



# Uncanny matters: Kafka's burrow, the unhomely and the study of organizational space

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## Introduction

In Franz Kafka's late and incomplete text *Der Bau* (translated as *The burrow*; Kafka, 1971), a mole-like creature is haunted by fears that its intricate, labyrinthine burrow is about to be – or indeed already has been – invaded by some dangerous other. The beastly protagonist and narrator has dedicated its working life to building and organizing a perfect shelter, an environment homely, quiet and secure. 'I have completed the construction of my burrow and it seems to be successful', the story begins (Kafka, 1971: 325). That is, 'it seems': while proud of the burrow's ingenious architecture, the creature 'can scarcely pass an hour in complete tranquillity' (Kafka, 1971: 325). It is continuously constructing and reconstructing, mending and repairing, surveying and controlling, forever trapped in the labour of keeping the outside at bay. Yet unhomely forces are perpetually there. Worse, the more work is put into securing the burrow, the more it seems to be haunted by ghostly presences. They cannot be kept outside but emerge with the construction of the homely itself, like the whistling noise that comes to occupy the dweller: 'I must first feel quite at home before I could hear it; it is, so to speak, audible only to the ear of the householder' (Kafka, 1971: 343).

According to Walter Benjamin, Kafka's writings summon and reflect the 'question of how life and work are organized in human society' (Benjamin, 2007: 123). In this sense, *The burrow* raises the question of the unsettling affectivity and ghostliness of organizational space.<sup>1</sup> Yet this is a specifically unsettling affectivity,

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<sup>1</sup> In Kafka's own words, his process of writing and revising was itself geared towards keeping or enlarging an aura of ineffable mystery by making everything sound *ein wenig unheimlich*, 'a little uncanny' (quoted after Harman, 2002: 325).

one that posits the ‘strange within the familiar, the strangely familiar, the familiar as strange’ (Fisher, 2016: 10). This is the realm of the uncanny (Freud, 1976). In tying the affect of uncanniness to the built spaces of the shelter, *The burrow* dwells on the spatial or ‘the architectural uncanny’ (Vidler 1992). In this note, I seek to reflect on these uncanny matters in relation to organizational space and the ‘spatial turn’ in organization studies.

Two specific interests inform this endeavour. First, the ‘unconcept’ of the uncanny (Masscheleinen, 2011) arguably lies at the core of the by-now broader engagement with the ghostly, with haunting and spectrality in social and cultural theory. The special issue’s aim to more fully open the organization-theoretical imagination towards ‘ghostly matters’ thus calls for an engagement with the uncanny. While a well-established, even fashionable term in the humanities and the humanities-inflected social sciences (hence its pivotal role in matters of the ghostly; ffytche, 2012), *das Unheimliche* is a little-known category in the study of organization (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013).

Second, the uncanny has been at work in the spatial and architectural imagination at least since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Vidler, 1992). Relating uncanniness to organizational space thus offers a distinct perspective on the physical spaces of organization. The notion of the uncanny emphasizes the affective, haunted and multiple constitution of space. It thus is a powerful reminder to not dissimulate spatial multiplicity into comforting narratives of spatial means and ends when studying and writing spaces of organization (Massey, 2005). And it points to a way of theorizing organizational spatialities that is open to the affective and atmospheric force of space and attuned to its unsettling and ghostly effects.

## The burrow

Back to Kafka’s strange, nameless beast and how its story invites the reconsideration of organizational space; in the way that so many of the creatures that populate Kafka’s stories can compel us to rethink how organization takes place (Beyes and Holt, 2019). The affect of unhomeliness, or of the uncanny, to use the standard translation of *unheimlich*, is predicated on the burrow’s architecture, its spatial form and its organization of space. Already indicated by the story’s title, this ‘great vulnerable edifice’ can be read as the very material protagonist of the narrative: ‘the vulnerability of the burrow has made me vulnerable; any wound to it hurts me as if I myself were hit’ (Kafka, 1971: 355). In German, moreover, *Der Bau* alludes to a range of meanings which ‘the burrow’ does not capture. A *Bau* is, first of all, a building, an edifice, an architectural structure. Moreover, in colloquial usage it denotes a prison. The term is often used in the processual sense of *im*

