



Opening the Companion

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review of: J.A.C. Baum (ed.) (2002) *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations*. Oxford: Blackwell. (HB: pp.960, £65, ISBN 0631216944)

Reviewing

Book reviewing is a well-entrenched genre in the social sciences. To review suggests a certain procedure – the reviewer receives a beautiful hard-cover book, they gloat momentarily that they did not have to purchase it themselves, they place it on the shelf for a period of time, they are reminded that you need to finish the review, they read through the book (often taking advantage of points in time where we are not being economically productive such as commuting or spending time with ones partner or family), finally they expound their general understanding of the book in words. If the author feels they have found an ally in an intellectual project, they may enlist the authors help by labelling them ‘part of a revolution’ in the theory of cola production or an ‘intellectual movement’ in thinking about genital auto-mutilation. If they feel the work represents part of a cancerous trend in the field, they might attempt to remove the tumour with subtle quips, standard insults, or brutal rhetoric. If they have just been reading *The New York Review of Books*, then they might begin to imagine this book is a launching point for an investigation of issues of great intellectual import (The correlation between military spending and cargo pant consumption, comparative Eastern European pornography). Once they have crafted this nasty piece of work, added a few hooks (for the publishers), and sharp insults (for the authors ego), it is packaged up, posted off, never to consider it again until the off-prints are received.

This practice of distilling the argument of a book does not just happen. It relies on a whole structure of institutions that have negotiated exchange relations based on shared interests in accumulating capital of one kind or another. Publishers provide the latest volume on the evolution of sewerage contracting to ensure it is effectively marketed to the exceedingly tiny niche market of academics and university libraries. The journal accepts and farms it out to a willing author in order to preserve its reputation as being up-to-date with developments in the field. The author accepts the task to contribute to

their collection of books, to force himself to read, perhaps to intervene in a debate about a particular issue, and ultimately score a few RAE points. The printed text becomes a carrier that links these momentarily aligned interests.

The social scientific review has inbuilt assumption about the material. It implies there is a central argument or scheme that can be mined out of the book, dusted off and coherently presented to the audience. It assumes that there is a positive, cohesive content that a reviewer can assess. It also presupposes that the review is in a position to judge statements put forward by the author and rationally arbitrate whether it is a 'critical success' or should be confined to the dust of historical curiosity.

In this peculiar case, the components of a review are out of place. The first misalignment encountered was that the normal practice of reviewing went wrong from the start – it was difficult to sit down in one easy step and swallow Baum's bitter pill. Was this because I was lazy? Had other more pressing projects? Was I suffering from chronic overwork produced by the under-funded English university system? Did I have a personal dislike for the content of the book? All these reasons went through my head, but none were correct. The real reason that my labours had been horribly interrupted was this – I was reviewing a handbook, not a normal monograph. This meant it was a series of loosely connected chapters that are to be read in an un-sequential fashion like a technical manual. If we cast even the most cursory empirical glance over how people actually use handbooks, only in the most deviant cases does it involve a studious and systematically reading the entire text. Instead we bring various chapters to hand as we need them.

The second problem that haunted my reviewing efforts was that interlocking interests seemed to be broken – the informal contact did not require a resounding recommendation of the book to people who might go out and buy it. As the joys of evolutionary theories of the firm unfolded, I became aware of some serious breaks between personal interests (free book, writing an article), the interests of the journal (material to publish) and the interests of the readership (something to read which connects with their interests), the interests of the editor (having the book seen as the standard reference device in Organization Studies, advancing his evolutionary perspective), the interests of the publisher (sell expensive hardbacks to libraries), and the interests of much of the books intended readership (members of the North American Academy of Management).

The final problem that dogged efforts to produce a competent review was not holding the correct position to judge the volume's offering. The small store of intellectual capital I have managed to build up during my career is situated in fields unknown in Baum's encyclopaedia. How was I then to judge the offerings of Organizational Economics, for instance? A reviewer for a professional journal is assumed to be a well-honed expert in the field who can provide incisive assessment about specialist claims. If correct, then the ideal reviewer would have to have a grasp on ten separate debates in Organization Studies, as well as good understanding of particular developments in epistemology and distinct research methods. I suspect that such people are the absolute exception instead of the generalised rule in modern science where one can spend their

whole life using the same theory to study the same object. This seemed to suggest there was no single ideal reviewer for Baum's handbook.

