

Ghostly matters in organizing^I

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Assistens Cemetery, Copenhagen

If the digital realm of Word files and PDFs was more analogue, less hermetically sealed off from the surrounding world and thus in palpable touch with its messiness, you would be able to see the soil of the Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen, its mounds of damp earth, still clinging to our thoughts and words as you read this text. This image would probably look a bit like the smudges and marks on the drawings and the drawn statements found in this special issue. These smudges are traces of the hand that did the drawing, but also remains of the process of drawing itself. As Asbjørn Skou writes in his absent-present² commentary to his artwork in this issue: 'The act of drawing always embedded in the drawing as object; processual smudges and marks, called ghosts, of the movements of the hand that holds the pencil'. In our work with this editorial, we studied the Assistens Cemetery, and its various pathways, its plantation, its smells and its many told and untold stories have all left their marks on our thinking about ghostly matters in organizing.

We would thus like to start this editorial by inviting our readers to join us on a virtual excursion to the Assistens Cemetery to explore what both the cemetery and our special issue contributors can teach us about the ghostly matters of organizing. We will then turn to the variety of haunting methodologies contained in our contributions, for they address the question of how we might study those ghostly

^I As the title of the special issue reveals, our thinking is indebted to Avery Gordon's seminal work in her book *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*, first published in 1998.

² Absent because he refused to have it published, present because it speaks to us as we write and because we cite it and refer to it.

aspects of organizational life that escape articulation or even intelligibility. The third part of the editorial introduces the literature on ghosts, hauntology and ghostly matters, as we narrow our focus to two themes we view as relevant for organization studies: the collapse of linear time and the intimate connection between ghostly matters and affect. We conclude by suggesting that to encounter ghosts and engage with ghostly matters, one must not only direct one's scholarly gaze in certain directions but also allow the ghostly to bedevil and leave its smudges on our scholarly subjectivity.



The Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen

Established in 1760 outside Copenhagen's city walls – an area then called the Northern Suburb – Assistens Cemetery was used as a site to bury paupers and thus to ease the pressure on the overburdened churchyards of the inner city. Despite this humble beginning, the graveyard transformed rapidly, becoming a lush, green urban refuge where affluent Copenhageners favoured laying their dead to rest and thus erected imposing gravestones and commemorated the deceased with memorials and vaults that still grace the cemetery today. Now called Nørrebro, this city borough has evolved into one of Copenhagen's liveliest quarters and Denmark's most densely populated areas. The borough's mass of living bodies is

mirrored in the ground beneath the cemetery, where 250 years and more than 200,000 burials have compelled graves to be stacked on graves and thus the bodies occupying them to decompose in layers upon layers of soil.

Today, Assistens Cemetery is emblematic of the kind of space where a multitude of practices, temporalities and functions co-exist and intersect. It remains a cemetery where people come to grieve their lost loved ones, but in kinship with cemeteries around the world, it is also a historical site where prominent cultural, political or scientific figures have been buried. Every year, particularly in summer, tourists flock to visit the graves and monuments of famous Danes like philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, physicist Niels Bohr and writer Hans Christian Andersen. The cemetery also hosts a cultural centre, which holds events and exhibitions. However, what makes this sanctuary so unique and so popular among tourists and Copenhageners alike is its function as an urban green space where people are encouraged to sunbathe, jog, relax, read, walk their dogs or have picnics and small parties with friends and family ‘in the shadow of the area’s many historic gravestones’ (Københavns Kommune, 2019). These co-existing practices constitute the cemetery as, to borrow a term from Tim Edensor, a ‘thick place’, that is, a space ‘suffused with a sense of sensual, emotional and affective belonging that is embedded over time through repetitive practical embodied engagement’ (2012: 1106). The multifarious uses of the cemetery render it a place where distances or boundaries between public and personal, between public and private become difficult to maintain. It is hardly unusual for 15 tourists to be receiving an upbeat guided tour while just a few metres away a woman kneels in solitude, quietly mourning the loss of a dear one recently passed away.

The cemetery features a remarkably high level of biodiversity, replete with many species of trees, flowers and bushes, some of which normally only grow outside of Northern Europe. This makes strolling through the cemetery even more surreal, as the flora do little to situate you in geographical Denmark. While you may be no botanist, you will still have an eerie sense that the trees and bushes populating the cemetery are somehow out of place – or could it be you? Deep in the park, a fig tree has found a spot to drink in the warm sun. It seems right at home, there next to a beech – an almost iconic native of Denmark. The sight of traditionally Northern European trees juxtaposed with other exotic vegetation provokes thought about climate change, about how it might lead to new ecologies where plants once considered exotic will soon become common and other traditional flora will have to find new homes further north. As such, the cemetery’s biodiversity also gives rise to thoughts and concerns about what may be lost in the distant and not-so-distant futures that await us.

Multiple, intersecting temporalities

Gan et al. (2018: G1) have defined haunted landscapes as landscapes of overlaid arrangements of human and nonhuman living spaces and as something produced in gradual steps with more-than-human histories that make and unmake ecologies. The cemetery is indeed such a haunted landscape where the many disparate rhythms, processes and ecologies of the cemetery imbue it with an atmosphere of untold stories – a multi-layered collage of temporalities, sensed in the site's particular ambience and visible in the wide array of monument designs, statues and gravestone inscriptions – each testifying to the specific fashions, customs, politics and societal hierarchies of its time. Tim Edensor (2008; this issue) has insistently explored how traces of previous inhabitants, politics, ways of thinking and being and the modes of experience left behind intrude on the present, sometimes confounding, aligning and colliding with it (Edensor, 2008). Similarly, the cemetery is a dizzying meshwork of temporalities where past and present grieving, burial and recreation practices co-exist and intersect – sometimes with one temporality literally overlapping the other, such as when several teens celebrate the first day of summer holiday by hanging out on someone's neglected, half-forgotten grave. If you open yourself to the world around you, you will quickly come to sense how the cemetery is crowded with the lingering vestiges of former mourning rituals, of long-out-of-vogue cultural and political burial practices, of changing ideas about the organization of remembering, of failed attempts to plan and of materiality in varying stages of decay (see Hetherington, 2004; Maddern, 2008).