*Bau*, of a building under construction and a construction in process (a *Baustelle* is a construction site). The verb *bauen* or *aufbauen* means to construct and to build, and in a metaphorical sense, to develop (a text, a self, a company). Only in the context of animal habitats the term refers to a den, a lair, or indeed a burrow. Arguably, then, the title emphasizes the physical building, its architecture, its entrances and exits, walls, passageways, rooms, cells and voids, as well as the interminable labour of construction and repair. The story's *Bau* is made of passageways, in the intersections of which there are spatial voids or cells. These cells afford the creature's feelings of homeliness, and moments of rest and sleep. The main cell and ultimate shelter is the 'Castle keep': a larger, womb-like space that the empty passages seem to lead to and depart from (Touloumi, 2005). It is here, where homeliness can be enjoyed the most and interruptions are least expected, that the whistling noise sets in (or returns):

This had to happen just in my favorite room, I think to myself, and I walk a fair distance away from it, almost halfway along the passage leading to the next room; I do this more as a joke, pretending to myself that my favorite room is not alone to blame, but that there are disturbances elsewhere as well, and with a smile on my face I begin to listen: but soon I stop smiling, for, right enough, the same whistling meets me here too. (Kafka, 1971: 344-345)

The homely encompasses, and is destabilized through, the unhomely; the household and its management – literally, *oikonomia* (Dotan, 2016) – by that which is unmanageable. The building and its ghosts turn against its dweller: 'I go once more the long road to the Castle Keep, all my surroundings seem filled with agitation, seem to be looking at me, and then look away again so as not to disturb me, yet cannot refrain the very next moment from trying to read the saving solution from my expression. I shake my head, I have not yet found any solution.' (Kafka, 1971: 357) The familiar becomes strange, and the strange familiar; the architecture of surveillance and control to defend against intruders becomes a trap for its builder. The burrow's exit, beyond the security labyrinth, appears to be safer than the inside: 'A complete reversal of things in the burrow; what was once the place of danger has become a place of tranquillity, while the Castle Keep has been plunged into the melee of the world and its perils' (*ibid.*: 352).

Yet this is not a complete reversal. After all, 'even here [at the exit] there is no peace in reality' (*ibid.*: 352); and the noise was there before, the creature remembers, 'when the burrow was only beginning' (*ibid.*: 355). Whatever it is that haunts the building – 'some animal unknown to me'; 'a huge swarm of little creatures'; a single 'big beast'; 'strangers'<sup>2</sup> – it is co-present with and tied to its cells, vaults,

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<sup>2</sup> It is beyond the scope of this note to discuss how *The burrow's* uncanniness figures the very timely issue of 'strangers at our doors' (Bauman, 2016) and concerns of security, paranoia and affective politics. Uncannily, 'the foreigner lives within us: he is the

labyrinth and passageways. No homeliness without uncanny sensations, a reader might think; no organizational space without cracks, leaks and hauntings. ‘All remained unchanged’ (*ibid.*: 359), thus ends the story.

## The Freudian uncanny and the ghostly

The notion of the uncanny has a rich and heterogeneous genealogy (Masschelein, 2011). In 20<sup>th</sup> century thought, it was developed and mobilized to think specifically modern anxieties and to ponder questions of estrangement, alienation, exile and (literal and metaphorical) homelessness (Vidler, 1992; Jay, 1998). A ‘crossover’ concept par excellence, it is now referenced and employed across many fields, including cultural studies, sociology, aesthetic and architectural theory as well as literary, feminist and postcolonial studies. According to ffytche’s critique of the ‘apotheosis’ of the uncanny in cultural and social theory (2012) – and of the uncanny as a kind of meta-theory of cultural thought – Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* constitutes the perhaps most influential text for the proliferation of this kind of scholarly work. This influence is predicated on relating the notion of the uncanny to the language of the phantom, the spectral, the ghostly and haunting or ‘hauntology’. Indeed, Derrida (1994: 174) claimed that *Spectres of Marx* could have been subtitled ‘Marx – *Das unheimliche*’.<sup>3</sup> The uncanny is a peculiar concept in at least three ways: as ‘unconcept’, to use Masschelein’s term, it is situated ‘on the verge between concept and affect’, between thought and sensation (Masschelein, 2011: 11). As such, it is a particularly performative and slippery notion, ‘never fixed, but constantly altering’ (Royle, 2003: 5). It thus appears to be an all-purpose nostrum – a meta-theory – that can be brought to bear on all kinds of phenomena.