Taking these three devastating problems into account, I began to take heart and recognise what Baum and colleagues had produced was not reviewable, at least in the traditional form. The only honest way to review such a tomb was to follow the practices through which one actually uses a handbook like Baum. For Baum this is "a comprehensive survey that consolidates and evaluates what we know (and what we don't) about organization and to focus attention to the possibilities for epistemological and methodological elaboration" (p.xxx). The practices that Baum points towards involve dividing the world of knowledge up in palatable chunks through 'consolidation and evaluation' which can then be used in relationship to specific problems in practical everyday activity (teaching, research, advising organizations). The *Companion* is resolutely practical as it is envisaged as "a person you spend a lot of time with because you are either friends, or you are travelling together" (p.xxx). Because of the friendly relation the reader is encouraged to develop with the *Companion*, the routine standards of a social scientific book review were actively avoided.¹ By following a typical review

1 If the reader is looking for a routine review of the *Companion*, they will not find it in the body of this paper. I would suggest they consult Lousbury *et al.* (2003). If I was forced to provide such a routine review it may read something like the following:

The book begins with an introduction by Baum (the editor) and Rowley which situates the work firmly in the tradition of American organizational sociology influenced by systems theory [the central touchstone here is Scott's popular textbook and its framework which proposes that the study of organization can be divided into rational, natural and open systems approaches]. The introduction then lays out the levels of analysis that organizational science is based upon – namely intra-organizational, organizational, inter-organizations. The ten central concerns in 'Organization Science' are then laid out in relation to the themes of rational, natural and open systems. These ten concerns are institutions, networks, ecology, evolution, cognition and interpretation, power and dependency, technology, learning, complexity and computation and economics. Finally the issue of research method is picked up. Rejecting the positivism/relativism debate, the option of 'realism' is put forth as an alternative. In order to think through the thorny issue of how different theories relate, the concept of paradigms is rejected in favour of the thought image of 'scales' (as in fish scales). This introduction subsequently sets up the organization for the rest of the book which investigates in turn the ten issues at the intra-organizational level, then the organizational level, and finally the inter-organizational level (thirty chapters in all). The last eight chapters are devoted to 'updating organizational epistemology' by inculcating a realist agenda into current debates about epistemology.

Baum has assembled a group of leading representatives in the field of 'Organization Science' who are able to provide both the neophyte and experienced researcher with genuine insights. The overall organizing framework of the volume makes it easy to negotiate as a whole. Each chapter is clearly structured and provides the reader with a clear description of the classics in a given area of research, current questions, future issues as well as making links with other parts of the volume. A remarkable feature of each chapter is that they are largely discursive and providing clear descriptions of central pieces of research in the field instead of long chains of references. As well as covering many of the major issues in organization studies, the volume addresses contemporary debates about epistemology by providing the sensible alternative of realism (in contrast to relativism and positivism) to orient future developments. Ultimately the book provides a subtle balance between Baum's own vision for organization studies (the analysis or organizational variation, selection and retention through realist analysis of social life), and the unique contributions and expertise of each of the co-authors.

While Baum's vision for organization studies might be compelling for a largely North American audience, it comes as somewhat of a rude shock to those working in other traditions. The European researcher would find most of the central issues that are their bread and butter to be rendered

procedure, issues so central in any attempt to make Organization Studies ‘handleable’ would have been missed. In particular, shadows would be cast over attempts to divide knowledge and the provision of a resource to be used for specific practical purposes.

