In the final section I will focus on the socio-political

importance of innovation as a financial buzzword by indicating how it is used by government and by universities. This will provide a sense of the importance of the close association between innovation and the ideology of financialisation. Innovation is used by the financial sector to provide a positive gloss to financial practices but this conception of innovation has also spread to government and higher education institutions. I will conclude by briefly discussing alternative, more radical conceptions of innovation that are not so tied to processes of financialisation.

Critical work on the concept of innovation

It is worth emphasising that there is a comparative dearth of work developing critical perspectives that explore the concept of innovation in organizational literature. The majority of research in organization and management tends to take innovation as something inherently positive that can help companies compete more effectively in the market place (see for example Damanpour, 1992; Slappendel, 1996; Wijnberg, 2004). Broadly speaking innovation is associated with newness, it is any idea, practice or material artefact that is 'perceived as new' (Zaltman et al., 1973: 158) by the unit of adoption. As I will go onto explore, although this is often left implicit in the literature on organizational innovation, this newness must also be commercially viable and profitable to be an innovation that takes hold. Amidst this literature is what is perhaps best described as some discordant fragments that seek to engage with the concept of innovation more critically. I will briefly examine these alternative perspectives on innovation before developing my own critical perspective. Principally I will argue that we need to explore how innovation is used in different socio-political discourses and examine the ideological associations innovation has in different contexts.

Perhaps the most mainstream of the existing critiques of the concept of innovation, is one that criticises the study of innovation for its lack of systematicity and consistency. Wolfe (1996) for example is highly critical of this dense field in management and organization literature. Wolfe (1996: 406) makes his critique on the basis of the catch all ambiguity of the concept of innovation. He argues that this has led to a certain hit-or-miss approach to the research that has meant that it does not seem to advance or evolve in a cumulative manner. For example, researchers are often unclear about what stage of the innovation process they are studying; some focus on the point at which an innovation is adopted, others the number of innovations that have been implemented and others the extent of innovation implementation (Wolfe, 1996: 414), which all might lead to quite different results when measured. While Wolfe's critique of innovation research undoubtedly has some continuing relevance and validity, it is ultimately a call to develop a more systematic measurable instantiation of the concept of innovation to aid theory building (Wolfe, 1996: 425). What I am more interested in here however is exploring how the catch-all ambiguity of innovation is not simply a hindrance to research but ultimately something that makes innovation a powerful socio-political buzzword. It is essentially the very ambiguity of innovation, which means it can be employed selectively and strategically in different contexts.

The next critical perspective on innovation tries to re-invigorate the concept by giving it some interesting and unexpected theoretical associations. This kind of approach works

against dominant trends in managerial thinking in innovation research, which see innovation principally as an ordered process that can be managed, controlled or facilitated (for examples of this kind of this alternative account see Akrich et al., 2002; Hellstrom, 2004; O'Shea, 2002). O'Shea (2002: 115) draws on Bergson's account of creative evolution in developing a conception of innovation that is more pluralistic and focused around creating the possibility of a variety of futures rather than a singular one. Innovation is seen as a *process* rather than product, thus O'Shea breaks with existing accounts of innovation on the basis that they present a singular model of time and progress, an overly narrow and ordered conception (*ibid.*: 119). Instead he presents a conception of innovation based around 'utmost action' and continuous change; changes yield further unexpected changes rather than leading to complete products (*ibid.*: 121).

From a different theoretical perspective Hellstrom (2004) draws on Hegel and Marx to develop a notion of innovation as dialectical social action. That is, innovation occurs in dialectical opposition to a given situation and in a dialectical relation between the individual and innovative artefact. This greater attention to the social contexts from which innovation emerges that Hellstrom presents works against the tendency to see innovation as a disembodied entity, which is evident in 'the increase in the calculative or manipulative treatment of innovations and the social relations in which innovation takes place, with a concomitant emphasis on innovation "management"' (Hellstrom, 2004: 643). Hellstrom uses Lukacs's notion of reification to highlight that the dominant view of innovation tends to reduce the relation between humans to a relation between things. The human relations responsible for innovation become abstracted as commodities and products, rather than socially embedded dialectical actions.

Both these accounts in different ways then work against the pre-dominant managerial conception of innovation found in much of the literature, the problem is that they tend to neglect the political dimensions of why innovation has been understood in the way that it has. While Hellstrom for example draws heavily on Marxist theory he gives little sense of how the discourse of innovation works ideologically in solidifying financial capitalism. To develop a more nuanced critical perspective I suggest that what is needed is an engagement with the roles that the concept of innovation plays in different socio-political discourses. Why is innovation such a popular and pervasive term? To address this question it is not enough to simply give an alternative more radical understanding of innovation, which Hellstrom and O'Shea do extremely effectively. It is necessary to understand what ideological associations innovation has in its current uses.

In uncovering the political aspects of the different meanings of innovation, Suchman and Bishop (2000) provide a very useful account. Suchman and Bishop note that the obsession with the 'new' reflected in the discourse of innovation often has deeply traditional frames associated with it. Innovation places individuals in a competitive field of action, in which corporate innovators must adapt to survive in a changing environment (*ibid.*: 327; see also Suchman, 2002: 143). They draw on the experience of two US corporations, one in document-related technologies and the other in insurance. For Midwest Insurance, innovation was principally about the shifting of corporate direction into broader financial products like health and care insurance. In Midwest Insurance a dichotomy was created between 'new' and 'old' agents, between those willing and unwilling to embrace change (Suchman and Bishop, 2002: 330). As they

note, 'in this sense "innovation" in the work force, rather than creating something new, effectively perpetuates an old, "divide and conquer", managerial strategy' (*ibid.*). Accompanying this was an increased focus on competitive individualism, with individuals required to take responsibility and acquire relevant skills. As Suchman and Bishop (*ibid.*: 331) explain, 'this means that framing agendas under the rubric of innovation and change is inevitably a strategic move appropriating the positive value of the term for whatever the agenda to be pursued in its name might comprise'.

The more political perspective on innovation offered by Suchman and Bishop (2002) gives us the beginnings of an alternative theoretical approach that might help us to understand how the discourse of innovation operates socio-politically. Their account serves to highlight how the meaning of innovation is strategically shaped by particular actors in different contexts and they also note how the gloss of innovation serves to give a positive mask to the more contentious corporate practices that might lie behind it. To situate the political importance of innovation however, I think it is necessary to employ some further conceptual tools. In highlighting how the discourse of innovation might be working to support particular corporate practices, it is helpful to develop some conception of the ideology that underpins it in different instances. Ideology is the imaginary relation, the key set of framing norms and practices that give sustenance and unity to a set of rule-governed behaviours or discourses.

Here I intend to draw out a neglected association between the pervasive concept of innovation and the ideology of financialisation. In organization and management research there has actually been rather little consideration of the relation between innovation and finance (see O'Sullivan, 2005: 240). Indeed, there has also been little attention paid to the relation between innovation and resource allocation. Given that economics is centrally concerned with resource allocation it is fair to say that we are lacking any kind of substantive economics of innovation (*ibid.*: 245). One can begin to see a discrepancy here between the concept of innovation as deployed in organization and management studies and the functions that the discourse of innovation plays in its contemporary socio-political uses. That is, when government and universities as commercial entities refer to innovation they are concerned with creating the best conditions for finance and investment (see for example DIUS, 2008) to fund it. While in the recent literature in organization and management studies on innovation there tends to be relatively little attention paid to the key role of resource allocation and finance in funding innovations. I argue that this link between innovation and finance is crucial to many of the modern understandings of innovation. The intention here is to develop a critical perspective in the following sections on this link, by showing the connections between innovation and the ideology of financialisation. To lay the ground work for this alternative critical account of innovation as an advance from existing critiques of the concept, I will begin by outlining its position as a financial buzzword.

Innovation as a financial buzzword

It is not difficult to find mention of the importance of innovation on the websites of different financial companies. Innovation is a key selling point for the majority of transnational financial services. For example, Credit Suisse, the international financial

services group based in Liechtenstein, declares that 'the Principality of Liechtenstein is a byword for innovation'. Apparently this is because of the country's 'economic and political stability, its liberal tax and corporate laws, and the strict secrecy rules applicable to its insurance and banking sectors' (Credit Suisse, 2010). The idea that a country can be a 'byword' for innovation due to its liberal tax laws and banking secrecy presents quite a revealing political association.

In the appropriation of innovation by the financial sector it has a variety of associations that are all rather imprecise but emit a positive glow. Innovation is associated with developing unconventional solutions (see USB, 2010) and with enhancing education and enterprise (see Goldman and Sachs, 2010; Santander, 2010; USB, 2010). Innovation in the language of financial services is also associated with derivatives, which are essentially the commodification of risks through the rolling together of discrete financial attributes into contracts (Bryan and Rafferty, 2006: 10). The international financial services bank, Deutsche Bank (2010: 3), for example argues that 'regulators' efforts to comprehensively reorganise derivatives markets threaten to hamper the viability and innovative powers of these segments'. We can see an example again here of how the positive gloss of innovation is being used both politically and ideologically to justify the predominance of the financial services sector. Innovation is seen as something of great worth that will be damaged by attempts at financial regulation.

Management buzzwords have received some attention already in critical management studies literature (see for example Collins, 2000a; 2000b; 2001; De Cock and Hipkin, 1997; du Gay, 1996). Here I want to develop the understanding of management buzzwords by linking the analysis of them to the concept of ideology. It is through exploring the relation between ideology and buzzwords that we can develop a more attuned understanding of the *political* role that buzzwords play in different contexts. Within critical management literature buzzwords tend to be seen as fashionable pieces of jargon, which have an important role in the 'grammar' of management (Collins, 2000: 10). Buzzwords often have a close association in the literature with fads, transitory popular fashions in management. As Abrahamson (1996: 255) notes, these fashionable techniques must be seen as both rational and progressive. However, these key norms regarding what is rational and progressive may also be open to challenge and subject to differences of opinion (*ibid.*: 262). Innovation ties quite neatly into this key norm of progress because it seems to suggest a positive newness; it reflects the idea that to progress we must be creative and unconventional.