The ‘apotheosis’ of uncanny thought is usually based on readings and re-readings of Freud’s *Das unheimliche*.<sup>4</sup> As ‘founder of the discourse’ (Masschelein, 2011: 4), Freud (1976) perceived the uncanny and its unsettling feelings of unpleasantness

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hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder’ (Kristeva, quoted after Sandercock, 2005: 222). The stranger is strangely familiar, indeed. As Simmel (1992: 764 et seqq.) has famously argued, the stranger combines wandering and fixation, nearness and farness, not belonging and somehow belonging, being-inside and being-outside.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Is this not our own great problematic constellation of haunting? It has no certain boundaries, but it blinks and sparkles behind the proper names of Marx, Freud, and Heidegger: Heidegger who misjudged Freud who misjudged Marx. (...) The subtitle of this address should have been: “Marx – *Das unheimliche*”’ (Derrida, 1994: 174).

<sup>4</sup> In Freud’s oeuvre, *The Uncanny* is regarded as a so-called ‘bridge text’ leading from the earlier writings and their psychoanalytical conceptualizations to a more advanced social thinking to be witnessed in later works such as *Beyond the pleasure principle* and *Civilization and its discontents*.

and unease to be a neglected part of the aesthetic sublime. The destabilizing force of the uncanny is echoed in its etymology. There are doubles and reversals: Freud noted how the meaning of *heimlich* first became ambivalent and then fell together with its opposite *unheimlich*. *Heimlich* (literally: homely) stems from *heimelig* (cosy, intimate, familiar, trusting) – from feelings of domesticity, of being at home – yet came to signify things that are concealed, kept hidden, done in secrecy. *Unheimlich* is then the un- or not-homely that is however there, tied to the home and its secrets, emerging with and beneath the *heimlich*, and thus a ghostly presence. This amounts to an etymological manifestation of how ‘that which supposedly lies outside the familiar comfort of the home turns out to be inhabiting it all along’ (Wigley, 1995: 108). The uncanny thus denotes a peculiar knot of the familiar and the unfamiliar. It designates the strangely familiar, the familiar becoming defamiliarized, in its two senses: something familiar emerges in an unfamiliar context, and something unfamiliar emerges in a familiar context. The uncanny thus involves feelings of uncertainty and apprehension and a crisis or critical disturbance of the proper, of the boundaries of inside and outside.

Collecting and discussing examples of uncanny experiences, Freud (1976) mainly drew upon literary works,<sup>5</sup> such as E.T.A. Hoffmann’s novel *The sandman*, and upon personal anecdotes and psychoanalytical cases. The uncanny appears in various disguises: as more gruesome or terrible defamiliarizations linked to death and corpses (e.g. the fear of being buried alive, being haunted by the dead as well as by the spirits and ghosts of dead bodies); as doubts whether an apparently living being is in fact alive, or, conversely, whether an inanimate object might not be alive; as a belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and spirits as well as corresponding practices of magic; as phantom doubles in all its forms and expressions (persons who appear to be identical, telepathy, identification with an other and subsequent ‘loss’ of one’s own self); as visions of supplementary of phantom limbs; as a response to lifelike objects or apparatuses; more generally, as the effacement of the distinction between image and reality (something becomes real that hitherto appeared fantastic); as involuntary, unsettling repetitions, for instance when losing one’s way in a city and returning to the same place time and again; as the feeling of *déjà vu*.

As the range of phenomena indicates, Freud struggled to contain the notion of the uncanny. His introduction of a distinction between reality and fiction seems odd,

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<sup>5</sup> Also with regard to uses of Kafka in organization theory, it is of interest that e.g. Ranciè (2010) argues that a psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious could be formulated *because* there already existed, beyond the proper realm of the ‘clinical’, a notion of the unconscious’ sphere of influence invented by works of sculptural and literary art. In this sense, Freudian theory sought anchorage in this aesthetic configuration of both ‘uncanny thought’ and ‘unconscious thought’.

strangely disavowing literary examples after having made good use of them. After all, the point of departure of Freud's 'theoretical fiction' (Masschelein, 2011: 56) is the becoming-real of something hidden, something hitherto not real. '[A]s if', Royle comments (2003: 133), 'psychoanalysis were ever concerned with anything but displacements, disturbances and refigurations of "the distinction between imagination and reality"!' Also, basing 'real' (presumably non-fictional) individual causes of the uncanny on the link between prior repression and unexpected return (e.g., of infantile complexes such as castration anxiety and womb fantasies) ties the notion to the troubled individual psyche, foreclosing the social complexity of haunting. As Gordon (1997: 57) put it in her study on *Haunting and the sociological imagination*, '[a]fter having dragged the human sciences into all these ghostly affairs, Freud's science arrives to explain away everything that is important and to leave us with adults who never surmount their individual childhoods or adults whose haunting experiences reflect their incorrect and childish belief in the modes of thought of their "primitive" ancestors'.