Dividing

On opening the *Blackwell Companion to Organization* I could not help thinking that I had come across the Chinese encyclopaedia that Jorge Louis Borges (1962) and Michel Foucault (1970) found so enchanting. In this peculiar oriental manuscript we are confronted with a crazed proliferation of objects that are separated by apparently arbitrary taxonomy. The result of such an affront is thus:

All the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bear the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the order surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and Other. (Foucault, 1970: xv)

The Chinese encyclopaedia clashes with the well order world of the reader. But in this clash, the reader is made aware of the arbitrariness of the order that she imposes upon the world. Like the Chinese encyclopaedia, the *Companion* made the world of organization I knew tip and sway. Clean lines were drawn in the most arbitrary places. The generic process of organizing was no longer a concern. Rather, there were three separated levels of analysis – the intra-organizational, the organizational, and the inter-organizational. Hadn’t these divisions carved into the body of organizing long since healed over? As well as these fundamental incisions into the living, breathing, body of organizing, there were some more arbitrary cross-hatchings. These lines of division were imposed directly by what appears to be a strange mix between bodies of thought and objects of analysis. The arbitrariness of the line between say ‘evolution’ and ‘ecology’ made my head swim.

outcomes or intervening variables in the grand scheme of variation, selection and retention. Indeed, merely comparing the contents pages of Clegg, Hardy and Nord’s *Handbook of Organization Studies* with Baum’s offering reveal some massive gaping holes. While Clegg, Hardy and Nord consider most of the fields raised in the *Companion*, Baum does not return the favour. Instead, he concentrates on the ‘hard core’ or American organization theory, completely writing off topics like language, emotion, philosophy, aesthetics, gender, race, culture, time and space, national differences. This would lead them to suspect Baum’s criteria of what counts as important forms of knowledge about organization, and what gets excluded. They might then reflect on the fact that only seven of the fifty-seven contributors work in institutions outside North America. Moreover the bulk of work cited has been produced by North American authors using distinctly North American theories about North American organizations. Indeed the underpinning assumptions about social life (Donald Campbell’s evolutionary theory) would be treated as curiosity produced by the remarkable lack of engagement with social theory on the part of Baum and colleagues. Taken together this would lead this review to suggest that Baum’s book is a little presumptuous in calling itself a ‘companion to organization’. Perhaps if the editor was to follow his own recommendations about the need for a realist science it would be labelled a ‘Companion to North American Organization: Social Darwinist Ideology Applied’.

So, why this desire to divide? To sever organization into a bleeding mess of organs without a body? Is the reason purely a practical one of communicating clearly with students who have had the rudiments of schoolmasters logic beaten into them? Is there something slightly more epochal about the swift divisions at work? Are we seeing the typical encyclopaedic drive of modernity to carve objects of analysis into manageable chunks by a director of studies and portioned out to salaried professionals who investigate their assigned chunk of writhing meat with cool rationality? Should we protest at the continued salience of dichotomous thinking and the damage it has wrecked upon our collective efforts of inquiry? Should we turn away in horror from such disastrous linear thinking that severs thought, severs reason, and leads to the slaughterhouse? Should we make a final cut, and portion out Baum and colleagues attempts at carving up the body of organization as yet another instance of modern reason attempting to arrest the process and flow of organizing through placing rational bounds on it?

These are certainly options that a particular brand of thinking about Organization Studies has been rather contented with for over a decade (e.g. Knights, 1997; Burrell, 1997; Chia, 2003). But of course, these attempts at epochal severing do not represent a break, but just another cut. They attempt to sever the body of organization and thought of organization once again, committing the same crime that the evil modernists are so liberally accused of. Instead of dividing around levels of analysis, we have a division in thought – modernist vs. post-modernist. Rather than making such over-generalised, philosophically unsustainable, historically inaccurate divisions that are blind to issues of continuation, perhaps we need to ask more modest questions about the divisions we find in very particular instances. Such a reflection has a clear lineage in Michel Foucault's archaeological work that inquires into the regimes underpinning our process of classifying the empirical world. It is a process of understanding how order arises from and within the blank space of the grids we use to systematise the world. This would lead us to target questions about Baum's gridding practices in a very specific way. We would treat the divisions he makes not as necessary expressions of the actual organizational world, but as moves that create a particular understanding of organization. We would ask how these divisions set up within the text are political acts of asserting one set of truth claims about organization.