While this understanding of buzzwords in the management literature is helpful in regard to innovation, it does not get us very far in understanding the political role that buzzwords play in different contexts. Buzzwords are often used for strategic political purposes and this aspect tends to be rather neglected in the management literature. Buzzwords then, are popular, fashionable and transitory concepts that have both a lack of clear directional specification and a certain positive glossy ring. As Cornwall and Brock (2005) note in their analysis of development buzzwords, these terms shelter multiple meanings and thus they are sometimes better described as being 'fuzz words'. Innovation fits this trend quite neatly since it can mean very different things in different contexts. The notion that buzzwords tend to be fuzz words reflects on the multiple

meanings of innovation and how it might be imbued with different ideological properties.

The notion of innovation as a buzzword has some overlaps with recent literature in critical entrepreneurship studies. In similar fashion to innovation, entrepreneurship has multiple meanings, despite being, in its pre-dominant conception, tied to venture capitalism and profit maximisation. Steyaert and Hjorth (2006) explore some alternative and collective conceptions of entrepreneurship, focusing on its capacity for social change. In critical entrepreneurship there is an emphasis upon the social and public dimensions of the concept (see Anderson et al., 2006; Hjorth and Bjerke, 2006; Lindgren and Packendorf, 2003; Steyaert and Katz, 2004). Indeed, as Steyaert and Hjorth (2006: 2) note, 'it might be possible to rescue and make public some of the less evident meanings' of social entrepreneurship. Because buzzwords have the quality of fuzziness and possess multiple meanings, there remains the possibility that they might be invested with different ideological properties in given instances. This also applies to innovation, which in certain instances might be understood in a more socially transformative sense. Having said this, it remains an important political task to understand how innovation is used, and the ideological associations that it has, within the pre-dominant discourses of contemporary capitalist life, which is my aim here.

The ideology of financialisation

Innovation is a concept that has sparked an extraordinarily wide range of theoretical and empirical research. There has been a variety of work on the sources of innovation (Von Hippel, 1995), the diffusion of innovations (Rogers, 2003), on its links to economic growth and evolution (Nelson and Winter, 1982; Verspagen, 2005) and on a variety of other social and economic phenomena. Work on technological innovation is one important subset of the innovation literature (see Rosenbloom and Christiensen, 1988; Roberts, 1987). Technological innovations are the type of innovations that have made the most concrete differences to the patterns of everyday life, like for example the steam engine (see Scherer, 1984). However, this kind of technological innovation is best seen as invention plus investment, investment is necessary to develop the capabilities and to acquire the materials for new technologies to be put into practice. Here the role of finance begins to enter the picture, individuals and firms bet on new technologies by taking out credit in the hope of increasing their production and getting hold of the next big innovation first.

At a theoretical level the key precursor to the close link between innovation and financialisation is Schumpeter. Schumpeter is perhaps the most cited and important theorist of innovation in organizational literature. He is also the theorist who makes the links between innovation and finance most explicit, which is why I will focus on his work here. Yet his conception of innovation is rather selectively employed in different empirical analyses in the innovation literature. In a helpful introduction to the Schumpeterian conception of innovation, Fagerberg (2005: 6) defines Schumpeter's innovation as the creation of 'new combinations of existing resources', the key actor in this process of creating new combinations is the entrepreneur. Schumpeter also develops a typology of innovation: of new products, new methods of production, new

sources of supply, the exploitation of new markets, and new ways to organize business (*ibid.*: 67).

In Schumpeter's analysis the entrepreneur's function (Schumpeter, 1934: 74) is to carry out new combinations, which is what is known as enterprise. For Schumpeter (*ibid.*: 78) 'everyone is an entrepreneur only when he actually carries out new combinations', and loses that character as soon as he has built up his business. This would seem to situate the entrepreneur as the creator of innovation, since innovation is about new combinations and the entrepreneur is the person who carries this out. Thus, for Schumpeter, business investment and entrepreneurial activity is integral to any innovation (see Scherer, 1984: 15). Schumpeter (1934: 89) actually explicitly separates the concept of innovation from invention. Integral to such a separation is a sense in which individual or collective inventions, which might take place on the shop floor or in alternative ideas of co-operative working arrangements, are not encompassed within the definition of innovation. Instead, the entrepreneur is the key driver of the process of innovation. Their role involves combining the different aspects of production to maximise capital (see Spicer and Jones, 2009: 48).

This distinction between innovation and invention is crucial to my analysis; since it is finance and entrepreneurial investment that is precisely what makes an invention into an innovation for Schumpeter (see also Scherer, 1984). Bill Gates is perhaps the most suitable model of the entrepreneurial innovator in this kind of account, since his success is not simply down to invention but rather his aggressive cornering of the market. Not only is Bill Gates the personification of a socially responsible capitalist (see Fisher, 2009: 27; Žižek, 2009: 34), he is one of the richest people in the world because his product Windows has assumed a certain orthodoxy; people use Windows without necessarily thinking about alternatives. This is the case despite the fact that many argue that alternative free programmes, like Linux, actually perform better and are less likely to crash. Thus Bill Gates' success is not so much down to invention, rather he has been able to monopolise the market place by creating a winning combination of Microsoft Disk Operating System (MS-DOS) and Windows. We can see from this example that entrepreneurial innovation is not so much about invention as the capacity to bring together skilful marketing, finance and a new product.

Less explored in different introductions to Schumpeterian innovation is the key role of financial capital in the process. Indeed, central to the driving of different forms of innovation is finance, Schumpeter (1934: 70) describes it as 'fundamentally necessary' to carrying out new combinations. Furthermore credit is necessary to detach productive means from the circular flow and adopt them to new combinations by outbidding other producers (*ibid.*: 71). Schumpeter (*ibid.*: 74) also notes the importance of the banker in providing credit, describing them as the capitalists par excellence. Regarding the importance of credit he does state that in principle 'no one other than the entrepreneur needs credit' (*ibid.*: 102). Credit then is about the entrepreneur being able to acquire

from the social stream of goods before they have acquired the normal claim to it (*ibid.*: 107).[3]

What we see then form the early Schumpeter is the importance of credit in funding processes of innovation. However, there are two aspects less addressed in this account of innovation but which would seem to spring from it: risk taking and speculation. In giving credit and essentially betting on new combinations there is clearly an element of risk, some ventures may succeed and many others may fail. Secondly, this also encourages people to speculate on other people's risks, by betting on the investments of a particular credit agency. These elements of risk and speculation are central to the ideology of financialisation, which selectively draws on innovation as a buzzword.

By financialisation I mean the spread of finance to increasing areas of social life, the principal tool, which facilitates this process is credit. Financialisation in a sense takes off from here, although the spread of credit has worked in conjunction with a variety of other phenomena which can be associated with amalgamating and betting on credit, like derivatives (see Bryan and Rafferty, 2006), securitisation (see Roberts, 2009: 336) and speculation, all of which are integral to the present ideology of financialisation.

Unfortunately, ideology is a rather unfashionable term at present in much of organizational literature (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000: 1145) but its value here is that it helps us to develop a more political perspective on the practices that the concept of innovation is helping to support. In using the term ideology I am employing Althusser's definition, which is the imaginary relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence (Althusser, 2008: 36). As Eagleton (1991: 18) notes, for Althusser ideology is 'a particular organization of signifying practices which goes to constitute human beings as social subjects'. The effects of this ideology are rooted in practices and material relations, combined with discourses. However, ideology here is not singular but multiple. There are a variety of symbolic codes, characterised by particular norms, which can be situated and problematised to reveal their ideological foundations.

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3   It is worth noting that Schumpeter's writing is a great deal broader than the rather limited characterisation of innovation that I have extracted from his seminal *The Theory of Economic Development*. A demarcation is sometimes made between the early Schumpeter, 'Schumpeter Mark I', focused on the individual entrepreneur, and the later Schumpeter, 'Schumpeter Mark II', whose analysis was based on innovation in large firms (Fagerberg, 2005: 6). It must be emphasised that in many ways Schumpeter was a radical theorist of economic disequilibrium and creative destruction, which he saw as central to the capitalist process (see Rosenberg, 1994: 52). In *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942), he engages sympathetically with Marx and his historical conception of capitalism (Rosenberg, 1994), going as far as to argue for the inevitability of socialism. However my intention here, rather than drawing out the richness of Schumpeter's work is to highlight the theoretical association between innovation and finance, which is pronounced in his earlier work. Having said this, there are more radical readings of the early Schumpeter focused on the non-economic or social aspects of entrepreneurship. Indeed in the earlier 1911 German edition, *Theorie der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung* – heavily amended in the English translation, the 1934 *Theory of Economic Development* – there is a wider emphasis on non-economic dynamism and creativity. This partial focus on creativity in the non-economic sphere is evident in chapter 7, which was then completely removed in the abridged and much more widely circulated English 1934 edition (see Swedberg, 2006).

It is worth emphasising that economic relations within my own approach are not equated here with the 'real' as such, although this is the case within the dominant ideology thesis of Althusser. Within this account, the economic is not an a priori determinant of political identity and the conditions of existence. Furthermore, this notion of a dominant ideology underpinning capitalist relations of production becomes complexified in Althusser's later work and in a letter correspondence in which he notes 'the interpellation of the individual subject, which makes him an ideological subject, is realised not on the basis of a *single* ideology; but of *several ideologies* at once, under which the individual *lives* and *acts* his practice' (Althusser, 2006: 241). This is not to say at the same time that the economic is not hugely important as an ideological formation, and here I examine one key facet of that contemporary formation: financialisation.

There are three senses to ideology and what I mean by the ideology of financialisation. The first sense is that of the framing norms that we can characterise in the discourse and practices of financialisation. This is based around the expansion of credit and financial markets to increasing areas of social life in terms of certain key norms like the spreading of risk and financial literacy (see Martin, 2002) to individuals, families and public services. A key norm of financialisation is risk taking (Mandel, 1996: 8), the idea that we gamble now, that we bet on credit and the markets in the hope of securing profit later. Also accompanying the expansion of credit and financial thinking is the assumption that this can create profits and also wider social benefits. Financialisation is seen as a way of maximising opportunity and creativity, and it is in this sense that innovation becomes a central concept within financialisation.