Thus, the first thing that the cemetery teaches us in our efforts to explore ghostly matters in organizing is to discern how different temporalities co-exist, intersect and collide. Ghostly matters in organizing have to do with how, every once in a while, something long forgotten, something now inappropriate, re-appears to disturb current orderings of past, present and future (Degen and Hetherington, 2001; Pile, 2005; Pors, 2016a). The call for papers for this special issue was an invitation to investigate moments in which different layers of time come to intersect and collide and thus reveal how, as Fredric Jameson (1999: 39) has phrased it, 'the living present is hardly as self-sufficient as it claims to be and we would do well not to count on its density'. Along these lines, the contributions in this issue explore moments where linear time collapses and something that was repressed, forgotten, misplaced, or is unfitting, has not willingly vanished or is now resurfacing. To explore ghostly matters, one does not necessarily need to adhere to the common narrative of a ghost as a person, animal or thing from the past that returns to haunt the present. The ghost is also a 'social figure' that points, for example, to the interstices that emerge between past and present (Gordon, 2008: 8), and also to the hauntings of the future. As Degen and Hetherington have

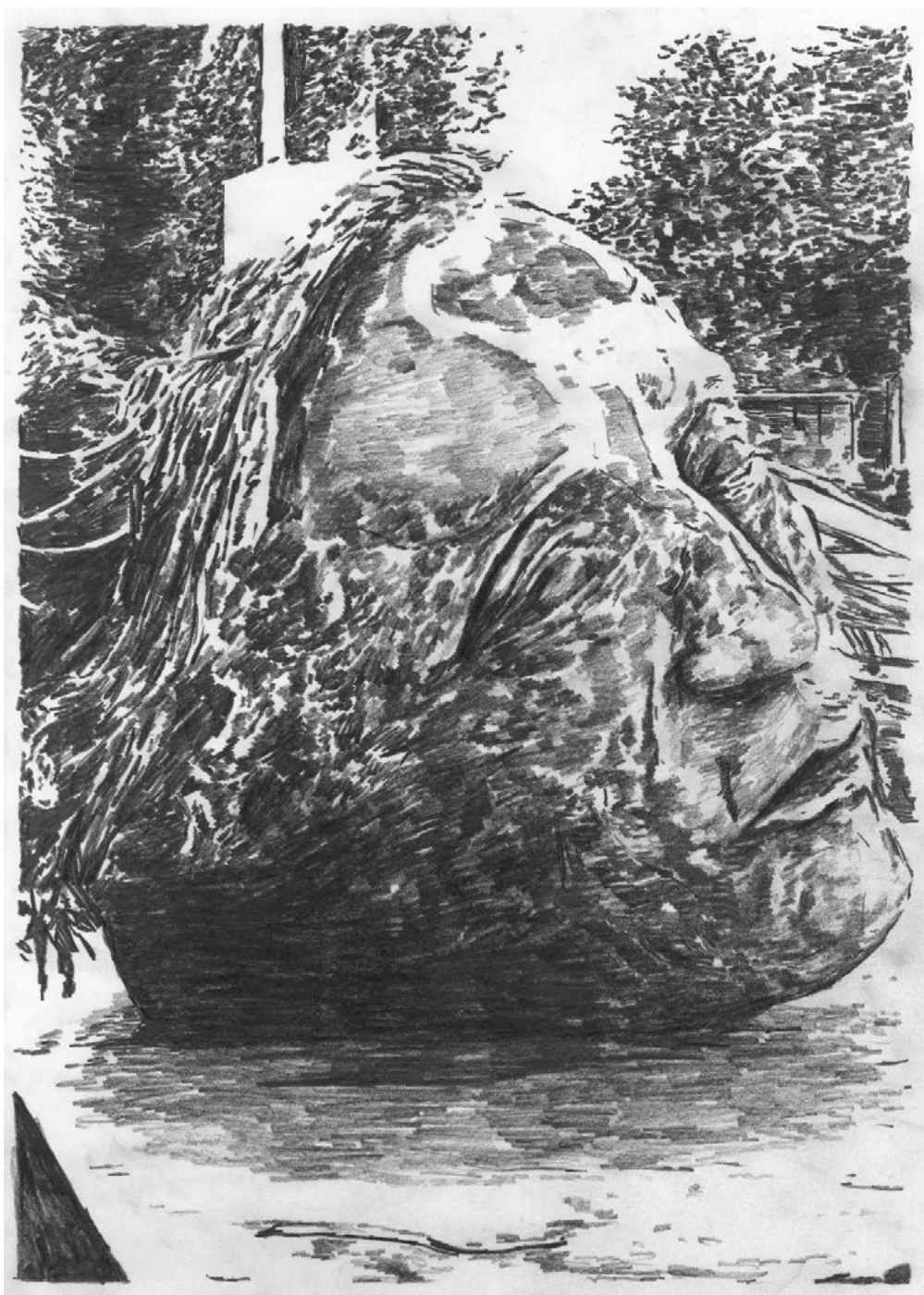
suggested, new building sites and developments are just as likely to be haunted by the visions and plans for the future, as cemeteries or abandoned buildings are to be by the events that once took place in them – not just because of what new buildings and developments rub out ‘but because within their expressions of novelty, pride, social engineering, we find the tragic, ghostly voice of the future evoking the inevitable failure of such spatial dreamings’ (2001: 4). Albeit in different manners, every contribution in this issue searches for and develops analytics apt for exploring how certain events, statements, moments or encounters come to have a capacity to open up for forgotten, silenced and lost futures as well as pasts.