The most obvious feature of gridding found in the *Companion* is the strict division between three levels of organization – intra-organizational, organizational, inter-organizational. These categories suggest that neat lines can be drawn between different 'levels of analysis' within organization. Oftentimes these levels of analysis simply go without saying. A typical introductory organizational behaviour textbook will inculcate into students that organizational behaviour is made up of individual, group, organizational and inter-organizational levels. When pressed for an answer as to why these divisions are made, one might retort that they accurately reflect the reality of organizational life. Against this rather foolhardy conjecture we could mobilise the refutation that there are clearly organizational processes which operate at all levels of analysis simultaneously. An example of this might be identity which is experienced at the individual level (my everyday flow of experience as an academic), reinforced through a specific group (self presentation to my colleagues, partner and students), may be bound up with an organizational culture (the identity entrenched at my institution),

and be also tied to a broader industry (the collective identity of what it means to be an academic I might share with someone working in clothing science at the University of Huddersfield). In order to counter my claim, a more wily defender of these levels of analysis might claim that the process of dividing levels of analysis is simply a contingent intellectual move that serves as a useful heuristic. In response to this question we would point out that this useful heuristic becomes rapidly engrained in peoples thinking so that when it might be time to abandon it, in order to pick up more useful tools, it continues to infect our thinking. I might also point out that the continued use of this heuristic led the analyst to assume particular levels naturally given. I might ask, when did these levels become pertinent? What is the history of a strict division between the group and the organization for instance? Similarly, is the division between organizational and inter-organizational meaningful given that so many processes occur across these borders? Does the process of continuing to pose these levels of analysis merely lead to the reconstruction of the assumption that organizations are a totalising entity that can be talked about as a whole? What other levels of analysis might be crafted as an intellectual framing, and indeed a framing for practical action?

The second striking feature which orders the *Companion* is a strict gridding of what constitutes current 'Organization Science'. This map of the terrain appears even more arbitrary than the levels of analysis. Included are institutions, networks, ecology, evolution, cognition and interpretation, power and dependency, technology, learning, complexity and computation and economics. The typical question we would expect to find in most reviews of a handbook would be why these particular divisions and not others? Obviously the act of dividing up the field is based upon an arbitrary act of pushing forward some concerns at the expense of others. For instance, in the *Companion* we find that approaches associated with social evolution are clearly favoured as these are two categories (ecology, evolution) which contain the same basic theories that are influenced by Donald Campbell's (1965) variation-selection-retention model. This strange slippage could easily be explained with reference to the editor's own preferences and heavy investment of intellectual capital in ecological approaches. One political consequences of this attempt to enrol other actors is that many of the editor's own studies are cited throughout the book.

What does this carefully structured grid exclude from organizational science? Starting with the levels of analysis axis, we would have to ask what is it that constitutes a non-organizational action for Baum? Is it the wide spread, but equally well organized practices which occur outside of formal organization such as work in the household, protest movements, informal street trading? What aspects of social life are rendered as 'not our concern' by these three levels of analysis? The political economy which large corporation so systematically attempt to manipulate for their ends? The desires that are systematically produced and destroyed while workers are 'in' organizations? The home life of these workers which serves as a space of habituation and social labour that is the necessary supplement for the organization?

A second set of exclusions is at work in the topics selected by Baum. If we briefly compare the current standard handbook on organizational studies, namely Clegg, Hardy and Nord's *Handbook of Organization Studies*, we notice that there are a significant number of topics that are simply not mentioned in Baum's book. These include issues

such as gender, emotion, language, time and space, race, aesthetics, culture, the natural environment, bureaucracy and identity. It seems strange that so many of these issues in organizational life could simply be done away with. A possible answer to our amazement might be that while each of these issues are important, they are merely applied issues, and hence are not particularly important for developing a central core of organization. Such a response would ask us to reflect back on what Baum claims to be at the core of organizational life.