The second sense of ideology is the practical denigration of ideology by ideology (Althusser, 2008: 49). A principal characteristic of ideology is that it does not cast itself as ideological, political or contestable. For example the practices of financialisation are constantly characterised as being about efficiency rather than a subject of political disagreement. The recent financial crisis clearly raises wide questions about the role of finance in shaping increasing spheres of our lives. Yet because financialisation has become hugely important, and more than this necessary, for economic growth it has been able to place itself beyond substantial questioning or political contestation. Žižek (2008: 31) expresses this neatly when he notes that 'the actualization of a notion of an ideology at its purest coincides with, or, more precisely appears as its opposite, as non-ideology'. Financialisation is cast as beyond politics and increasingly as part of the fabric of everyday life (Martin, 2002). These two features of ideology are closely bound up with one another: ideology is based around a set of key norms that are cast as necessary, resulting in ideological denegation. Thus the second sense of ideology, ideological denegation, has a central role in denigrating or depoliticising certain framing norms.

This connects closely with the third sense of ideology, which is focused on the ways in which this ideology is sedimented and the deeply rooted practices it is based on. Financialisation has substantially changed the patterns of everyday life principally through the spreading of credit and securitization. Securitization is essentially the process of pooling or bundling together debts in otherwise non-tradable goods like houses, into tradable assets (Martin, 2002; see Leyshon and Thrift, 2007: 100).

Furthermore as Dembinski (2009: 80) notes, financial transactions have become central to the globalising economy. Impersonal promises through credit become spread out through the economic system and rights, duties and commitments based on paper become 'financial assets' to be speculated upon. These are deeply rooted sets of practices that enter into our daily lives in ways that make them seem inevitable or natural. The three senses of ideology link together then, financialisation is based on certain key norms like risk and profitability, which are then taken as given rather than something which is political or questionable, and this ideology is sedimented around practices like financial transactions that become part of the fabric of everyday life.

Where does the discourse of innovation fit then within this increasingly financial picture? My principal claim is that the links between the function of innovation as a buzzword and the ideology of financialisation are under-examined in organization and management literature. The discourse of innovation is central to financialisation for four principal reasons. Firstly, at a theoretical level innovation can be associated with processes of credit formation and amalgamation; this is something we have seen through the analysis of Schumpeter. Second, risk is integral to the ideology of financialisation, which creates a certain routinization of risk (Martin, 2002: 106; see Roberts, 2009: 335). In this sense risk is an endemic feature of financial capitalism.[4]

To the extent to which risk is about betting on winners in financial markets it can be closely associated with the buzzword of innovation. To find innovations, the market needs to be open to those that are prepared to risk new combinations which may or may not be profitable, thus leading, in turn, to cycles of risk taking. Innovation becomes a key term in justifying increasing rounds of financial speculation, betting on risks that might become innovations, which then leads to betting on these financial risks, which then leads to greater amalgamations of those conjoining risks. It is unsurprising therefore that the language of innovation is employed by financial firms to publicise their activity, the large financial management and advisory service Merrill Lynch for example advertises itself as a 'driver of innovation' (De Cock et al., 2009: 14).

The first two characteristics of innovation and its association with financialisation work more at the ideological level of norms although they do affect practices. In the Schumpeterian sense, we see that credit and finance is necessary for the entrepreneurial activity that creates innovation. In the second sense, the norms of risk that are endemic to financial speculation become justified through the discourse of innovation.

At the ideological level of practices, financialisation is linked to innovation in two more practical senses. The proliferation of financial innovation is the third link between innovation and financialisation. Indeed, as Roberts notes:

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4   Economists have tended to draw a distinction here between risk in which possibilities of financial return can be calculated and uncertainty, the immeasurable other of risk which involves potential totally unforeseen occurrences. The problem is that with the spread of financialisation any clear distinction between risk and uncertainty has become highly blurred. In the recent financial crisis, with securitization, long chains of risk led to scenarios in which nobody knew who was actually holding the risk (Erturk et al., 2008: 14; see also Stiglitz, 2010).

> The Collateralised Debt Obligation (CDO) offered a further innovation by devising a way in which such a pool of assets might be further divided in order to produce different 'tranches' of securities each with a different risk/reward profile. (Roberts, 2009: 336)

Roberts then goes onto describe how CDOs, the placing of pooled asset risks into structured tranches, led to the development of further innovation through 'synthetic' CDOs in which risks were sold onto investors through credit default swaps (CDSs). CDSs are the swapping of default risks to another body, such as a hedge fund, which takes the interest payments and is supposed to pay in the event of a default.

At a financial level then when we examine specifically financial innovations, they begin to sound very much like tools to increase lines of untrammelled financial speculation. While speculation is a difficult term to define conclusively it refers to buying and selling financial assets in different parts of the market and thereby distributing and redistributing risk (Bryan and Rafferty, 2006: 197). We can say that financial innovation is thus closely allied to speculation, in that financial innovations serve often to repackage risks that can then be invested in or betted on by other speculators. Thus, at the level of practices, the term financial innovation gives a positive gloss to increasingly speculative ways of pooling financial risk.

Fourthly, in terms of practices financial innovation has been about finding new asset streams. Essentially the purpose of making loans, mortgages and offering credit cards, is increasingly to generate 'tradeable financial assets' (Leyshon and Thrift, 2007: 106). Furthermore, new geographies and new classes of risk to create new assets are constantly being searched for by enormous databases of credit-rating companies, like Equifax (Leyshon and Thrift, 2007: 107). Thus we see a key instantiation of innovation, the creation of new assets through the further financialisation and commodification of existing entities.

Innovation it might be argued is about increased performance and economic growth rather than politics. However, in heralding an engagement with the new, innovation tends only to suggest a selective engagement, a selective engagement within the parameters of consumerism and finance. The link between innovation and the ideology of financialisation has also spread into the predominant conception of innovation we find in government and universities.

Government and university innovation

Innovation seems to have a series of rather nebulous positive associations at the political level which are difficult to ignore, it means at different times: technological development; useful research; a device to build economic dynamism and productivity; a tool to create sustainability; and a way to build growth in a competitive economy. My aim here has been to contribute to the literature on financialisation, by focusing on how the concept of innovation serves to support its central norms and practices. In this section then, I want to briefly situate the relation between innovation and financialisation in government and university discourses.

The Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) has been a key actor in the government embrace of innovation. It is immediately striking that innovation has been associated with universities in the name of a government department. There is an implicit assumption here around the idea that the primary role of universities is to innovate, meaning essentially that they are there to provide fresh research and ideas that will contribute to economic productivity and growth. As I will go onto discuss, this obsession with innovation at the level of universities is deeply intertwined with the pervasive business ethos that has come to predominate in large parts of the university sector, which Beverungen et al. (2009: 264) characterise as the 'financialisation of universities'.

In 'Innovation Nation', the DIUS recent white paper on innovation, it is not difficult to see the principal ideological tropes that the concept tends to operate within when government embraces the innovation buzzword. For example, the report notes in the early pages that 'government creates the conditions for innovation by securing macroeconomic stability and open and competitive markets' (DIUS, 2008: 4). The features of market openness and competition are seen as necessary conditions for innovation in the white paper, what this serves to do is solidify a certain financial orthodoxy around innovation. The idea is essentially that innovation can only be promoted if it can be ensured that it will render profits for the innovators (Corrado, 2007). An inevitable corollary of this is that massive profits might also be generated for those speculators who take risks on an innovation, those that bring together 'new combinations' in Schumpeter's terminology. Innovation also works with the governments' relentless faith in finance as the way to drive sustainable growth, something which remains unshaken despite the recent massive financial crisis. For example, the white paper proposes a range of financial support for innovative programmes, under the title 'Innovation finance' (DIUS, 2008: 36). Furthermore the improvement of access to finance for innovative products and services is seen as an area that needs to be improved upon (see NESTA, 2009: 21).

Underpinning much of this government discourse of innovation is the increasing commercialisation of universities. Within this framework universities exist principally to produce commercially viable ideas that can attract private sector investment. Indeed, the DIUS (now the DBIS) is seeking to brand universities as institutions that have a key role in helping business. The language of innovation is also one that modern universities have bought into equally as strongly, partly because it is a way to maximise the potential for public and private investment. By speaking in terms of innovation universities seek to demonstrate that they are relevant and useful in contemporary life by producing the ideas to foster economic growth and to create new technologies. Universities are characterised by an 'ongoing obsession with innovation and creativity' (Berglund, 2008: 322). The absorption of innovation into universities is extremely difficult to ignore, in that the concept of innovation is often present in job descriptions, university department names, research proposals and different funding body requirements.

For example, the concept of innovation seems to be particularly prevalent in the European Union and European Commission funding guidelines. They have an extensive funding programme available for research and innovation programmes, partly for PhD

students and higher education institutions. Indeed, in the European Union's guide for research funding in innovation the sentiment expressed is similar to both the UK's DIUS white paper and the views of financial companies, like Deutsche Bank, that see regulation as a barrier to innovation. As the European Union (2010) guidelines note:

> In an open global economy, competitiveness lies in the capacity of businesses to create high value-added goods and services. A move towards innovation-based sustainable growth is therefore at the heart of the EU's response to globalisation.

In similar fashion to the DIUS white paper we see that innovation is invoked as the best way to secure growth in an *open* economy. The idea that market openness facilitates innovation, implicitly serves as a way of justifying the absence of substantive financial regulation. What is also interesting is that the open economy is taken as given and as something that must be adapted to through innovation, rather than a subject of any questioning. Innovation is then taken as the only way to be successful and competitive within this pre-given economic order. Research also has a key role in this conception of the economy, the purpose of which is to discover the ideas that might become the competitive innovations of tomorrow. The idea is that innovation research is the root to commercially profitable investment in the modern 'knowledge economy' (see European Commission, 2010; European Union, 2010).