Yet before moving on to the architectural uncanny and thus one way of dealing with socio-organizational realities of haunting, it should be noted that bemoaning Freud's struggles to comprehensively discuss or specifically pin down the uncanny is a nostalgic move: the 'unconcept' haunted by the ghosts of conceptual clarity, docility and applicability. Having demonstrated its slipperiness might just be a lesson of Freud's text.<sup>6</sup> The unsettling quality of the uncanny extends to the conceptual level itself. Especially in so-called poststructuralist readings, Freud's text has been discussed as exemplary for the fundamental difficulty or perhaps the impossibility of defining and 'fixing' concepts as such (Cixous, 1976; Derrida, 1994; Royle, 2003).

### **An uncomfortable sense of haunting: *The architectural uncanny***

The uncanny may thus be an individually felt emotion, 'but it is never one's 'own': its meaning or significance may have to do, most of all, with what is not oneself, with others, with the world "itself" ' (Royle, 2003: 2). Its significance, that is, also pertains to the world of organization. At the very least, Freud's seminal essay invites the study of organization to turn towards the ghostly and haunted,

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<sup>6</sup> As Weber (2000) speculates, the indeterminacy and instability inherent in the Freudian uncanny might go some way to explain its importance. After all, there are different notions of the uncanny that have remained comparably marginal, for example Heidegger's usage of this term. In her reading of *Das Unheimliche*, this 'act of theoretical boldness' (527), Hélène Cixous (1976) marvels at how 'what is brought together here is quickly undone', how 'what asserts itself becomes suspect'; how 'each thread leads to its net or to some kind of disentanglement' (525).

disturbing and unsettling character of everyday organized life. Following Kafka's creature in *The burrow*, I suggest turning to the spatial environments of organized life. In architectural theory, mainly the work of Anthony Vidler (1992, 2001), physical spaces as well as spatial thought are shown to be invested with the unhomely. Recall Kafka's burrow: the crisis of the proper and of the boundaries of inside and outside is tied to the very building, its architecture, entrances and exits, rooms and passageways. The mole-subject not only builds its *Bau*; it 'lives the material world; it is of that world and produced by it' (Pile and Thrift, 1995: 19). In this reading, space is not treated as a 'container' in which the creature is placed, as if its burrow would be a 'given, knowable and universally same condition' (Vidler, 2003: 33); neither is the built environment a material disguise for deeper-rooted individual maladies. According to Vidler, space rather becomes 'suddenly charged with all the dimensions of a relative, moving, dynamic entity' (2001: 3). To put it differently, the interest lies in space as it affects embodied experience, as it is atmospherically 'lived'.

That uncanny sensations are perhaps invariably and irreducibly spatial is not only indicated by the etymology of the unhomely but also by its genealogy. In fact, the uncanny has been related to the spatial imagination at least since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Vidler, 1992: ix). It is part of a bigger history of seeing 'space as threat, as harbinger of the unseen [that] operates as medical and psychical metaphor for all the possible erosions of bourgeois bodily and social well being' (*ibid.*: 167). In this sense a 'spatial turn' *avant la lettre*, connections of uncanniness and physical space had been at work in the aesthetic of the sublime, the numerous 'haunted houses' in romantic literature, avant-garde architecture as well as the 'posturbanist sensibility' (*ibid.*: xii) from surrealism to situationism.

According to Vidler, two trajectories are particularly pertinent here. For one, in romantic thought and the aesthetic of the sublime – and as re-enacted in Kafka's *The burrow* – the house has been treated as a place for countless representations of haunting, doubling, dismembering and other gruelling imaginations. The juxtaposition between a safe home and the fear-inducing invasion of strange presences turns the uncanny into 'the quintessential bourgeois kind of fear' (Vidler, 1992: 4) – a materially (more or less) secure class that feels unhomely in its own home. Not surprisingly, also for Freud (1976) the haunted house is one of the most striking examples for the uncanny. Returning to Freud's etymological discussions, Vidler therefore suggests the term 'unhomely' as a (more literal, and better) translation for *unheimlich*: '(...) from the homely house to the haunted house there is a single passage, where what is contained and safe is therefore secret, obscure, and inaccessible, dangerous and full of terrors (...) ' (Vidler, 1992: 32). Second, the labyrinthine spaces of the modern city have been re-imagined as hotbeds of anxieties such as epidemics, revolutions, phobias and urban

estrangement. 'In many ways, the city provides an archetypal scene for uncanny experiences' (Pile, 2005: 40). The uncanny 'went public' in the modern metropolis, with its potentially disturbing characteristics of heterogeneity, instability and estrangement as described by Benjamin, Kracauer, Simmel and many others.<sup>7</sup>