The third major movement of exclusion we find at work within Baum's grid is the strict slip between what constitutes scientific and non-scientific knowledge of organization. The final section of the book articulates a clear version of what Organization Studies is. Abandoning the positivism vs. relativism debate, it suggests Organization Studies should become a realist enterprise:

Scientific realists believe that the world exists largely independent of our perceiving it. In contrast to relativism, there is an out there to theorize about. The job of the research is to improve our perception (measurement) process, separating illusion from reality, and generate the most accurate possible description of the world (Hunt, 1990). While believing that our perceptions cannot yield knowledge about the external world, scientific realists do not believe that the resulting knowledge is certain. Our observations (as well as our theories) are fallible – some more accurate and reliable (i.e. closer to the truth) than others, the validity of knowledge claims determined, at least in part, by the way the world *is*. (p.23)

The vision of science articulated here seems to be a naïve and conservative version of the more robust ontological realism and epistemological relativism put forward by critical realists like Roy Bhaskar (1989). It is naïve because there is no reflection on the fact that the yawning gulf between the real world of science and the relative and fallible world of practice requires serious and radical reflexivity about our method, instead of routine application. Baum's vision of realism is also conservative in that it assumes the handful of procedures typically found in the pages of *Administrative Science Quarterly* could be transposed directly into the intellectual terrain set up by realism. If this is so, the realism presented in the *Companion* seems not to have any use as a genuinely philosophical framework that reveals the world. Instead, realism merely legitimates routine practice in organizational sciences. This means practices associated with 'good research' are the usual routine of building and testing models, surveys, archival research, simulations, grounded theory, and field based research. Many of the recent advances in research methodology, such as studies of language, literary methods, and philosophical inquiry, are simply excluded.

The problems with the kind of relativism put forward are amplified in McKelvey's manifesto-like chapter. Here we find a strange switch in the basic formula of realism. Typically, critical realists such as Roy Bhaskar (1977) and his followers would advocate a realist ontology and accept a relativist epistemology.² This means they would accept that there is some real world that is not simply exhausted by our ways of knowing. Strangely, McKelvey argues that a realist ontology and relativist epistemology is a

2 According to McKelvey, a realist ontology and relativist epistemology is a position no one is advocating (p.755). This is a patently incorrect statement as even the most basic understanding of Roy Bhaskar's work found itself in exactly this position.

position no one is advocating (p.755). Instead, McKelvey advocates a realist epistemology and relativist ontology – there is no real core to the world, but we can develop positive knowledge about this unreal world. McKelvey's real concern seems to be preserving the sanctity of standard methodological procedures in Organization Studies. This downplays any suggestion that there are any significant ontological questions which need to be asked.

The pattern of inclusions and exclusions in Baum's grid reveals a system of distribution, an index, a series of gaps in which a group of practices get rewarded the title of 'Organizational Science'. The ground prepared by Baum seems to be designed to foster an 'Organizational Science' driven by a naïve and conservative realism which places particular importance on an account of organizational selection, variation and retention while marginalizing the host of 'supplementary' questions found, for example, in Clegg, Hardy and Nord's *Handbook*. Ultimately, Baum puts forward a version of Organization Studies that seeks to reproduce the most elementary divisions of intra-organizational, organizational and inter-organizational. This grid creates a ground for 'Organizational Science' that supports the normal business of theory building characterising North American Organization Studies for some time.

Using

Rather than remaining within the field of a discourse that upholds its privilege by inverting its content...one can try another path: one can analyse the microbe-like, singular plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which have outlived its decay; one can follow the swarming activity of these procedures that, far from being regulated or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy, developing and insinuating themselves into the networks of surveillance, and combining in accord with unreliable but stable tactics to the point of constituting everyday regulation and surreptitious creativities that are merely concealed by the frantic mechanisms and discourses of the observational organization. (de Certeau, 1984: 96)

When I was reading the *Blackwell Companion to Organization*, I could not hold back the memory of Michel de Certeau's wonderful description of viewing New York from a skyscraper (the World Trade Centre observation deck actually). From this vantage you could see the strict gridding of the city below. You could clearly see the austere public housing in Alphabet City, the smaller buildings of the Village, the massive buildings around Midtown and the Wall Street. The scheme seemed just as obvious and brutal as the scheme put in place by Baum. It is a scheme clearly designed to keep everyone in their place, and allow universal access to the city. However, when we descend from our vantage point into the hustle, the "chorus of idle footsteps" (de Certeau, 1984: 97), another side of the grid reveals itself. This is the side of practices, tricks, deals. We find the ways which individual walkers use the grid for their own purposes – hustling, dreaming, gazing, escape, leisure and work.