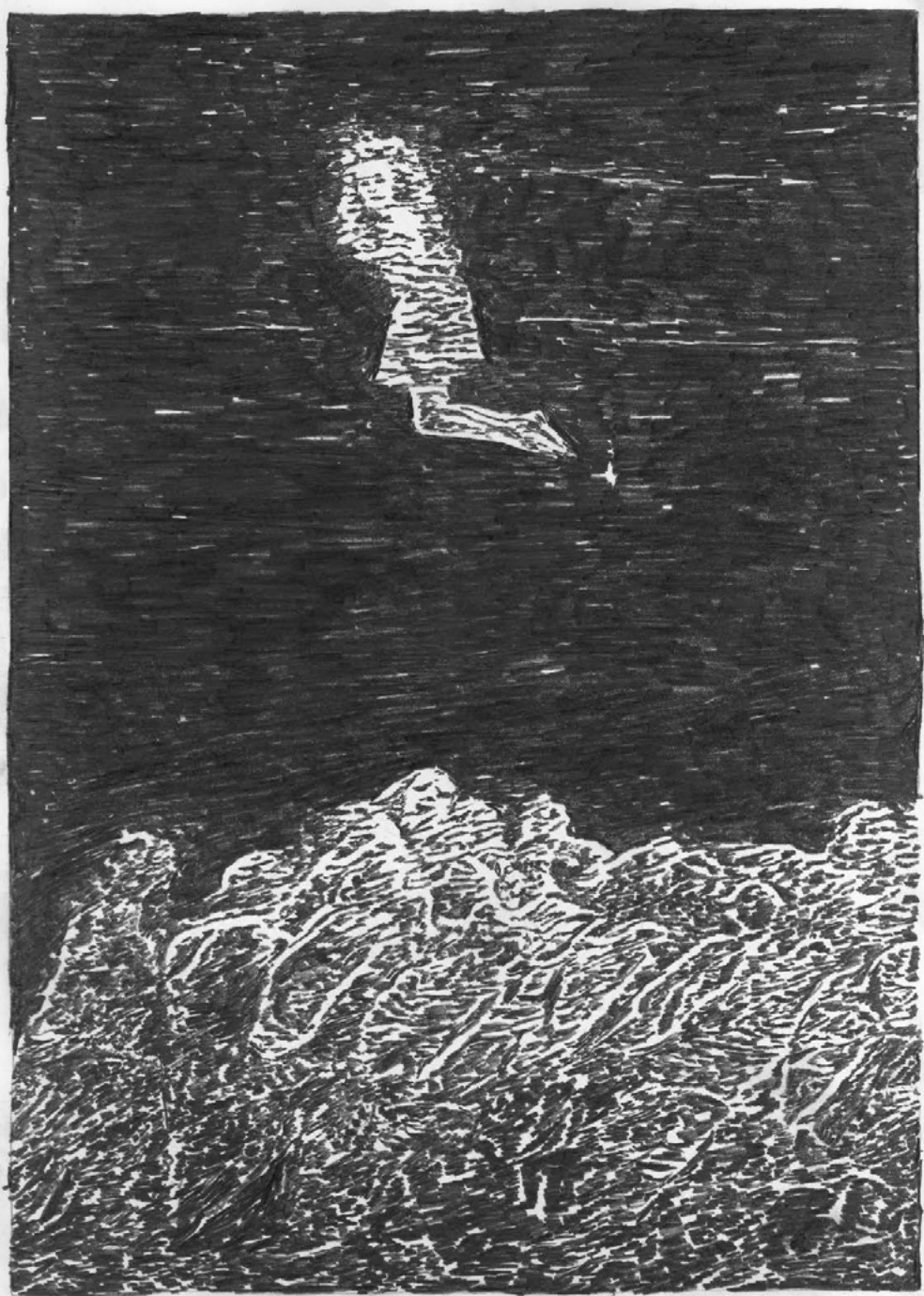
Remembrance and forgetting

A walk around the cemetery to look at the different graves, gravestones and monuments is a study in remembrance and, thus, also in processes of forgetting. Tim Edensor, in this this special issue, cites Nuala Johnson’s (1995: 63) work on how monumental statues serve as ‘points of physical and ideological orientation’ around which ‘circuits of memory’ are organized. In other words, the practice of engraving stones and monuments ensures that certain people are remembered for particular aspects of their lives. Because inscriptions must be brief, one has to capture the essence of a person’s life in a single sentence. Certain patterns seem to persist in what is worthy of remembrance. People’s roles and relationships with particular institutions of authority, such as someone’s service to the royal court or government, have often been etched into headstones. Visual symbols speak of the qualities to be remembered. For example, bees and beehives feature regularly on stones from the late 18th century, thus telling us that someone, often a craftsman, was particularly diligent and hardworking. More often than not those considered important enough to commemorate, or at least those that could afford to be so, were men, while the names of women were often written in smaller letters, and any virtues, deeds or achievements mentioned are likely to refer to their loyalty and wifely support.

A strikingly selective practice of remembering is revealed in the graves of young men slain in the battle of Dybbøl in 1864. In our investigation of cemetery ghosts we interviewed a cultural centre employee, who offered us this narrative:

Those people that died in Dybbøl, their gravestones constitute a goldmine of insights into how the terrors of war were sought repressed. This one, very young guy, who was probably shot to pieces, has a gravestone that reads: ‘His life was brief, his death was beautiful, an honourable grave he won’.





The battle of Dybbøl occurred during the war between Denmark and Prussia over the Dukedom of Slesvig. The Danish troops were badly prepared and greatly outmatched by the efficient Prussian war machine. In a short battle lasting only 10 hours, 5,000 Danish men lost their lives in what many considered a hopeless and even meaningless fight. Omitting the horrific realities of pain, blood, mud and terror, the gravestones at the Assistens Cemetery depict the deaths of the young men as utterly glorious and sublime.