The concept of innovation is particularly pervasive in academia also because it works with the increasing links between knowledge and business. Thrift (2005: 22) points to this as an instance of a more general trend in the move towards knowledgeable capitalism in which information skills become increasingly important. Business is linked to academia through a variety of recent phenomena, such as the focus on learning within business (*ibid.*; see Contu et al., 2003). Also business has become more academic while academia has become more business oriented, business workforces have become steadily more qualified, and often these fields draw on the same vocabularies, which the concept of innovation is one instance of (Thrift, 2005: 22-23). Indeed, Thrift (*ibid.*: 22) also notes that 'innovation necessarily involves the generation and deployment of information and knowledge'. Thus universities have seen an opportunity to market themselves as innovation drivers in order to ensure that they remain relevant and able to secure funding.

It is worth noting that with the almost wholehearted adoption of the concept of innovation into universities, an important point of critique has been circumscribed. Rather than being critical of any of the directions of contemporary capitalism and its gross inequalities the dominant discourse of innovation requires one to work within them. It means that researchers and academics have to work towards commercially viable ideas and to look at how to create the best conditions to facilitate innovations, which in turn works with processes and norms of financialisation.

The role of buzzwords is often to unite disparate groups around a key term; they create a positive gloss, which means that nobody can really disagree with them. Innovation has very much this kind of function in relation to financialisation and this is why it is increasingly used by financial companies, international institutions, university administrations, government departments, like the DIUS, and by a plethora of other public and private actors. However, because nobody can really disagree with

buzzwords, such as innovation, they also have the function of ideological masking in giving a positive gloss to a range of practices. I have sought to demonstrate some of the links between the concept of innovation and the ideology of financialisation.

Conclusion and discussion

In this selective sociological problematisation of innovation, I hope I have succeeded above all else in demonstrating the strong connection the buzzword innovation often has with the ideology of financialisation. This ideological association with financialisation is also a long standing theoretical one, since for Schumpeter, perhaps the key theorist of innovation, it is financial investment for purposes of profit that distinguishes innovation from invention. One might say that there is nothing wrong with this, but this depends on one's political persuasion, and to what extent one acknowledges that the recent financial crisis means that the pervasive ideology of financialisation needs critical rethinking. However, at present the discourse of innovation serves as something of a mask with which to justify financialisation and its accompanying conditions of speculation and risk taking.

A difficult question remains however about whether it is possible to develop a different kind of innovation, one that is not dependent on financial markets and profit maximisation. One can detect currents in the discourse of innovation that might run counter to financialisation, since sometimes innovation is invoked to refer more to radical transformation or an alternative creativity (see for example Fisher, 2009: 76; Lohmann 2009: 28). This is why I have emphasised that we need to undertake a context-specific examination of innovation and its ideological associations in given instances. I am not claiming as of necessity then that the concept of innovation is inseparable from financial speculation; such a claim would be unsustainable. Furthermore, the link between innovation and the ideology of financialisation is a contingent rather than necessary construction. Thus I think we need to try to shift the discourses of innovation rooted in the ideology of financialisation to a more transformative or radical conception of innovation. By seeking to build a more transformative or radical notion of innovation we might begin to highlight the constraints that the concept of innovation based within financialisation presents us with. The idea of innovation is often one in which we must accept the constraints of existing capitalism and work within these constraints, to utilise finance in creative ways in order to solve problems. We can only challenge these constraints by developing a more transformative, politically-charged conception of innovation, and by pointing to the limitations of existing predominant understandings of the concept; these tasks should be the principal goal of academic researchers into innovation. Transformative innovation might then serve to challenge the constraints of financialisation by thinking of more egalitarian and socially just transformations; rather than taking financialisation as an implicit given and seeking to work within it as all too often researchers into innovation have tended to do.

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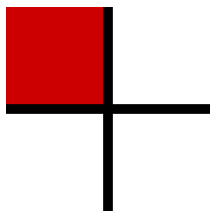
Roundtable: Health at work

Peter Case, Torkild Thanem, Charlotta Levay, Christian Maravelias and Carl Cederström. The panel discussion was lead by Michael Pedersen.

abstract

The following panel-discussion ended a one-day workshop on the 14th of April 2011 at Lund University about Health at work. The workshop was organized jointly by the Centre for Work Life Studies at Malmö University and the Department of Business Administration, School of Economics and Management at Lund University and was made possible by funding from the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS). The aim of the workshop was to explore how health at work is composed through managerial, organizational and employee practices. The roundtable centred in particular around which kind of notions of freedom health at work constitute and challenge.

Introduction

In April 2011 Andre Spicer, Torkild Thanem, Lisbeth Ryden and Michael Pedersen arranged a one-day workshop at Lund University on the topic of health at work. The workshop addressed the organization, management and implementation of workplace health; power and discipline in work health promotion; identity-work and body-work in the pursuit of healthy life-styles and practices of coping and resistance in workplace health promotion. Before the roundtable discussion, transcribed below, the day had six presentations, which we will broadly summarize here as the participants in the roundtable referred to these in their discussion.

Peter Case gave a talk about *Spiritual Well-being in Organization*[1]. The spiritual organization according to Case represents the development of a trajectory of social technologies that have sought, incrementally, to control the bodies, minds, emotions and souls of employees. However, as Case also argued, it might be employed to conceptualize the way in which employees use the workplace as a site for pursuing their own spiritual well-being.

Christian Maravelias and Mikael Holmqvist talked about their new book *Managing Health Organizations*. Focusing on corporate health programs within a large bus and

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1   Case, P. and J. Gosling (2010) 'The spiritual organization: critical reflections on the instrumentality of workplace spirituality', *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*, 7 (4): 257-282.

truck producer firm, the presentation revolved around how worksite health promotion constructs a certain ideal of what it means to be a self-managing employee.

Nanna Mik-Meyer presented her work on *Health and Morality – Power and Resistance in Health Promotion in Work organizations[2]*. Based on in-depth interviews and recorded talks between health consultants and overweight employees, her study emphasized how overweight people are perceived as 'risk identities' i.e. people who needs their autonomy restricted and who require personal management.

In her presentation *The elephant in the room: Obesity and organization as an object of inquiry* Charlotta Levay discussed the ways in which obesity is a concern in organizational life, and how obesity as an organized social phenomenon can be studied.

In his presentation *Fit for Everything: Health and the Ideology of Authenticity[3],* Carl Cederström argued that the emerging vocabulary of authenticity and health should be seen as a clear manifestation of recent permutations in the ideology of capitalism.

Under the heading *Bio-politics as bio-struggle in workplace health promotion*, Torkild Thanem ended the presentations by giving an insight into how people at a Swedish research institute dynamically acted and interacted to pursue, resist and comply with workplace health promotion initiatives.

The panel consisted of Peter Case, Torkild Thanem, Charlotta Levay, Christian Maravelias and Carl Cederström. The panel discussion was lead by Michael Pedersen. Questions from the floor were posed by Lisbeth Ryden and Kristian Gylling Olesen.

Michael Pedersen: If I should somehow try to summarize the discussions we had today about critical investigations into health management programs in organizations I would say that they all revolved around the question of how employees, through discourses and technologies of health, are governed in ways that seem to idealize a certain kind of self-managing employee. Being healthy and self-managing is constituted as interrelated. If you are self-managing yourself properly you are always trying to get healthier. As Carl talked about, being authentic and healthy are more and more intertwined, and Mikael and Christian's case study showed how the health promotions programs operated as instruments for the realizations of an organization centred on employees' self-managing capabilities. So in both these presentations being healthy was not about living up to a clearly framed norm, but about being able to set your own norm, regulate yourself around this norm and set a new norm whenever this norm started to get problematic and pathological. So as I see it, some of our discussion today was on how health is governed in various ways that makes the norm of being healthy something the employee needs to aspire to, in always new ways.

Another interesting aspect of this is that we also discussed health as related to an idea of an untapped potential of the employee. That is, health is construed as a resource that

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2   Holmqvist, M. and C. Maravelias (2010) Managing healthy organizations: Worksite health promotion and the new self-management paradigm. London: Routledge.

3   Cederström, C. (2011) 'Fit for everything: Health and the ideology of authenticity', ephemera, 11(1): 27-45.

might benefit the organization and might even make the employee a happier human being: 'Fitter, Happier and More Productive' as the Radiohead song goes. We heard various examples that for me illustrates this: How obese employees are risk identities that need to be better at managing themselves (Charlotta and Nana); we've heard about how employees at a bus and truck producer are valued more for their attitudes towards the future than their current skills (Christian and Mikael); and we heard about how health is interrelated with a discourse of finding your true self (Carl) and a spiritual side (Peter).

With that in mind, I only really have one question I still think is important to ask in line of these issues about being governed to become an efficient self-managing employee through discourses and practices of health: Namely the question of which kind of freedom we operate with, if worksite health promotions are organizing the relationship between employees and organizations. It's a question that has lots of questions in it, so hopefully you can discuss it.

To start off with this question, I want to start with the 18th century German philosopher Kant, who summarized his own philosophical work in three questions that he claimed express the key central human concerns. And the three questions were: 'What can I know?'; 'what ought I do?'; and 'what may I hope for?'. And my question about freedom is somewhere in between 'what ought I do?' and 'what might I hope for?'. So what kind of concept of freedom is implied in this critical angle on health management programs in organizations?

Torkild Thanem: Deleuze once said that a common error made by philosophers is to formulate badly posed questions or badly posed problems. And maybe even Kant himself committed that same error, at least when asking the question 'What ought I do?'. 'What may I hope for?' is a more seductive question, for me at least. What I hope for is more snow and more cross-country skiing. It's not prescribed by my employer, but that's certainly what I hope for. Why? Because that would certainly enhance my life; it would enhance the power of my body, to do something that I enjoy, and in that sense it would also to the ethical question of freedom, only not in the sense of 'what ought I do?'. So, what kind of freedom does this involve? Well, it would involve freedom as a matter of life enhancement, as a matter of life affirmation.