Thinking about these daily practices led me to reflect upon how the strict gridding found in the *Companion* is not the end of the story. Just because we have located strict attempts to grid and carve up the body of organization should not mean we reject the *Companion*. Certainly the strict disciplinary lines define what counts as knowledge

about organizational and what does not. Yes, these lines act as strict boundaries and points of policing. However, just like the streets of New York, we might find many practices in the crevices of Baum's grid. Just because we enter into it at a random point – perhaps part of the way through – does not mean we are suddenly tied down by a system of assumptions and values. Rather, we may enter at a number of points, take which chapters come to hand, and perhaps hide in the crevices we find. It may even be possible to use the studies we find arrayed in Baum's boulevards and do with them what pleases us. We should consider how we can use the various resources found within this grid. How is it possible to take elements from this text, create a line of flight, thereby radicalising them? The question of the practices of knowledge forces us to begin to look at not just the text itself, but the practical, overflowing production writers and readers are engaged in. Indeed, such handbooks actually asked to be handled, used, put to work. I could see at least three possible practical uses for this handbook – teaching, research, and organizing.

Texts always come to hand for a reason. They are found and shuffled off our shelves in relation to a particular concern. Probably one of the most important reasons that we press texts into service is as a prosthesis for teaching. The difficult question we are faced with involves creating a working match between a given text on our shelf at the time, the particular class we are working with, and an objective we might have in mind. One possible use which came to hand as I was reviewing this book was teaching Masters levels students about recent advances in philosophy of science, and in particular the approach of realism. As I have mentioned above, the *Companion* positions this approach as the most rational and desirable approach to knowledge production in Organization Studies. This positioning immediately shapes the uses we can make of this book. It means they lack any voice that convincingly argues for the three typical positions we might find in the social sciences – technical, interpretive, and critical knowledge. All we are provided with are two homogenous camps of the 'relativists' and the 'positivists'.

Moldoveanu and Baum's article, however, does provide a wonderfully supple example of a typical argument we could imagine between these two figures. During this exchange the 'positivist' and 'relativist' exchange some of the standard philosophical justifications for each position. Its dynamic form certainly provides students with a sense that these positions are not things which do not change, but constitute an evolving debate which must be attended to. This debate ultimately would herd the student towards a realist position whereby they would ultimately see that the 'positivist' is misrecognising their position and the 'relativist' is acting in bad faith by using realist arguments. The only conceivable option they find at the end is realism. The story does not end there. The reader is herded towards a very specific conception of realism that appears from Donald Campbell's work on evolutionary theory and knowledge. The rapidly developing field of realism in philosophy science called of critical realism is not an option for developing a theory of realism. Rather, it is the musings about perceptive capabilities of the human species and the appealing but ultimately incorrect discussion about knowledge as map-making that stands in for realism. This leaves us with the assumption that everything perceived by science is done so for evolutionary reasons.

A second possible use of the *Companion* would be for research purposes. Obviously the work is published as a guide to 'Organization Science'. Perhaps a more useful title for many researchers is 'A guide to what elite North American researchers currently think about organization'. This may be infuriating at times (given its absolute lack of correspondence with a given field you may know), but it also provides an interesting peek in the door. One of the central practical challenges which European researchers set about negotiating is speaking to the North American audience. Often this is exceedingly difficult due to the wild divergence of some concerns between the two continents. To speak about say power, one must be able to enter into conversations about unrecognizable theorists and 'outdated' concerns in order to be heard. The series of chapters in this book at least provide a starting point for most Europeans to understand what current obsessions in the US are and how our conversations might be practically connected with them. For instance, the avocation of a realist epistemology in this text certainly provides a central point of connection and linkage with current European debates about critical realism. Contrasting the ontological realism and epistemological relativism advocated by Ackroyd and Fleetwood (1999) with McKelvey's ontological relativism and epistemological realism may provide a fruitful point in re-igniting and indeed moving the debate about epistemology. Using this contact point would allow authors to speak to a different audience and accumulate additional social capital. It also brings to the European debate the reminder that not 'everyone is a social constructivist now'. It reminds us that model building and computer simulation continues to be practiced with excessive vigour.