It follows that 'in each moment of the history of the representation of the uncanny (...) the buildings and spaces that have acted as the sites for uncanny experiences have been invested with recognizable characteristics' (Vidler, 1992: 11). Feelings of the uncanny are closely related to the organization of physical space: to the house (or the burrow) that does and does not afford security, to the city once intimated and walled, then a breeding place for unsettling encounters. Therefore, Vidler conceptualizes the 'spatial uncanny' as 'sinister, disturbing, suspect, strange; it would be characterized better as "dread" than terror, deriving its force from its very inexplicability, its sense of lurking unease, rather than from any clearly defined source of fear – an uncomfortable sense of haunting rather than a present apparition' (*ibid.*: 23). In *The burrow*, it never becomes clear from where the whistling originates; it seems there are no specific actors or objects that could be pinpointed as the source of what haunts the creature. Yet, what is clear is that the haunting and the dread co-originate with the building and its architecture of control and security. Significantly, Vidler argues that these feelings of dread arose

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<sup>7</sup> Around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, individual psychological disorders were extended to the social conditions of the industrial metropolis – 'the discovery of these new phobias seems to have been part of a wider process of remapping the space of the city according to its changing social and political characteristics' (Vidler, 2001: 26). Especially the bourgeois 'illness' of 'agoraphobia' (*Platzscheu*) embarked on a remarkable career, up to the point where it was popularly used to denote all kinds of urban fears somehow related to spatial conditions – it became the quintessentially urban anxiety next to claustrophobia (denoting the fear of crowded/populated places). Vidler (2001: 35) assembles an impressive list of what can be called 'metropolitan pathologies' of these nervous times: 'Agoraphobia (the fear of places) was supplemented by atremia or stasophobia (fear of elevated or vertical stations), amaxophobia (exaggerated fear of carriages), cremnophobia (the fear of precipices), acrophobia or hypsophobia (fear of elevated places), oicophobia (aversion to returning home), lyssophobia (fear of liquids), hydrophobia (fear of water – also connected to agoraphobia by the fear of the sea as expanse, and of crossing a bridge), pyrophobia (fear of fire, which was often linked to claustrophobia), monophobia (fear of solitude), anthropophobia (fear of social contact), and a multitude of others, culminating in photophobia (the fear of fear itself), an illness generally subsumed under neurasthenia.' Perhaps grappling with a list of more individualized psychological illnesses, the contemporary post-industrial city, too, is shaped by similar anxieties (Pile, 2005). For instance, '[d]iscourses of fear pervade contemporary discussions of the city. (...) Planning and urban management discourses are, and always have been, saturated with fear. The history of planning could be rewritten as the attempt to manage fear in the city (...)' (Sandercock, 2005: 219).