Christian Maravelias: As some of you may know, I published a paper in *ephemera* a couple of years ago about freedom and work – I think the title was 'Freedom at work'.[4] In the paper I made the distinction between freedom as autonomy and freedom as potential. Freedom as autonomy was defined as a form of freedom, which is based on self-consciousness, i.e. the ability to step aside, to look at oneself from a distance and to form a relationship with oneself. Hence, the idea of freedom as autonomy was seen as closely related to the idea of enlightenment and to the possibility of living a life in accordance with one's own principles that enlightenment is often seen to imply. Furthermore, freedom as autonomy was seen as closely related to the idea of power as the opposite of freedom. The individual is free when he or she can step away from

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4 Maravelias, C. (2007) 'Freedom at work in the age of post-bureaucratic organizations', *ephemera* 7(4): 555-574.

power, so to speak. By contrast freedom as a potential would be to be able to seize opportunities, to get things done. This form of freedom, which, today we tend to associate with an American doer mentality, would then be based on and idealize 'un-self-conscious' behaviour; that is instinctive, spontaneous behaviour. Furthermore, power would be an integral part of this form of freedom. Hence, from this perspective we are free not only if we can get things done, if we can take hold of the opportunities that present themselves, but also if we can do so instinctively, 'naturally', without having to think, without having to try to take conscious control of ourselves. I think these distinctions relate more or less directly to the discussion we had earlier, for instance about weight loss programs and work place health promotion programs. Consider a person that has managed to lose weight by consciously controlling her diet and her craving for food. Do we see this person as freed from her weight problem? Is she, in her own view, no longer a fat person, or is she a fat person that momentarily manages to create the impression of being a non-fat person by constantly and consciously controlling herself? I think today we have come to idealize this unthinking, un-self-conscious form of freedom in work as well as in life more generally where we can 'just be ourselves', be 'authentic', and so on. This is interesting, not the least from the perspective of how power is exercised in society in general and in organizations in particular. I am for instance thinking about the way we have made use of Foucault's works on pastoral power to say that power operates via different forms of experts – e.g. coaches, mentors and therapists – that help individuals know themselves and control themselves better in accordance with the self-view that they themselves have uttered. Maybe our idealization of the un-self-conscious, spontaneous individual leads to that this form of expert based power, which generates self-conscious individuals, is giving way to other forms of expertise and expert based power, which seek to make up authentic doers.

Carl Cederström: Okay. To go back to Torkild's critique of your three questions, what I have found really stimulating with today's discussions is that we have deliberately avoided the question of 'what we ought to do'. And that's probably what makes this session unique: speaking about health without saying what we ought to do. What's fascinating with the notion of health is that it's almost inseparable from the question of how we could improve our health, especially when we speak about health in relationship to work. In some texts we can find interesting alternatives to health, like in this book *Against Health*[5], where one of the authors proposes an Epicurean ideal of health. The same goes for happiness – another foolish obsession of our time. Like health, happiness is something we are all supposed to strive for. People have begun calling these ideals into question by pointing to their ideological flavour. One example would be the book *Against Happiness*[6] – it's very fashionable with these 'against' books these days – and the author there makes a case for melancholia. Maybe that's an interesting alternative – at least it challenges some of the standard voices on the subject. But still, I think it's important that we sometimes take the risk and speak without alternatives. Now the reason for that, is that many of the more desirable alternatives found in corporate language (and indeed the language of management scholars) are all

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.   Kirkland, A. and J. Metzl (2010) *Against health: How health became the new morality*. New York: NYU Press.

6   Wilson, E. (2008) *Against happiness: In praise of melancholy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

too often leading down the same route. They are sort of fake alternatives, if you like. Take freedom for example. This word is now employed in all weird forms of organisational settings. It has become the business guru's new darling word. But what exactly does freedom mean when it moves into the corporation? Is it the freedom to express ourselves? Or maybe the freedom to produce more? The same goes with health, I would claim. It sounds great! But we should be very... cautious. What do we mean by freedom? And how does it operate to, say, usher in new forms of managerial techniques? One way to think about freedom is to think about it, not as taking place *through* or *within* the corporation, but in relationship to the *exit*. How could we leave the corporation? That obviously takes us away from the question of the workplace and leads us to the broader question of capitalism, and the way in which capitalism is increasingly integrated in and colonizing aspects of life. I think we would need to at least try to address that question.

Charlotta Levay: Unlike what you said, I think self-disciplining practices, technologies of the self, may be a source of freedom. And the way I have read Foucault, it was this potential source of freedom that made him interested in them. And relating to Peter's talk of spirituality, I think that there are some spiritual, more genuinely I would call them, spiritual practices that correspond to health promotion practices, things such as fasting, or traditional self-disciplining. Like now, we are in Lent. Of course, they are precisely organized by religious authorities, but with an explicit goal to liberate people. It can be discussed whether that is a reality or not, but since you asked that question, that's what I come to think of. Of course health promotion in the workplace is obviously geared to other goals. It points in other directions. So yes, escaping those efforts might perhaps be a freedom. But freedom could also be trying to recover some genuine form of practices; care of the self or technologies of the self that are guided by logics that don't make persons into means for the corporation. As you pointed out Peter, that's the core problem with workplace spirituality. Actually, I don't know where the practices would originate to be accepted as free. Perhaps somehow from the individual persons choosing them or seeking them or trying to realize them. Perhaps in cooperation with others, but in a more bottom-up way rather than one directed by state, politics or corporate efforts to enhance productivity.

Peter Case: Returning to Michael's initial questions through the voice of Kant, and the three questions 'What can I know?', 'what ought I do?', 'what might I hope for?', and particularly the relationship between the latter two. Deleuze wasn't the only philosopher who questioned the very nature of the formulation of problematics. Before Deleuze there was Wittgenstein; someone who raised the same issue and who pointed out that structures of explanation, as it were, fall out of the questions that we pose philosophically; that the philosophical problems are themselves the result of the formulations of the questions; that we tie ourselves in knots, potentially, if we ask the wrong kinds of questions. In relation to the Kantian questions, my first point of departure would be the questioning of the 'I' here. What is this 'I', that ought to do something, or the 'I' that ought to hope for something, or that can possibly hope for something? And one way this can be addressed is to differentiate different philosophical registers in which we frame the questions. So, to cut a potentially very long story short, I would say in one register, or in two registers really – in an 'absolute' register and also in a 'phenomenological' register – I'd say that the 'I' is completely elusive. It does not

exist. If one interrogates the experience closely, and I think the only way to do that is through introspection of one form or another – the kinds of spiritual exercises that Christian alluded to a moment ago – then this notion of 'I' just dissipates; it has no meaning whatsoever as a philosophical term. However, of course, intuitively, we moderns all have a sense of volition. And I think volition *is* a real phenomenon; it is an element within consciousness that can be discerned. But it's not connected necessarily with an autonomous self or 'I'. So there is a very complex nexus of phenomenological elements, if you like, that come together to constitute the illusion of the 'I'. I won't go into that any further, but if we move down to a more conventional register, in which we experience a sense of self, personal choice, freedom even, then Kant's questions become more meaningful. If we look at the questions from this conventional perspective – where there's a Michael Pedersen, and there's a Charlotta, and... Carl, and Christian, Peter, and Torkild et cetera, and there are perceptible objects – tables, chairs, glasses and so on – and we sense ourselves to be wilful and to have some room for choice and personal manoeuvre we immediately invoke a different structure of explanation. When considering notions of health, and their relationship to organizations and discourses in which we find ourselves, as it were, then I think we find limitations to the possibilities for free action. Often we have little choice but to open ourselves up to mediation by the discourses that circulate in the here-and-now. Again, I think that is not something that is within the control of the autonomous self. We are only in a here-and-now, and we are intractably mediated by past and present supporting conditions prevalent here-and-now. And if you find yourself in an organization like the one Mikael and Christian described where..., for instance... where the regime of health promotion is in full flight, or where you find yourself in the organization that Torkild examined in his paper, you don't have a choice but to be caught up and implicated within the regime in which these disciplines are being enacted and promoted. So there's very limited freedom in that sense. But of course there are also moments in which one does sense freedom, and can express the kind of resistances that, for example, Torkild alluded to. There is an intuitive sense, then, of a self, acting autonomously in response to those regimes and social technologies. But we are nonetheless mediated by the discourses and their intersectionality without choice or with very limited choice, I would say. I'm going on a bit and don't want to hog the floor... So, briefly, on the question of 'hope', and 'What might we hope for?': I would say both freedom and hope are incredibly overrated concepts. Hope, certainly. In a way I think if you take human birth, then it ought to come pre-labelled with Dante's caveat, 'abandon all hope, ye who enter here'. I just think hope is a terribly overrated notion. To return to this notion of 'ought': I would concur entirely with what Charlotta and Carol said about looking to what we might take to be *genuine* spiritual practices and exercises; *genuine* care of the self in pursuit of virtue and so forth. But obviously to qualify or justify that assertion would take me a great deal longer than we have here today. So I'd probably best just shut up... I realize this is a highly problematic kind of claim and it's maybe time for other people to ask questions.

Michael Pedersen: I would like to take some questions from the floor now. Are there any questions, and comments towards topics that you feel we haven't touched upon enough in this health workshop today?

Lisbeth Ryden: It sort of touches upon this 'what to do?' that we are so gladly not talking about according to Carl, but I see myself as a practitioner, even though I am within academia right now. I know work places where people feel bad. And I would like to be able to intervene in this situation in some way. And sometimes when I listen to these kinds of discussions I sort of despair, it doesn't really matter how I intervene, because I will always make some sort of disciplining of people. So sometimes I think it feels like there is no hope more. Then, what can I hope for? Even though we are not here to say 'Well, let's do this', is it possible to intervene and still honour the values you have spoken about today? Like more symmetrical power relations, more of some kind of autonomy or freedom maybe, I'm not sure. Or is this just the business of pointing out that it has dark sides, and there are no bright sides? So, please give some hope before we leave.

Charlotta Levay: I agree with Carl that it's sort of liberating to have this whole day talking about health without talking about what we ought to do. But then in everyday life we still face that question, what ought we to do? And I just remember having read among all these critical fat studies one scholar who suddenly found himself among strange bedfellows, in a way, ideologically. Because the people who have caught up on these critiques of public health efforts in political practical action turn out to be populist politicians, quite far right wing. They have been vocal, you know, in radio shows, TV shows, books. We even have someone in Sweden actually, not a populist exactly, but very neoliberal, who has written against any fat politics. And Sarah Palin has made a public appearance handing out cookies to schoolchildren, as a protest against what we have been criticising here. And what this critical obesity scholar said was that we shouldn't let our critique against these things mislead us into completely discarding any public health effort. He at least didn't want to be a part of that. Of course, now we are talking politics, and you are free to want to be a part of that. But it might be good to be conscious of the potential use of one's ideas. So I'm not sure that the conclusion here is that paradise would be where health was not at all seen as a public issue. You would then have to be aware that that would be a very... neoliberal version of it all. So I think the translation into practical politics or recommendations for your own practice has to be done very carefully, and probably not in any automatic or linear way, but much more reflectively.