While the choice of words and symbols bears witness to what was considered worthy of remembrance at specific points in time, it also shapes practices of forgetting inherent in such choices and raises political questions about issues such as power, gender, (in)equality, nationalism and colonialism. Yet, human practices of remembering and forgetting are not the only force to erase information. Moss and fungus have had their go at gravestones too, smothered them and their inscriptions over time, ultimately leaving them unintelligible.



Moss and fungus on a gravestone

Thus, the second lesson from the cemetery, for those of us interested in the ghostly matters of organizing, is to look for practices of remembering and forgetting and the politics these practices reveal and constitute. As Derrida (1994, 1995) also liked

to remind us, hauntology is an inquiry into the politics of memory. In this special issue, Lisa Blackman's contribution considers ghostly matters as particular organizations of practices of memory and forgetting, of attention and inattention. With a specific focus on digital archives and what she calls haunted data, Blackman explores how scientific knowledge production is haunted by events and forms of knowledge that have been disqualified and submerged. For Blackman, to be interested in ghostly matters is thus to be attentive to the ways in which the different pasts and the alternative futures that organizations manage to ignore, forget or derecognize occasionally come to resurface.

Also in this issue, Tim Edensor explores processes of remembering and forgetting in his study of how people, values and aesthetics are commemorated in old figurative statues that haunt public spaces by testifying to earlier historical processes. Referring to Angela Dunstan, Edensor draws attention to how these sculptures constitute a peculiarly haunting mode of representation: they just stand there – still, silent, largely monochrome and lifeless, a static model of a person once living and vital but now deceased, a sculpture sometimes unnoticed by the daily passer-by, sometimes changed or later refigured to embrace a different mode of remembrance and meaning. Through their specific performance of remembering and forgetting, these statues constitute a curious reminder not simply of the death of those they commemorate or the mortality of all individuals, but also of past and present power relations and injustices and their effects on people, societies and ecologies. Yet, remembering and forgetting are effected not only by the material substance of statues and memorials but also through the embodied practices of perceiving and ignoring. In his contribution, Edensor also unfolds the corporeal dimension of remembering and forgetting, drawing attention to how bodies move around and habituate public spaces and the statues in them, and thereby acquire a sedimented, embodied sense of their presence. In performing the habits and routines of everyday urban existence, bodies become adept at not seeing and at creatively circumventing the multiple resonances of the past (Edensor, this issue; 2012).

Thus, Blackman's and Edensor's respective contributions open up broader questions about how we learn to move around in social, material, digital and organized spaces by 'unseeing' and 'unnoticing' (Mieville, 2009) certain things, relations and political processes (Otto et al., 2019). This in turn raises the question of how our daily life in organizations depends on our adeptness at moving around without noticing certain things and without even noticing our not noticing. To be interested in the ghostly matters of organizing is to inquire into past and present processes of remembering and forgetting, practices of seeing and unseeing and patterns of attention and inattention. It is also to explore how choreographies of

‘unseeing’ occasionally collapse, enabling us to glimpse that which has become disposable, displaced or submerged.

Troubled categories

The cemetery’s cultural centre is located in the old chapel, a building that has seen much death and hosted many funeral rituals, but also provided the backdrop for concerts, theatre plays and exhibitions. The building has its own little oddities. As one employee told us, the lock to the door of the public restroom where a municipal caretaker once murdered an infant tends to jam, and every once in a while, the screams of some schoolchild trapped in the tiny lavatory will send a centre employee running to the rescue, screwdriver in hand to pry open the door. Usually, however, the teasing materiality of the door lock will already have produced a range of affects, such as surprise, fear or panic. Another unexplained phenomenon has occurred in the chapel ever since it held an exhibition about the life and untimely death of a young reggae musician, Natasja. One of the lights in the main chapel room can no longer be switched off. An electrician attempting to fix the problem fell from a ladder and injured his back. A cemetery employee recounts the difficulty of reporting this bizarre accident to the digital filing system of the Danish Working Environment Authority:

Those online schemes are constructed in such a manner that everything always requires a cause. You cannot continue to the next page before you check one of the many boxes ... But there was no cause. No, the ladder was not too old or damaged. Yes, he had a ladder certificate. No, the floor was not wet. No, he was not disturbed in his work. So I found a box saying ‘other issues’ and wrote ‘unknown causes’. Then the authorities called me up on the phone and wanted their cause, but after having talked to these people for many minutes without any progress, I explained to them that someone does not want anybody to stand on ladders in that room, and we have had problems with it in the past too. They hung up on me and I did not hear from them again.

The digital filing system where the incident was to be reported only works when incidents can be categorized and put into a scheme of cause and effect. In this case, none of the options fit, as the incident had no identifiable cause. The human-to-human phone conversation also failed to accommodate the messier scheme and mysterious cause. In the end, the employee’s insistent defence of the inexplicable took precedence over the rationality of the formal system, the report remains incomplete, and the incident itself remains as a ‘non-present presence’ in the cultural centre.

In his famous *Specters of Marx: The state of the debt, the work of mourning and the new international*, Derrida writes about the spectre:

It is something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely it is, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. (1994: 5)

For Derrida, the ghost is something that perhaps once belonged to knowledge but no longer does. It is something that (no longer) fits in any meaningful way with discourses, concepts and systems of categorization. As a sort of quasi-object/subject (Serres, 1991), the ghost brings with it a rather indecipherable message from a space beyond discourse and representation.

Thus, the third thing one can learn from Assistens Cemetery in this editorial is to keep an eye out for the incidents, events and moments that destabilize and trouble stable categories and categorizations. Ghostly moments, we would argue, are moments in which categories with the power to fix and organize, for some strange reason, fail to do so.