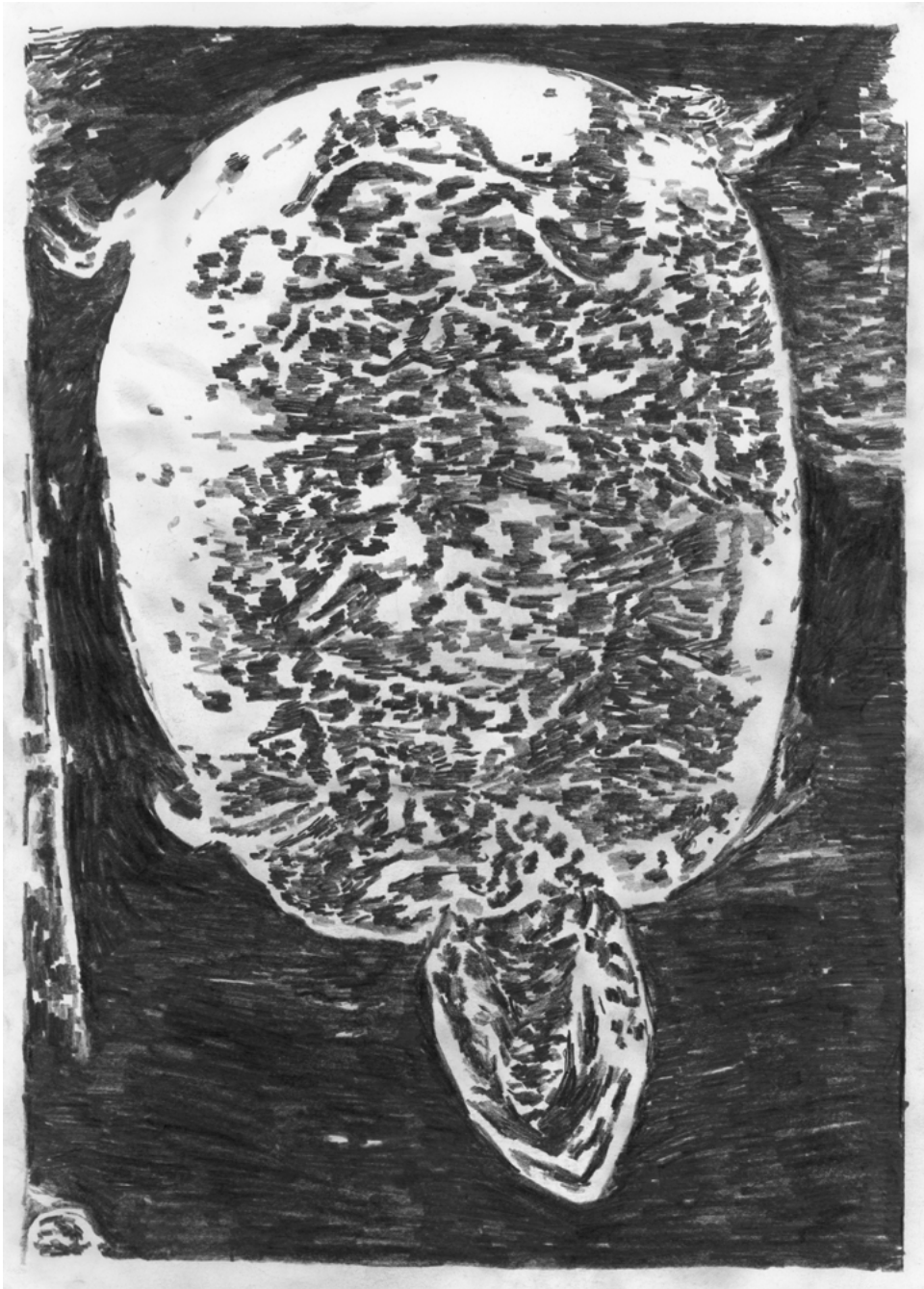
together with the enlightenment project of transparent and hygienic spaces of social progress. Modernism is said to have been infatuated with transparency and lightness – both in its technologically instrumentalist, optimistic visions and in its critical unmasking of structures of domination in order to enable progress and emancipation. What can be called the modernist paradigm of lightness is thus related to modernism's 'fear of the dark' and darkened spaces (Foucault, 1980); the infatuation with light, security and transparency goes hand-in-hand with its uncanny double, the 'invention of a spatial phenomenology of darkness' (Vidler, 1992: 169).

The uncanny therefore refers not so much to darkness itself (if there is such a thing) but to the interplay between darkness and lightness, to the process of bringing to light (that which was hidden). As has been noted by commentators of Freud's essay, 'the uncanny seems (at least for Freud) to involve a special emphasis on the visual, on what comes to light, on what is revealed to the eye. The uncanny is what comes out of the darkness' (Royle, 2003: 108). Importantly, then, both 'movements' – lightness, darkness – are intertwined: something familiar emerges in an unfamiliar context, and something unfamiliar emerges in a familiar context. The invention of the uncanny interferes with any clear-cut dualism in stressing the 'knot' of transparency and obscurity and the originary entanglement of dark space and bright space. It confronts the longing for a home and the desire for domestic security with its apparent counterpart, namely intellectual and literal homelessness, while simultaneously foregrounding the complicity between both (Vidler, 1992: 12).