Michael Pedersen: To make a short comment myself, that's also why I actually asked the question of freedom. Because for me it's not surprising that it is right-wing people such as Palin or the neo-liberal Swede that are saying this. The reason I posed the question of freedom and health is exactly because when we do not confront the question of freedom directly in studying health-programs, then the very argument against health promotion we indirectly pose in our so-called critical studies can easily be understood in terms of a very liberalistic notion of freedom. What Isaiah Berlin called negative freedom i.e. freedom without external interference. Freedom in this sense is where there are no external power relations. For example Palin and the Swede being against fat politics as they violate the individual's freedom of choice. But how does a more positive concept of freedom as we would perhaps find in Spinoza's or Hegel's concept of freedom fit into our critical studies? That is, where to be free is also to hold some obligations; social obligations for example. Or is it exactly a positive notion of freedom

we are saying is related to the power-mechanism we find in health promotion? That to be free is to realize yourself and self-realization is directly about being healthy?

Torkild Thanem: Okay, yes. Maybe just to first pick up quickly on your Spinozian thread. I don't think Spinoza would formulate freedom as something, which comes with obligations, but rather as something, which comes with responsibilities. Now of course, at face value, this may sound both awfully liberalist, awfully conservative and awfully Foucauldian. But with reference to previous interpretations of Spinoza's work by Etienne Balibar as well as by Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, a Spinozian freedom with responsibility is not about developing practices that help individuals master themselves before they master others. And it is not about governments removing responsibility from public institutions and instead loading it onto individuals. Again, this is about joyful life enhancement – but joyful life enhancement in a certain agreement with others. To expand not only one's capacity to affect but also to be affected by others – that is, to expand the different joyful encounters that are possible between different people. As expanding one's own freedom at the cost of others would result in sad rather than joyful encounters, life negation rather than life enhancement, this requires turning freedom into a *trans*-individual rather than an individual matter. If we are talking about promoting health and wellbeing, then, we cannot continue to bury ourselves in the New Public Health agenda. Instead we need to re-turn to the broader conditions of health and wellbeing. Of course, the socio-economic and organizational conditions of health have been the target of much mainstream health research. However, what I think has been neglected in that area of research (and much because of the dominance of medical and economics perspectives), is the multiplicity of joyful encounters that enhance (the conditions of) health.

And then onto Charlotta's important comment, though I would like to translate what you're saying Charlotta into a need for realism, not necessarily in an ontological sense but in a good old-fashioned common sense. I don't think we should be against intervention. We shouldn't be against discipline as such even, because that would be to give up our responsibility to pursue health and freedom at a transindividual level. Let me try and explain why through an anecdote. My wife went to a conference in New Orleans a few weeks back. Now, in New Orleans, a big bucket of deep fried chicken wings costs less than an apple. In fact, she found it almost impossible to buy a fresh piece of fruit in that town. So of course we need to intervene. But we need to be realistic about our interventions, and I think we need to, as Peter was saying, realize that these interventions won't work with a completely atomized notion of the individual. They also won't work if we – or health professionals rather – instigate feelings of guilt and lack in people. But they stand a better chance to work if they are more diverse, more open-ended and affirmative rather than constraining.

Carl Cederström: This really goes back to Lisbeth's questions. First, I think it's important to remember that what we have been discussing today, empirically, is health promotion in corporations with the intention of increasing productivity. In that sense, we should be very sceptical. We should not look for hope, because that would basically mean looking for new ways of managing a potentially productive workforce. But if we go beyond the corporation, or God forbid, beyond Europe or the United States, well, then there's a lot we could do. There's a lot that ought to be done. But that leads us to a

different set of questions. If we think about the ideology of health, as it appears in the corporations we've discussed today, I think we should concentrate our attention on how questions of health have become subsumed under principles of management. Like Torkild, I will take the liberty to speak about my partner, who recently finished her nursing studies. They had compulsory courses in management and had to read about teambuilding, motivation, business models, leadership. I find it deeply disturbing that all those things are being taught to future nurses. I think a better idea would be to teach literature or philosophy or any other subject that would at least have some understanding of life and death. I'm not saying that that's going to make things an awful lot better. But at the very least, you would not have some corporate yuppie, calling you a client, drawing a balanced score card sheet on your stomach before cutting you up.

Kristian Gylling Olesen: For a period in Denmark the nurses were actually trained in philosophy on the Danish nursing college. Foucault and Habermas in particular. But it was criticized because the time spent on reading Foucault took away the time the nurses were taught in the practical dimensions of nursing. So they have tried to teach philosophy. But that was not what I wanted to say. As to the question of resistance, perhaps we should also look at the resources we already have at hand – the role of the union. I am thinking about an example from the US, where the union of the freelancers asked 'What can we do to help freelancers?' – it's the ideal type of flexible worker, so to say. They offer health insurance and competence development. One could say that they build their offers on Christian Maravelias concept of 'freedom as potential'[7]. The freelancers union contribute to enhance the potential of the employability of the freelancer by offering competence development and health care insurance. The freelancers' competences are up to date and the freelancer can focus his or her energy on seeking jobs instead of being nervous about health insurance. The general question is: 'What is the new role of the union in all of this, and especially in the Scandinavian countries, where the unions historically have a huge role?' But the problem is when we have these health programs – all the programs that look at how to instrumentally enhance productivity – that the unions have no language or way to approach this, because they have a lot of collectivistic approaches, they cannot integrate individuals in the collectivistic. And they need to reinvent themselves in some way. Do you have any comments on that? The role of the union?

Peter Case: I think this is, dare I say, an example of where there really is a need to abandon hope. I see absolutely no future for *institutional* resistance in relation to the issues of health, health promotion and the health regimes we've been discussing today. Why? Well, we've been looking at how 'health' extends from the physical – from the body, in fact – to the emotional, and, arguably, to the spiritual within organizations, and how each of these various domains are clearly linked to capitalist discourses of productivity and performativity. Now, I grant of course that such discourses *should* fall roundly within the province of union resistance but I think the issue of 'health' extends the context and milieu in which we understand or are permitted to apprehend unionized resistance. We need to see the impossibility of institutional resistance within a grander context of late-modern, neoliberal thinking, and what has brought us to a point where

7   Maravelias, C. (2007) 'Freedom at work in the age of post-bureaucratic organizations', *ephemera* 7(4): 555-574.

we are obsessed with and fixated as a culture... of course I'm talking about Europe here, or rather Euro-American culture... fixated on the *material*. This obsession extends to all modes of explanation: The privileging of material explanations and efficient causation, and so on, in just about every conceivable phenomenal realm. The fetish, indeed, also marks the disenchantment of the numinous. Neuroscience, for example, metonymically ends up with a neurological explanation of whatever it happens to look at, including, I'm sure, obesity and other such health-related phenomena. It's against the background of such extraordinary social momentum and social force that we've been considering these questions of health promotion and resistance in organizations. And who could question the legitimacy and merit of promoting such self-evidently 'good' things? Physical health and longevity seem to be central to *eudaimonia* in our time. So I really don't hold out a great deal of hope for resisting it institutionally. From whence would the collective motivation to mobilize come right now? Maybe, as we've been discussing, there are micro strategies of resistance that can be pursued, but institutionally? I don't see it.

Carl Cederström: Another thing about health, which is not necessarily linked to corporations, but nevertheless worth mentioning, is its relation death. To me, the ultimate aim of health seems to be the prolongation of life. And there are some really perverse forms of this that we haven't discussed. Perhaps the most radical is transhumanism. What I find interesting here – and this will take us back to the previous points about freedom – is that freedom is something we seem quite happy to give up in return for that prolongation of life. Many people would claim that death and freedom are closely linked, in one way or the other. The idea is that living forever would make our experience as human beings un-free. So that would be one way to go back to that question of freedom: That if we ask ourselves what health is really trying to do, then it is to extend life indefinitely on the expense of freedom. I realize I take this conversation away from its proper topic.

Peter Case: Just a reflection about what Carl is saying about freedom, life and death. I think that connects to the point I was making in response to Christian earlier about materialization, if you like. You know, health being equated with material well-being predominantly, although of course we've noted the ways in which it moves into other spheres and domains of possibility. But predominantly the ideal would be physical longevity. And of course we have these perverse kinds of examples of the way in which that's pursued. Cryogenics and so on, these bizarre... So maybe I could end by moving once again into a metaphysical register. If one explores these notions of freedom, of self autonomy, of health, phenomenologically; if we look closely at experiences of pain, examine intimately the nature of suffering, I would contend that it's possible to see them as not attached to a notion of self – as not 'located' in any personal sense. But this is only possible if we move into the phenomenological register of investigation. In so doing there's a kind of freedom, which presents itself, which we could call deathless. We could call it deathless, because it is not connected with the temporal limitation of selfhood. But of course that's way beyond any kind of material notion of life and death. Literally beyond that.

Michael Pedersen: Thank you all for participating in the discussion.

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The unbearable emptiness of entrepreneurship

Philip Roscoe

In *Unmasking the Entrepreneur*, Campbell Jones and Andre Spicer set about producing a much needed critical account of the entrepreneur and its place in contemporary society. This is a project with which we should have much sympathy, and there are certainly important questions to be asked. How, for example, did the word 'entrepreneur' move from Cantillon's original sense of an administrator grappling with uncertainty (Spengler, 1954) to a contemporary trope modelled on Gates, Jobs and Branson? How did a loose grouping of activities classed as 'entrepreneurship' come to be seen simultaneously as policy prescription and a social virtue? How did the word become an aspect of social identity and aspiration, replacing the banal but accurate term 'small-business owner'? While the discipline of entrepreneurship research has done much to investigate the genesis of new firms, it tends, as Jones and Spicer note, to the instrumental and the uncritical. Jones and Spicer, by contrast, seek to *unmask* the entrepreneur – where the project of unmasking pays homage to an ancient Greek conception of truth, the revealing of things as they really are (4). They promise us a 'theoretical journey *through* abstraction that keeps an eye on the dangers of theoreticism' (6), clarifying existing concepts and building new ones through which they will examine what entrepreneurship might be (5). As readers we accompany them on their journey, hopeful that they will provoke and challenge our conceptions of what it means to be an entrepreneur.