In this issue, Sine Nørholm Just 'sights' metaphors representing the financial crisis and interrogates their constitutive powers and capacities. The spectral vocabulary of supernatural figures like vampires ('bloodsucking bankers'), zombies ('dead banks') and ghosts (of 'financial speculation') serve to illuminate, or even shape, our understanding and hence responsive practices of what transpired in the crisis. The ghost of finance, she argues, is certainly more than a metaphor. Since trading debts entails buying and selling products that are never fully materialized but 'always already derivative, endlessly deferred. (...) a spirit without a body' (Just, this issue), finance is thus organized around ghostly matters. What is more, financial transactions, their assessments and evaluations are based on confusing relations between expert knowledge and (public) opinion, an interplay that generates their financial value – thus, troubling and disturbing those taken-for-granted institutions that have set up the financial system in the first place.

Similarly, Jannick Friis Christensen and Sara Louise Muhr delve into the disturbing capacities of concepts. Their empirical study investigates how the topic of female quotas haunts, that is, irritates and unsettles, the conversation that takes place in the interviews they have conducted with Danish business leaders. While these managers officially reject a quota policy, the subject keeps resurfacing in conversations and statements, often in affective registers such as hearty disavowals or as a secret, somewhat shamefully confessed approval. The authors argue that in the Danish context, quotas are a sort of non-topic, something excluded from how organizations make sense of and utilize concepts like talent, competence and leadership potential. However, the formal absence of quotas in the Danish work

system remains a powerful, seething presence in a topic that thereby questions prevailing notions of meritocracy and talent as well as the processes of leaders' identity formation and self-performance.

As we can see in Just's as well Christensen's and Muhr's contributions, ghostly matters can be explored as processes through which fixed categories and categorizations become unsettled (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Risberg and Pilhofer, 2018) and as disturbances of organizational attempts to capture and put things in certain places. The ghost disturbs neat discursive orders, narratives and explanations, causes them to collapse without offering any new, coherent and unambiguous narrative orders (Holloway and Kneale, 2008; Pors, 2016a).

Thus, in this issue we explore ghostly matters by drawing attention to how the categories and practices of categorization on which organizations rely to capture and control events, people and processes are sometimes disturbed and unsettled.

Organizing that which has become disposable

A couple of years ago, the northeast corner of the cemetery had to be excavated to make space for a new metro station. The graves of around 1,750 people, buried from 1805-1990, had to be cleared and the human remains in varying stages of decay removed. The cultural centre employee explained the process:

They said that it was a so-called ethical excavation because the graves were covered to prevent people in the surrounding buildings from standing in their windows and looking directly into the graves as skulls and thighbones emerged. However, cemeteries in the City of Copenhagen are run by the Office of Technology and the Environment, so ... It's a little bit like ... They consider dead people somewhat of a waste problem. Something that has to be handled. This is nothing like it was back in the days where the cemetery was run by the Office of Culture.

The office that normally handles road maintenance and parks, waste and building projects coordinated the action, eliminating the graves and moving all the remains to a single, common grave some 200 metres away. This series of events illustrates how different authorities, or different professions, have different techniques, programmes and routines for handling the material remains of that which no longer has a function, that which has become obsolete, that which is now disposable and even a waste problem.

In stark contrast to the gravestone inscriptions described earlier, which were heavily charged with sentimental, celebratory or honourable symbolism, a more recent gravestone near one of the cemetery entrances reads: 'In the year 2010,

coffins were moved from section G to section E and put down there due to the construction of a metro station by Nørrebro Runddel’.



The gravestone erected after human remains were moved due to the construction of a new metro station

Revealing a talent for storytelling, the cemetery employee tells us that one day, while the site was being cleared, a British woman who said she could sense and communicate with spirits came to the cultural centre feeling ghostly after an overwhelming encounter with numerous spirits in a state of agitation after having been disturbed in their deaths. As she walked past the building site where the bones had been excavated, she had been assaulted by the terrifying sound of a thousand screams and cries.

Perhaps human bones are not the everyday objects of organizational efforts to clean out the past and make room for the new. However, the event makes us think about how organizations deal with remnants from the past that are no longer conceived of as needed or valuable, and perhaps even as an obstacle to development. As the artist Asbjørn Skou (absent-present note, this issue) reminds us: 'It does not take death to make ghosts of some.'

Thus, the fourth and final aspect that Assistens Cemetery can help remind us needs attention is the processes through which something becomes disposable and how material and immaterial remnants are handled and gotten rid of (see also Gordon, 2008, chapter 2; Hetherington, 2004; Pors, 2016b: 4). What are the processes through which values, people, bodies, things, competencies, skills and habits become unwanted, considered outdated or unneeded? How are things once considered of value transformed into garbage-handling problems? How do organizations deal with and organize things like ideas, structures or human beings that have become disposable but continue to linger?

Nana Vaaben's and Helle Bjerg's contribution to this issue explores how an organization, a Danish state school, through a process of reformation makes some of those values, practices and perhaps even people once associated with teaching disposable. The paper starts with the story of an engaged primary school teacher who quit her job after being disappointed and disillusioned by the latest school reform, which seemed to make her 'spirit of teaching' dispensable (Vaaben and Bjerg, this issue). From the organization's perspective, the teacher is unable to conform to the new, heavily formalized requirements. From the teacher's perspective, she 'get[s] really mad, when people tell [her] that now we have to put things behind us and move on...[she] can't!' She insists on her sense that the past's way of doing things is valuable, and this absent-presence carries an urge to act and to resist (Gordon, 2011, in Vaaben and Bjerg, this issue). Here, Danish state schoolteachers inhabit, embody and, in this case, suffer from the performativity of policy through the entanglement of temporality, affectivity and imagination (of undesired futures) created by recent educational policy.