### **Defamiliarizing organizational space**

The notion of the architectural uncanny opens up a more complex frame of reference for the study of organizational space. It presents the physical spaces (of organization) as affectively and atmospherically charged forces or media of organizing (Martin, 2003). Organization theory's spatial imagination is stretched towards the potentially unsettling and disturbing psycho-spatial dimensions of built materialities. It also follows that exploring the ghostliness of organization has to reckon with the 'uncanny overflow' (Royle, 2003: 24) of spatial settings. The uncanny's capacity to unsettle is closely related to the irreducible unstableness and the excessive movements of space (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012). The turn towards the ghostly in the form of the spatial uncanny therefore has quite radical implications for thinking and researching organizational spatialities. In the past 10-15 years, a substantial body of work on organizational space has appeared (Weinfurtner and Seidl, 2018). Heeding Lefebvre's (2009: 186) claim that 'we have passed from the production of things in space to the production of space itself',





these studies have firmly established a focus on the making of organizational spaces themselves and how they shape organizational life. Perhaps most notably, this approach enables studying the spatial materializations of power relations in organizations and their consequences (e.g. Dale and Burrell, 2008; Tyler and Cohen, 2010; Wasserman and Frenkel, 2015; Zhang and Spicer, 2014). Yet this spatial awareness is usually clad in the modernist dualism of (spatial) structures of domination, which bear down on organizational members, and a counterforce of what one could call spatial emancipation. Organizational sites are then presented as either 'dark' spaces of control or 'light' spaces of creativity and resistance (Kornberger and Clegg, 2004) – a seductive temptation when dealing with the brute materiality of architecture.

What resurfaces in such analyses is perhaps a sense of nostalgia that pervades the renaissance of space as analytical category. The 'nature' of this nostalgia is a modernist one, expressing a longing 'for politics, for the subject, for identity, for gender' (Vidler, 2001: 235). Under the guise of spatial thinking, there is a 'return to the comforting terms of a temporal discourse, the authorities of narrative, of beginnings, middles, and ends, of pasts, presents, and futures, that so controlled our thinking in the nineteenth century and that have reappeared consistently in the nostalgic counterspatial moves of the twentieth' (*ibid.*: 236). Here, a comforting narrative of spatial means and ends emerges. Yet this narrative and its assumptions are haunted in a double sense: haunted by homely distinctions such as positive and negative power and clear-cut spatial categories; and haunted by the uncanniness of space, which unsettles these distinctions and categories (Wigley, 1995).

That *unheimlich* somehow belongs to *heimlich*, that the homely cannot be separated from the unhomely and the comforting harbours discomfort and anxiety – these phenomena fuelled Freud's interest in unfolding and systematizing the uncanny. Moreover, they turned this notion into an important category of interpreting modern anxiety, of reflecting upon questions of estrangement, alienation, exile, homelessness and haunting. The uncanny therefore involves feelings of uncertainty and apprehension and a crisis of the boundaries of inside and outside – an unsettling of time and space. In this sense, the uncanny becomes more than a species of anxiety and discomfort; it becomes a 'bulwark against the dangerous temptations of conjuring away plural spectres in the name of a redeemed whole, a realization of narcissistic fantasies, a restoration of a true Heimat' (Jay, 1998: 161).

As for Kafka's creature in *The burrow*, the unhomely is co-present with and tied to organizational spaces. Through the notion of the architectural uncanny, the 'unconcept' of the uncanny therefore opens up the study of the built environments of organization to their ambiguity and their affectively unsettling charge (Beyes

and Steyaert, 2013; De Cock and O’Doherty, 2017). It emphasizes the haunted and multiple constitution of space, and of spatial thinking’s potential to embrace this ‘spatial swirl of affects’ (Thrift, 2006). The architectural imagination of organization theory is thus expanded towards a more complex spatial agency. This entails problematizing the comforting pre-assumption of thinking the agency of built space either with regard to the ‘dark’ spaces of organizational control and surveillance, or its ‘light’ counterpart of organized spaces of creativity and innovation. Exploring organizational spatialities therefore calls for less certainty and more openness towards invisibilities and spectres, towards the familiar made strange and the strange made familiar. It ‘requires attention to what is not seen’ but there, ‘to what appears dead, but is nonetheless powerfully alive’, ‘to what appears in the past, but is nonetheless powerfully present’ (Gordon, 1997: 42). It calls for a scholarly attunement to unsettling and disturbing effects and affects of built materialities. One expects organizational spatialities to be twisted and haunted, unsettled and contested, already defamiliarized or on the verge of defamiliarization, invested with ‘invasive and boundary-breaking properties’ (Vidler, 2003: 41). In this sense, the study of organizational space needs to embark on voyages into the ghostly and haunted character of organized life.