Jones and Spicer's argument makes some considerable demands on their readers. But it may be summarized as follows: the entrepreneur is an empty vessel set in the matrix of capitalist social relations, which, through the gratuitous dispersal of large sums of money gifted to him/her by way of these same social relations, becomes a tool of capitalist domination. As Jones and Spicer put it, entrepreneurship is 'a placeholder in the history of the political and economic struggle over valuation and right to waste' (70). They see entrepreneurship as inextricably linked with excess, and to be an entrepreneur necessitates excessive behaviour, characterized by the most wanton

dissipation: 'throwing parties…and indulging in endless rounds of golf' (68). The inevitable examples are Richard Branson, the late Steve Fossett (Branson's rival and then partner in the race to circumnavigate the globe in a balloon) and US businessman-cum-spaceman-for-a-week Dennis Tito. Jones and Spicer theorise this golf-loving, party-going, and space-visiting 'entrepreneurial' excess through Bataille, positioning expenditure within the struggle and contestation of capitalist economies: the 'real job description of the entrepreneur is… the management of wilful destruction' (*ibid.*), while the day job of managing production (of being, for example, a small business owner) only commands a managerial wage. For Jones and Spicer, the entrepreneur's excessive spending is not a by-product, or even a direct result, of the surpluses earned by entrepreneurial activity; the entrepreneur does not even *earn* that money. Instead, the entrepreneur '*attracts* such a massive amount of resources' (*ibid.*) to spend on the promise that it will be spent excessively. The use of 'attract' allows the authors to pre-empt the objection that the accumulation of capital is a crucial part of the entrepreneurial process. In an *ex post* analysis, entrepreneurial rent has been gifted to the entrepreneur in return for complicity in the repression of labour.

Unfortunately for Jones and Spicer's argument, the claim that excess *in itself* characterises entrepreneurship seems tenable only on the basis of a circular definition. Corporate men are also guilty of excess, and this does not make them entrepreneurs; alternatively, Jones and Spicer's assertion may be seen off empirically by those more careful entrepreneurs working in charities, the third sector, or social organisations. It appears that excess is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for entrepreneurship, nor vice versa. Indeed, to concentrate attention on the excessive behaviour of entrepreneurs threatens to empty entrepreneurship research of much of its substantive content. Moreover, few scholars would deny that the narrative of the heroic entrepreneur is one of retrospective justification (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006); the notion of the entrepreneur as a uniquely special person has been questioned in mainstream entrepreneurship studies for many years (Gartner, 1988). Jones and Spicer quote Žižek: 'Bill Gates is no genius, good or bad, he's just an opportunist who knew how to seize the moment, and as such, the result of the capitalist system run amok' (83). Žižek's analysis reduces the agency of an entrepreneur and considers him/her, to some extent, the product of chance and dumb luck. Perhaps this is not so far from the vision of the Austrian school in economics: Kirzner is explicit in his account of entrepreneurship as a process of experimentation, where numerous entrepreneurs chip away at our 'sheer ignorance' (Kirzner, 1997). Inevitably most fail, while some reap extraordinary rewards. The difference is political: where Jones and Spicer revile the mechanism that rewards opportunity discovery and exploitation, Kirzner regards it as a social and political good.

Throughout *Unmasking the Entrepreneur*, Jones and Spicer make freely interchangeable use of 'entrepreneur', 'entrepreneurship', and 'entrepreneurship discourse'. In the book, these terms all refer to the same sets of repressive social relations within the capitalist system, and it is from these social relations that a critical study will set us free. *Unmasking the Entrepreneur* therefore moves to a discussion of this nexus of social relations, the empty kernel/sublime object/Lacanian Real of entrepreneurship, terms that are also interchangeable and all point to a common (non)object. Jones and Spicer conclude that the 'consistent and congenital' (37) failure

of entrepreneurship research to define or identify the entrepreneur is a success in itself, a failure 'which by its very act of repetition, brings to light a deeper and more profound truth' (*ibid.*). Entrepreneurship itself is a 'paradoxical, incomplete and worm ridden symbolic structure which posits an impossible and incomprehensible object at its centre' (38). In the strictest Lacanian sense, entrepreneurship discourse does not exist *ibid.*); on the other hand, it offers 'a narrative structure to the fantasy that co-ordinates desire...it points to an unattainable and only vaguely specified object, and directs desire towards this object' (*ibid.*). As Lacan reminds us, unattainability is a virtue, for if the desired object should ever be attained, it is 'changed inexplicitly into a gift of shit' (39). So would it be for the entrepreneur, Jones and Spicer imagine. One wonders in passing how this tragic apotheosis might be manifested to the entrepreneur; literally perhaps, as he wakes one morning to find that a passing rat-boy has crammed the door-handle of his Maserati with dog muck.

Such a highly theorised account of a non-existent and unattainable entrepreneurial discourse sits at odds with the prosaic range of activities that, for Jones and Spicer, constitute entrepreneurship: pimping, hustling, manoeuvring in the grey economy, and even begging. They quote Shaver and Scott's (1991) twenty year-old saw – 'Entrepreneurship is like obscenity: nobody agrees what it is, but we all know it when we see it' – yet go on to define an entrepreneur in naïve terms as someone who is 'willing to take extreme risks…aspirational …able to perceive gaps in the market…able to persevere' (95). *Anyone* who takes risks (including risks to their person) and acts in a strategic manner to achieve a certain end should be considered an entrepreneur. Thus a pimp, a hustler, a cockle-picker, the homeless man on the book's cover, and a ballooning captain of industry are all entrepreneurs (86f). Jones and Spicer want to use the term to refer simultaneously to super-rich, decadent business people and economic outcasts. They exploit this tension in pursuit of their demonstration of linguistic exclusion; all of these people are entrepreneurs, but only those who are capable of wasteful and excessive consumption can lay legitimate claim to the title 'entrepreneur'. In Jones and Spicer's down-the-rabbit-hole-world, titles matter: it is the title that confers wealth and status, and not the other way round.

Here Jones and Spicer might have grasped the lifeline offered by entrepreneurship research, which, having struggled with definitions for many years, now concentrates on the entrepreneurial *process* and insists on a novelty of means-ends combinations as the defining feature of entrepreneurial activity (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). It is worth noting that entrepreneurship research considers excessive risk taking to be characteristic of failure; entrepreneurship is often mundane, risk averse, calculative and organisational (Shane, 2003: 106). As Drucker (1999) points out, setting up yet another Mexican restaurant in an American suburb does not make one an entrepreneur, risky and difficult though it may be. The advantage of the Shane/Drucker/Kirzner position on entrepreneurship is that it gives us a rule with which to navigate the shifting sands of Jones and Spicer's argument: Not all economic actors, however risk taking and desperate, are entrepreneurs. While Jones and Spicer define cockle-pickers as entrepreneurs in order to claim that capitalist social relations prevent them from enjoying entrepreneurial super-profits, the Austrian position makes the much more straightforward claim that cockle-pickers do not enjoy entrepreneurial super-profits

because they are not entrepreneurs. The cockle-pickers are miserable victims of criminal exploitation, but this has nothing to do with entrepreneurship.

In order to explore further the boundaries of entrepreneurship, Jones and Spicer even consider whether the Marquis de Sade was an entrepreneur. They argue that de Sade is eligible for consideration as an entrepreneur on the basis of his unsuccessful attempts to transform the contemporary institutions of sexuality through his shocking writing (76).[1] The authors conclude eventually that de Sade is not, after all, an entrepreneur: He failed to achieve any institutional change, he was economically unsuccessful, and was cruel. This marks a change in the book's narrative: Whereas previously the authors campaigned for the admittance of excluded actors to the status of entrepreneur, de Sade is a different matter on account of 'his patent inability and even unwillingness to recognise the other'. They go on to make this point more generally, claiming that 'the lack of an account of ethics is one of the fatal failings of current work on social and institutional entrepreneurship' (84). Jones and Spicer are now beginning to talk about what they believe should be the core concerns of entrepreneurship and have *themselves* excluded Sade from the category of entrepreneur on account of his moral solipsism. So the book moves from a critical assessment of entrepreneurship discourse as a political placeholder where exclusion is repressive and unjustifiable, to a normative conception of entrepreneurship where exclusion is morally justified. Such a move is unfortunate for the pimps, thugs and hustlers who, wrongfully excluded from the category by the holders of capital, are likely to find themselves appropriately excluded on the grounds of their inability to empathise with the other, namely, the victims of their pimping, thuggery, and hustle.

In the closing pages of the book, Jones and Spicer reflect upon what entrepreneurship should entail. They claim (with some justification) that a Schumpeterian definition of entrepreneurship privileges the actor who combines factors of production (the labour of others) rather than the factors themselves (103). They suggest a 'general entrepreneurship' (following Bataille) that throws into relief the entrepreneurship of the Other (following Levinas) (107). Such a general definition would see creative capacity in all labour (following Negri), set against a 'restrictive definition' of entrepreneur as one who is able to capture, limit and close down the creativity and innovation of the other (108). Once again, the authors' concern with definition appears to centre on the possibilities for individual action afforded by the classification as entrepreneur. At the heart of their account lies an unspoken understanding that linguistic categories have a real and defining power over material outcomes. For Jones and Spicer, a reconstruction of the entrepreneurial enterprise must therefore come through a critique and rebuilding of the language that surrounds entrepreneurship. Granting that there is quite some truth in this claim (Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004), it is disappointing to see the authors fail to carry their assertion through to a meaningful conclusion. Instead, they conclude by expressing the hope that 'if you are an entrepreneur, this book might have helped you think about the vast array of things outside of you, and outside of your enterprise, that have made you and your enterprise possible' (115). That's a nice sentiment, and I truly

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1   Interested readers will note that de Sade's prose is the 'sexual version of the complex architectural dishes produced by post-revolutionary French chefs such as Carême and his followers' (77).

hope that some of those 'cruel and vindictive' actors, 'surveying the landscape from however tall an office or however elegant a jet' (*ibid.*), will hear it.