A final use of these texts might be in processes of organizing. A handbook typically has a direct link with research and perhaps graduate teaching. Rarely would we extract such a handbook from the shelf in order to advise action within and upon organization. If, in the rare case we reach for a handbook as a tool for changing organization, it will probably be applied in a relatively conventional way. It will be used to bolster the functioning of large state or capitalist organizations. The spectre of efficiency will always be in the wings. If the promise of a general theory of Baum's is genuine, then might we be able to put unintentional use to some of the concepts we find? To test this assumption, I shall examine how the concepts contained in one set of chapters could be used to advise the anti-globalization movement.

Advising

Following the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle, there has been a growing 'anti-globalization' movement. During its first few years of existence, it was largely focused on co-ordinating 'oppositional' protests during meetings of international trade and financial groups. Recent activity has been increasingly channelled into more 'affirmative' actions which co-ordinated around events which aim to articulate alternatives to global neo-liberalism. This is clearly expressed in the World Social Forum movement which aims to providing a point of connection for activists challenging neo-liberalism, war and colonialism. One of the central issues currently

faced by the anti-globalization³ groups is how they can effectively regulate their activities. This is particularly felt within the European branch of the anti-globalization movement associated with the European Social Forum. Currently they draw on radically decentralised network methods in co-ordinating their action across time and space. One of the major issues this has produced is marginal groups using violent tactics during protests that have alienated the majority of the movement. One possible outcome of this requirement to regulate activity by the anti-globalization movements is building institutions. Instead of treating Baum's book as a handbook for getting published in American management journals, could it be possible to use it as a guide to advising the anti-globalization movements?

To test this point, let's do a short intellectual experiment by asking: what can the three chapters on institutions contained in the *Companion* offer to those attempting to institutionalise the anti-globalization movement through organizations like the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum? Picking up on Elsbach's chapter on inter-organizational institutions, we find that the development of institutions involves "taken-for-granted beliefs that arise within and across organizational groups and delimit acceptable and normative behavior for members of those groups" (p.37). Following Scott's (2001) well-known typology, institutions are understood to be constructed through three modes (p.38-39): rules and standards which give rise to entrenched 'process' institutions, social norms about power of 'structural' institutions, and ideals and normative goals which give rise to 'value' institutions. When these three processes are combined they form a powerful, entrenched institution at the group level. By developing such institutions, anti-globalization movements such as the European Social Forum would be stabilised and give some continuity and stability to their organizations through the development of shared rules and standards that define what can and cannot be done. It also involves the development of shared norms that shape what are the usual and expected ways of undertaking routine procedures such as organizing protests or a mailing campaign. A shared ideology and outlook in organizations would also be recommended.

So, how exactly does this process of building institutions take place at a group level? According to Elsbach, there are at least three points into which those seeking to institute a new social movement may intervene. The first is through developing a shared and institutionalised identity that would develop congruence across 'value institutions'. A working group at the European Social Forum (ESF) may be made up of members from the union movement, the green movement, and the refugee rights movement. In order to develop some co-ordinated process, it is necessary to build a common identity within the workgroup. A second way in which institutions are developed, according to Elsbach, is through building institutionalised routines that act to informally co-ordinate ways in which activities are carried out. At the ESF, this might involve routinized work procedures such as meeting or protest procedure. A third way in which institutions might be developed at the group level is through the structuring and composition of

3 The anti-globalization movement is very difficult to define. The movement is made up of a range of very disparate groups with interests including the environment, poverty, third world debt, worker exploitation, warfare, and human rights. It is not explicitly 'anti-globalization', but seeks to challenge the globalization of neo-liberal policy across the globe (Fischer and Ponniah, 2003).

groups. This involves considering the demographic aspects of who gains access to the group, and how diverse these members are. Moreover, these intra-organizational institutions are established and entrenched through the appearance of informal status hierarchies throughout the group. In the case of the ESF, an analysis of these institutions would point out the importance of drawing on already established group status hierarchies.