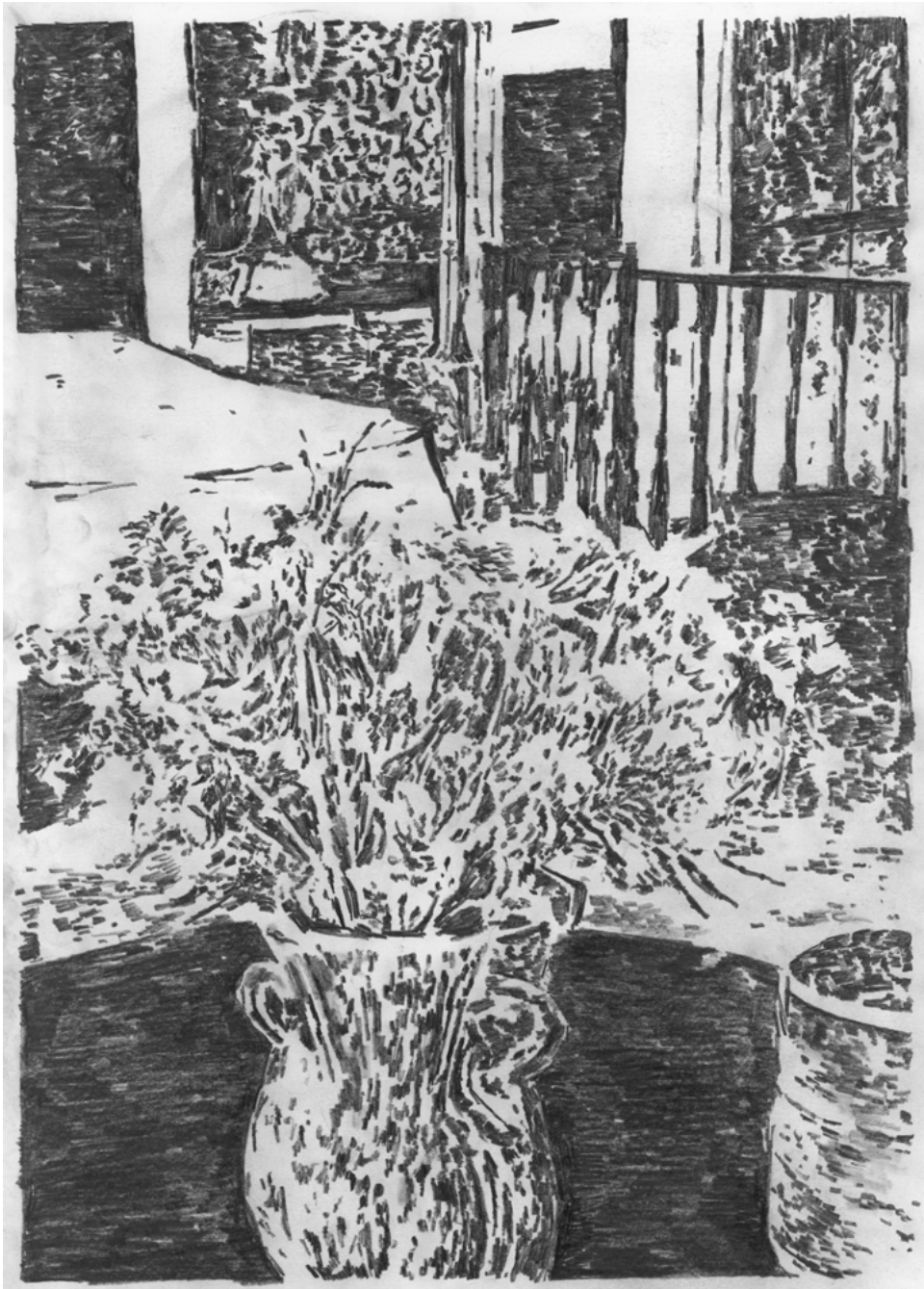
Empirically, a world of potential research sites presents itself to the organizational scholar. He/she might encounter staircases, corridors, toilets, voids and empty spaces (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 1999). An uncanny organizational analysis would need to defamiliarize the exchangeability of a corporate architecture often colloquially deemed soulless, of corporate lobbies and open space offices. It would venture the hypothesis that the colourful and playful ‘creative spaces’ of today’s experience economy harbour their own ambiguity and dread. It would explore new sites of organizing as they emerge through networked technologies and their uncanny doublings of time and space. It would inquire into the return of camp-like enclosures and their cracks and fissures as well as other monstrous sites that constitute the ‘capitalist uncanny’ (Clarke, 2011). Through addressing and conceptualizing the uncanny overflow of such and other sites, it would bring space back in, again.

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