In Jerzy Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera's contribution, the issue at hand is not how to dispose of unwanted ideas, values or other material, but how to go 'backwards to recover that which has been left behind'. The authors take us ghost hunting in a reading of foundational management texts, such as those by Frederick Taylor and Mary Parker Follet. This is a 'walk against the winner's tale', but it is not concerned with deconstructing texts to seek new meaning. Instead, the authors develop a different way of seeing the texts, one that allows ideas that are marginal, unwanted and cast-off yet present there in their own right to reclaim their voice. Reading and writing through the lens of Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, Kociatkiewicz

and Kostera develop a method of textual *flânerie* that provides a way of seeing and wandering in such texts. As with the other contributions of this issue, the goal is not to solve remaining inconsistencies or problems in management texts or to exorcise their ghosts, but to ‘learn to think through what these have given us to consider’ (Richer, 2002: 5, in Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, this issue). Through such non-linear reading, the authors aim to open up false closers, such as pathways to humane ideas of management theory that are hidden in plain sight.

Vaaben and Bjerg as well as Kociatkiewicz and Kostera’s contributions are examples of how ghostly matters in organization concern that which has become disposable, but also how that which has been disposed of can be redeemed.

Ghost hunting, ghost sighting and summoning ghosts

In the first part of the editorial, we used Assistens Cemetery as an ‘anecdotal case’ (Michael, 2012) for thinking through ghostly matters in organizing. The cemetery is not only a host of ghosts, spirits and spooks, it reveals how every organizing process is imbued with intangible, unintelligible and affective issues that escape, disturb or animate plans, strategies and institutionalized ways of doing things in unexpected ways. As our conceptual understanding of ghostly matters evolves and hopefully becomes more palpable, the question of the empirical and how to methodologically explore the limits of representation remains (Knudsen and Stage, 2016; Fotaki et al., 2017). The authors in this special issue have chosen various methods for and approaches to unearthing such haunting vestiges of narratives and events from the pasts or imaginaries of the future that shape the present way we organize. They evoke at least three notions for their ghostly methodologies – their ways of creating processes of collecting, analysing, presenting and perhaps changing that which animates in unforeseen ways: ghost hunting as a way to search for and identify absent-presences; ghost sighting as a way to explore what appears clearly present; and the summoning of ghosts as a way to create spaces and openings for absent-presences to emerge.

Ghost hunting

In some contributions, the authors aim to make an uncanny disturbance palpable, while also acknowledging that it can never be fully articulated, made sense of or located. Every account of ghostly matters will also always remain incomplete or indeterminate (Stevens and Tolbert, 2018: 34). The authors in this special issue reflect this in their various ways of engaging with the empirical: by pursuing forgotten data online (Blackman, this issue) or recovering forgotten ideas in academic texts (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, this issue); by tracing a disquiet felt in interviews as informants search for words (Christensen and Muhr, this issue); or

by juxtaposing an official discourse with the personal experience of someone affected (Vaaben and Bjerg, this issue). Here, they identify and follow traces in the empirical material that haunt the texts, observations and themselves. Such traces appear as ruptures, confusions, gaps, silences, irritations and other failures of sensemaking that register in manifold, often affective ways but ‘exceed conventional modes of perception’ and therefore require one to have a particular sensibility for being attentive to such incidents and feelings (Blackman, 2015: 26).

Ghost sighting

In contrast, other contributions in this issue are interested in (aesthetic) textual, literary or figurative accounts of ghosts, spooks and the uncanny. These contributions explore what spectral concepts and ideas reveal to us and consider the power and performative effects of such symbolic representations. Sine Nørholm Just importantly reminds us that supernatural metaphors to describe the financial crisis ‘become[s] true when we have forgotten that it is a metaphor ... when the ghost is mistaken for the possessed body’. What follows is an understanding that the ghostly can be where we least expect it. We must therefore also look at the interplay of the above-mentioned affective irritations with that which is undisputed, which appears familiar and homely, which seduces or seems at first glance transparent and clear. Beyes’ reading of Kafka’s story ‘The Burrow’ in relation to discussions of space in organization studies is a performative gesture to become aware of this tension. It invites the reader to grasp the uncanny frailty of organizational space, both at an affective *and* a conceptual level. Organizational spaces are physically designed to achieve certain institutionalized ends and meanings – productivity, convenience, hierarchies, reputation – but the impossibility of living up to those intentional designs carries an inherent vulnerability that generates new animations. The perpetual affective forces arising from such tensions have a way of unsettling organizational spaces where one ought to feel safe, to know one’s way around, as an ‘unhomely’ feeling can creep in and will continually need to be handled (Beyes, this issue). These contributions mobilize and interrogate haunting metaphors to find ways to observe and describe uncertain, ever-changing and indeterminate worlds (Stevens and Tolbert, 2018).

Summoning the ghosts

Two contributions in this issue create a setting to mobilize the resistant or emancipatory potential of the spectral by collecting empirical material in a particularly ghostly-attuned way. Sharing an ambition to summon ‘common ghosts’ (Skou, absent-present note, this issue), the two notes by artistic researchers Asbjørn Skou and Sibylle Peters play an important role in enabling other kinds of socio-political imaginaries of organizing. Yet, their artistic methodologies and

presentations differ greatly. Drawings by Asbjørn Skou are scattered around the pages of this issue, as his work method for this specific project has been to produce a collage-like, ghostly stream of events, ideas, people, things. The project included a performative talk held in the lower basement of Copenhagen Business School at the *ephemera* workshop that launched this special issue. Following this engagement with the university, he embarked on a hauntographic search for ghosts in the everyday lives of academics in the buildings where such presences are found. Skou's work seems to suggest that knowledge organizations like universities are haunted twice – once by that which does not stay dead and then again by its disenchantment. In addition, the source material for Skou's images printed in this issue stems from microfilms of newspaper articles published between 1979 and 2001, with each of these dates being a 'magical number in an equation of paranoia and slow catastrophes'. To quote from the note, Skou declined to have published:

Here is a stage set from Hamlet in New York. Here is Casper The Friendly Ghost as seen in the obituary of his inventor. Here are stockbrokers and the precarious bankers, sex-workers and a radiated turtle. Here are colonial ghosts and a shadow in Lacan's mirror. Here are earthquakes and premonitions of a Fukushima melt down. Here is a Japanese lady who turned away from society to live with dolls. Here is Ayn Rand and an obsessive love, here is black Friday. Here are victims and victimizers. Here is Thatcher's flowerpot and a disaster zone, and they all say: *Welcome night, open the windows and whistle some invocation, some fluorescent spell – not to mourn for the futures lost, but to conjure up their meaning once again, and let all the dead, that ever died, live again (forever)*. Hungry, hungry spooks. From a delicate whisper to a furious clamour – they all sang: 'It is a bad day for investors'.

We encourage you to search the pages of this issue and see what you find, what ghostly messages the drawings transmit to you.

Peters' artistic note takes a different approach, offering a step-by-step description of the methodology deployed by the *Theater of Research*, a German-based theatre that creates experimental setups for collective performative practices to change the way children and teachers experience their daily school life. The note critically engages with the tension of (re)solving the ghost by calling it forth. This performative practice is inspired by accounts that link the Sisters Fox, three 19th-century mediums who started the spiritualist movement with practices of radical political and, in this case, feminist emancipation. The *Theater* experiments with summoning ghosts as an emancipatory practice by revealing and potentially changing affects that haunt, as in this case, schoolchildren and their teachers. Put differently, the aim of the artistic engagement is not only to disrupt, question and reveal troubled categories but perhaps also to create and offer new malleable orders able to actively engage with the uncertainties presented by organizational life.

Kristian Bondo Hansen's review of Lisa Blackman's book *Haunted data* touches on the impactful, yet often denied links between parapsychological phenomena and science that Peters' and Skou's work teaches us about. Engaging with the intellectual dispute over the psychic powers of Eusepia Palladino – a medium from Naples, Italy, whose public séances attracted and created confusion among many prominent scientists in the late 19th century – Hansen underlines Blackman's argument that 'science controversies are engulfed in power relations, with the preservation of boundaries between the scientific and the non-scientific being the battleground' (Hansen, this issue). He situates Blackman's recent publication in her long trajectory of 'embrac[ing] the weirdness in science without romanticizing or ridiculing it, but with an open mind towards what it might tell us even from beyond the grave' (ibid.). This is a theme that also re-occurs in her contribution in this issue, and that has most obviously inspired our editorial and our anecdotal excursions to Assistens Cemetery.

Bringing together the variety of approaches the authors of this special issue use to study and analyse ghostly matters in organizing, we learn that a ghostly methodology requires us to pay attention to the senses (Blackman, 2015). To perceive and unfold the many layers of sensual experiences and activities discerned in the data, the researcher needs the time, space and openness to be attentive to and let herself be affected by the animations that data creates. Here, MacLure reminds us of the familiar, though perhaps undervalued, situation we encounter in the process of data analysis – that of stumbling on data that 'glows' (2013: 661). This is the moment when the analyst is drawn to, struck by or cannot let go of certain fragments of information; when an encounter with data causes reactions that resonate with the body *and* mind; when data 'seems to invoke something abstract or intangible that exceeds propositional meaning, but also has a decidedly embodied aspect' (ibid.). Thus, the task for the researcher exploring ghostly matters is to become 'enchanted' – to have an experience of being captivated, inspired and affected (Bennet, 2001), and to become sensitive to what may be 'insubstantial', but is not insignificant (Stevens and Tolbert, 2018: 40). A ghostly-attuned exploration traces what generates affects *and* thoughts – both of which are always somewhat beyond the researcher's control.

Thus, the researcher must also stay with the ghost and go along with it, or, put differently, re-read and return to data that affects. An analytical attention to ghostly matters is thus one that invites hesitation and waiting (cf. Holloway and Kneale, 2008), one that also draws and dwells on memories, associations, fantasies, intuitions, visceral responses and more. Such attention allows the researcher, as Hansen so eloquently puts it in his account of Lisa Blackman's methodology, to 'immerse herself into the unbounded field that stretches out from the respective academic studies she makes her points of departure. It allows her to pick up clues,

to draw connections to the past or into possible futures, and ultimately to engage with questions about what data are, how they come about and what they do' (Hansen, this issue). Following Blackman (2015, 2019, this issue), we might call this approach an embodied hauntology.

Such a methodology might thus be described as one that resists the temptation of resolving and explaining away, that avoids quickly reshuffling insights for the sake of a smoother or more inventive narrative. If hauntings remain uncertain, they must be 'incarnations which hover between secure accounting mechanisms' meaning that the interpretative criteria for understanding spectral occurrences can never be *fully* grasped or articulated (cf. Holloway and Kneale, 2008: 308; Lipman, 2014: 23). Along these lines, Cho (2007, 2008) develops a methodological approach for listening to the gaps, silences and contradictions in her mother's story, communication and behaviour after the Korean War. The capacity to 'see' the trauma that has been transmitted across generations, often through shame, secrecy and silence, cannot be seen or registered. Cho strives towards a form of inquiry where 'what is perceived is not located at any single place and moment in time, and the act by which this perception occurs is not the result of a single or isolated agency but of several working in concert or parallel' (2008: 66). A ghostly methodology can thereby be described as the analytical efforts to work with traces, fragments, fleeting moments, gaps, absences, submerged narratives and displaced actors and agencies that register affectively and that collectively might begin to tell some of the stories thus far untellable.