While Elsbach's chapter gives us a few tricks for developing institutions in groups, a subsequent chapter by Palmer and Biggart investigates how institutions are developed at an organizational level. Like Elsbach, they also point to the importance of rules, norms and cognitive schemas in building institutions. Unlike Elsbach, they ask why particular institutional forms come into existence. They argue that a particular structure exists not due to technical output reasons, but because they are seen to be valuable in and of themselves. This illuminates the fact that the institutionalised forms of anti-globalization movements are not simply there for the needs of co-ordinating action across distance of an ever changing membership. Rather, there is a significant ideology around the need for such organizational forms that are 'non-hierarchical', 'non-stratifying' and 'democratic'. A second point made by Palmer and Biggart is that the founding of organizational institutions are not based on technical criteria, but tend to occur along the lines of already established forms they find in similar organizations. This is largely because these organizational forms are seen to be a 'safe bet' that have succeeded, are seen as legitimate, and may protect the organization from an uncertain environment. In the case of the anti-globalization movement, we could observe, and perhaps even recommend the spread of known and accepted organizational forms. The final point that Palmer and Biggart make in relation to organizational institutions is that they often encourage processes of goal drift. They point out that many organizations are forced to abandon part of their espoused goals when there is a divergence from the legitimate organizational form in a given field. In order to gain legitimacy, these organizations begin to conform to what are seen as acceptable forms. The result is a drift from the originally espoused goals. This is evident in the anti-globalization movement when protest organizations adopt organizational forms which are widely accepted in the protest movement. These forms may result in other organizations accepting them as legitimate players. However these new organizational forms may also lead to significant divergence from espoused goals.

Moving to the inter-organizational level, we can draw certain advice from Strang and Sine's chapter. Looking at the processes through which organizational forms and processes are developed, they argue structures become institutionalised when they are invested with meaning. Instead of focusing on issues of convergence (as institutional theory typically does), they ask how these institutions might change. They explain institutional changes with reference to external factors such as the state (which shapes the control of the organization, employment practices, and organizational forms), professional bodies, marginal actors, institutionalised conflict, and triggering conditions such as performance problems. Using these concepts, it then becomes possible to remind those involved in the ESF that they are indeed developing an institutional form, and making them aware of the processes through which they might go about changing their existing institutional form. They should be aware of the influence of changes to state legislation that might include laws shaping political protest. Professional bodies

may have limited influence on some parts of the movement that depend on expertise (such as environmental protests which depend on environmental expertise). Marginal actors such as new protest groups addressing new fields such as genomics may serve as important agents of change in terms of what is acceptable action amongst anti-globalization protestors. Finally, change may be driven by internal dialectics where there is struggle between existing, relatively institutional factions. For instance, there was reflection on the need for more governance following the protests in Prague during September 2000 during a meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. This was driven by conflict over tactics between groups who advocated more peaceful strategies and the 'black block' who advocated more direct and at times violent protest strategies.

The chapters on institutions in Baum certainly provide the anti-globalization movement with a few pointers. Perhaps this gestures to the fact that the surface of conservative texts like the *Companion* cannot only act as a panoptical point of theoretical lock-down. Maybe it is a series of lines, which we only need to open up, add to, take seriously. By radicalising the largely conservative evolutionary science we find within Baum, might it be possible to develop a different organization that we could be companions of? I began to ask these questions in my small experiment of using institutional theory to inform the anti-globalization movement. There are certainly some lines for politicising institutional theory as well as institutionalising anti-globalization politics.

We should ask what the political implications are of mechanically applying institutional theory to the anti-globalization movement. While there is some radical potential in institutional theory, it does remain under-pinned by a certain proclivity for regulation. By systematically applying institutional theory to the study of organization, a series of recommendations appear about how to regulate the savage multiplicity that has erupted from the anti-globalization movement. Perhaps this kind of regulation and consolidation reduces the de-territorializing force that lends the anti-globalization movement such dynamism. By attempting to apply what is essentially knowledge of regulation we might sap this swarm of social practice of its own dynamic.

The dangers of attempting to radicalise a science of regulation like institutional theory alerts us to the dynamic between the possibilities such knowledge contains, and the limits this subsequently places on what is possible. Perhaps it is within this bind between maliciously working through existing theories, and opening up radical new routes that a radical theory of organization might dwell. Perhaps it is precisely in this *aporia* that we could locate the radical reading of a handbook.

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