Critical or otherwise, Jones and Spicer's project of teasing out the concept of the entrepreneur seems fatally compromised almost from the outset, and this by one little fact: They simply have not done their homework. Of course, no one could accuse them of being narrowly read. In the bibliography, one finds Foucault, Lacan, Levinas, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Guattari, Žižek, Bataille, Negri, de Certeau, and de Sade, among others. But a reader cannot help but notice that, for a book that claims to be excavating the theoretical underpinnings of the entrepreneur and developing genealogies of entrepreneurial value, there is not much entrepreneurship literature here. Jones and Spicer's commitment not to be bogged down by disciplinary categories does not free them from the need to engage with the disciplinary literature, if only to avoid looking foolish – and there are, on this point, some really glaring omissions. There is no sign of Ted Baker's (2005) seminal study of entrepreneurial bricolage: Of making do, the crook, the hustler, the small time trader, the very things that Jones and Spicer claim are absent from entrepreneurship research. As they find functionalist approaches theoretically problematic, one might expect to see Sarasvathy's (2001) concept of effectuation, or even Görling and Rehn's (2008) account of accidental entrepreneurship. The problems of agency-led, individualistic approaches to entrepreneurs are well understood and discussed in the existing literature (Ucbasaran, 2008). Jones and Spicer lament the absence of accounts of ethics in entrepreneurship; interested readers can find the literature of entrepreneurship and ethics reviewed by Hannafey (2003). Finally, and most tellingly, Jones and Spicer assert that 'the ancient activity of charity is now "social entrepreneurship"' (10). Unfortunately, it is not: the ancient act of charity is now philanthropy, and the subject of an entirely different set of moral and social arguments. Social entrepreneurship quite specifically refers to the use of organisational forms familiar from business and the motor provided by profits in order to solve social problems (Dees, 1998). Social entrepreneurship sets itself against the very social relations that the authors condemn; it seeks to ensure a redistribution of wealth to the factors of production, and pursues social justice and moral goods. Social entrepreneurs invoke the discursive power of social relations in their *favour*: They take on and use of the title 'entrepreneur' to strengthen their confidence, their reputation, and their fledgling ventures (Parkinson and Howorth, 2008). Social entrepreneurship is on Jones and Spicer's side, and yet the whole strand of literature is missing from the book.

While reading *Unmasking the Entrepreneur* one is reminded of Humpty-Dumpty: 'When I use a word... it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less'. Throughout the book, it seems that Jones and Spicer can only sustain their arguments through the use of a naïve concept of entrepreneurship that invokes private jets, sports cars, designer clothes, endless golf, and all the other elements of conspicuous consumption. For entrepreneurship research, a focus on process (Steyaert, 2007; Ucbasaran, Westhead and Wright, 2001) and outcome (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000) has liberated scholars – and business people too – to consider entrepreneurship in a much broader and often more socially productive sense.

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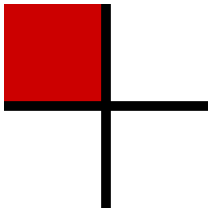
Diasporas in a digital age

Leon Tan

Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff's book *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement* provides a great deal of useful material concerning the use of Internet technologies for social organizing among diaspora communities. As the author notes, this is an area that has been relatively under-researched and, for that matter, under-theorized. Drawing on a diversity of case studies including Afghani (AfghanistanOnline), Egyptian Coptic (MyCopticChurch), Tibetan (TibetBoard), Somali (Somalinet) and Nepali (Thamel.com) diasporas, Brinkerhoff demonstrates how such communities may take up the social and expressive affordances of the Internet to achieve a range of benefits in differing circumstances. Thus she shows that online conversations and interactions between diasporans enable the expression and negotiation of cultural identities, the accumulation and distribution of material benefits, the achievement of collective goals (in homeland and/or host-land), and a decrease in social marginalization. The resulting portraits of diaspora life in the Internet's digital spaces are both evocative and detailed, and make the book a worthwhile read.

In selecting such a wide range of diaspora organizations to study, Brinkerhoff manages to convey a lively sense of the contemporary world economy in its ongoing transformations. One of the key changes is a rapid globalization of actual locales by the spread of Internet-based social networks and an accompanying intensification of flows of people, passions and desires. The inclusion of verbatim quotations from case study subjects enables diasporans to acquire a voice in the narrative, and thus speak for themselves to some degree. This strategy lends validity to the book by demonstrating respect for a principle articulated by Gilles Deleuze (2004: 208), namely, 'the indignity of speaking for others'. What is especially moving is the way Brinkerhoff attempts to capture not only the semantic content of online interactions between diasporans, but also their emotional reactions. Emotions are, after all, the basis for affective bonds that motivate families and communities to maintain and nurture ongoing connections across the Internet after separation from each other by migration across geopolitical borders. It is a shame, however, that the psychological reasoning provided by the author tends to

be relatively unsophisticated, and would benefit from a deeper consideration of existing literature in psychosocial disciplines.

While Brinkerhoff acknowledges evidence of the Internet's use for 'terrorist' activities, it is commendable that she avoids the paranoia to be found in many popular discussions concerning the Internet's impacts on national and international governance. Instead, she focuses on so-called 'liberal' uses of the Internet by diasporans, with case studies providing evidence for 'American values of pluralism, democracy, and human rights' (57). A central theme recurring across the book is that diasporas play an important, though neglected, role in international affairs; their activities have contributions to make to global security, integration, political and economic development. As an outcome of her research, Brinkerhoff makes a number of laudable policy recommendations, for instance, continuing provision of IT access and privacy, non-interference with the making and negotiation of identity claims online, the creation of enabling environments for high quality lives for diasporas, and relationship building between governments and diaspora organizations. These recommendations, if implemented, are likely to enhance the growing capacities of diasporas in various host countries and indeed to improve the lives and livelihoods of such communities.

If the book has a major downside, it is that Brinkerhoff copiously references 'liberal values' without once stopping to elucidate the term liberal. Neither does she give pause to question the role of the US, explicitly associated with liberal values, engaging in illiberal practices such as torture and the purveyance of global violence and protection services[1]. What is also disquieting is the way in which Brinkerhoff appears to equate democracy with non-violence in her discussions, while neglecting to critically analyze the last several decades of US military violence and its contribution to the enlargement of numerous diasporas. Think, for instance, of the displacement of Vietnamese, Cambodians, Iraqis and Afghanis resulting at least in part from respective cases of US foreign policy 'interventions'. The lack of attention to such issues is surprising given the book's interest in international affairs, migration, diasporas and the promotion of non-violence. Brinkerhoff also makes the strange claim that 'American culture and socialization place far fewer limits on expectations and possibilities for those born into less fortunate circumstances' (191). Such a claim is directly contradicted by the disproportionate representation of African-Americans in US prisons, as well as the persistent under-representation of Indigenous Americans, African-Americans and women in state and federal government and in the top tier of corporate management and ownership.

This book would benefit from a critical discussion of the history of US government instigation and financing of armed violence in numerous regions of the world, and the contribution of such history to global insecurity, the displacement of communities and stimulation of migration flows. The world systems analysis trajectory of Immanuel Wallerstein and the recent work of Francis Shor (2009; 2010) are instructive in this regard, especially in relation to US hegemonic succession and corresponding world crises. Brinkerhoff's social analysis, while rigorous, would benefit from attention to

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1   Charles Tilly's (1985) historical analysis makes a strong case for such cases of war-making and state-making as 'our largest examples of organized crime' (169).

suitably critical work done by the likes of Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2007) on the dynamics of contentious politics and social movements across the world economy. In effect, what Brinkerhoff portrays may be fruitfully theorized in terms of digital 'repertoires of contention' with which diasporas and their organizations engage in the making of more or less contentious claims. The advantage of employing Tilly and Tarrow's work is to provide a more sophisticated account of identity mobilization and social boundary formation than what is currently given in the book.

The analysis would also benefit from a consideration of Charles Tilly's (2007) *Democracy*. In contrast to Brinkerhoff, for Tilly there is no such thing as democracy in general, only populations of individuals and groups organizing more or less democratically. Democratic organizing depends on four intermeshing components: *breadth, equality, protection* and *mutually binding consultation*. Thus a regime is democratic 'to the degree that political relations between the state and its citizens feature broad, equal, protected and mutually binding consultation' (Tilly, 2007: 13-14). Tilly's key contribution to theorizing democracy is his observation that it is best considered as a *process*, with individual world-economies continually subject to waves of *democratizing* and *de-democratizing*. Democratizing and de-democratizing consist of large-scale processes increasing or decreasing a political regime's degree of democracy. As concepts, they allow for the portrayal of political life in individual world-economies not solely in terms of political organizations, but more importantly in terms of *movements* and *transformations*, making possible a more nuanced social analysis than the one presented by Brinkerhoff.

One wonders at the omission of critical analysis regarding concepts such as democracy and liberal values, and at a seeming failure to consider the embeddedness of diaspora organizations in long duration world-economic history. For what Brinkerhoff claims to be the first book-length study of online diaspora organizations, it seems strange not to devote at least a chapter to these issues. This lack of critical discussion handicaps an otherwise useful book by giving the impression of deliberate avoidance or naïvete. *Digital Diasporas* nevertheless makes an important contribution to the study of diasporas and their uptake of the Internet's social expressive affordances. Its major strengths lie in the broad coverage of different diaspora organizations and the detailed description of diasporan interactions. To Brinkerhoff's credit, the book is written in a clear and engaging style, even if it is at times a little too repetitive. Because of this clarity, the resulting images of diaspora life online and offline may be widely accessible, even to those for whom English is not a primary language. At the very least, this book opens up an important area for discussion and further research.

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