Lastly, although they have remained scarce in this issue, we aim to second Stevens' and Tolbert's (2018) call for not ignoring or forgetting literal ghosts and paranormal phenomena. The authors criticize academic scepticism toward such unexplainable incidents, even amongst those academics interested in ghostly matters. They argue that in seeking to metaphorize the spectral, 'scholars have tended to ironically strip experience of its immediacy in-place and in-body (as well as out-of-body)' (2018: 39). Engaging with the everyday experience of literal ghosts more seriously (rather than ignoring its relevance) through spatial-analytical expertise or situated, ethnographic studies, the authors argue, will enable a form of research that does justice to lived experience and the politics of everyday life (*ibid.*: 49).

Haunting and ghosts in organization studies

In organization studies, a few contributions have already called attention to the ghostly qualities inherent in organization and management (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Gabriel, 2012; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2010; see also Knox et al. 2015; De



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Cock et al., 2013; Muhr and Azad, 2013; Weiskopf, 2004). Particularly Orr's (2014) study of how local government chief executives encounter and live with ghosts has demonstrated not only that we find ghostly presences in mundane organizational settings but also that analytical curiosity about ghostly workings can enrich our understanding of organizational change and the transformation of organizational traditions. However, when compared to other social science disciplines like human geography, cultural studies and sociology, organization studies is only incipiently beginning to benefit from theorizings of the ghostly (e.g. McCormack, 2010; Gordon, 2008; Hetherington, 2004).

Particularly since Derrida's *Specters of Marx* from 1994, so much has been written about ghosts, hauntology and ghostliness in cultural studies, geography and art theory that any attempt to summarize contributions and discussions makes little sense. In the following, we will therefore focus on three questions we think especially valuable for organization scholars: 1) How thinking about the ghostly enables inquiries into organizational time and how organizational time is not linear. 2) The intimate connection between haunting and affect, and how thinking about ghostly matters invites a curiosity towards those intense moments in organizations when things that no longer hold a place in language, narratives and knowledge make themselves felt in affective registers. 3) Finally, how ghostly matters are entangled with complex questions of the politics of organizing and of justice and responsibility.

A conceptual framework for thinking about the ghostly begins with a dismissal of the idea that time is linear (Edensor, 2001: 42; Maddern, 2008). Famously, in Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) the figure of the ghost reveals that history neither begins nor ends and that Marxism endures despite the supposed triumph of capitalist liberal democracy. The ghostly draws attention to 'endings that are not over' (Gordon, 2008: 139), but also more profoundly interrupts linear time and thus any narrative trying to fix time in neat stories of progress, development or enlightenment. Derrida writes: 'It is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time' (1994: 202). He introduces the concept of hauntology in order to trouble the concept of ontology. The two concepts sound quite similar when spoken, but hauntology nevertheless reminds us that ontology is haunted by a corrupting and contaminating undercurrent: a spectral working that destabilizes, in a more or less subterranean fashion, any existence and any self-sufficient present (Derrida, 1994: 174; Jameson, 1999: 93). The living present is full of animate and animating pasts as well as futures. Ideas, concepts, subjects and things that should no longer be continue to exist as absent-presences, working to produce a 'sort of non-contemporaneity of present time with itself' (Derrida, 1994: 25). Thus, to attend to the ghostly is to explore the complexities of the present and the ways in which

multiple pasts and futures continue to linger in spite of how certain forces work to forget and derecognize them.

At the same time, the ghostly does not straightforwardly propose any new or alternative orderings of time. As Pile has suggested, the ghostly is not coherent; it can mean many things at once: 'Just like an element in a dream, the figure of the ghost is overdetermined – pointing in many different directions at once' (2005: 162f.). Ghosts rarely deliver clear messages (Holloway and Kneale, 2008), and ghostly matters may be about futures as well as pasts. For Derrida the ghostly is both *revenant* (invoking what was) and *arrivant* (announcing what will come). He writes: '(N)o one can be sure if by returning (the ghost) testifies to a living past or living future' (1994: 123). Ghostly matters are not about how one ordering of time is replaced by another equally fixed and meaningful narrative. Rather, the ghostly has to do with indeterminate foldings of time. Ghostly matters rarely involve a simple mourning over lost pasts, but work to remind us about lost futures too. In Avery Gordon's seminal work, haunting also centres on a contest over the future, over what is to come next (Gordon, 2011). Ghostly matters are therefore as much about how we inherit the future as about how we inherit the past (Barad, 2010: 257). An analytical sensitivity to ghostly matters means inquiring into those particular moments where linearity collapses, implodes or explodes into excess, and exploring those moments in different settings, where certain temporal orders are disturbed and other possible lines of flight open up.

For scholars of organization and organizing, a conceptual framework of the ghostly draws attention to how strategies, policies, vision statements and the like do not always succeed in capturing and ordering organizational time as linear. Often, such practices strive to order organizational complexity as narratives consisting of inadequate pasts that the organization should move away from and brighter, more efficient and prosperous futures that can only be achieved through certain requisite actions and efforts in the present. Attending to ghostly matters can involve following how strategies and policies become haunted when their implementation clashes with embedded local cultures, traditions, histories and storytelling (Brøgger, 2019). Thinking about the ghostly is a way of drawing attention to the fact that strategy narratives of change can forcefully replace some inadequate past with a glossy future, but also be fragile and precarious. Rather than creating linear progress, such narratives are more likely to produce collages of intersecting temporalities colliding and merging in a landscape of juxtaposed asynchronous moments (Pors, 2016a). Here, organization studies might learn a good deal from (post)human geography where much work has been done to show how modern imperatives to swiftly transform and renew are only partial attempts to remove the past (Degen and Hetherington, 2001; Maddern, 2008). For example, studies of urban spaces, underground sewers, commuting routes, industrial ruins

and metro lines have explored how supposedly renovated or improved social and material spaces remain crowded with lingering remnants of former ways of life, outmoded working routines, long-gone cultural fashions, failed city planning and materiality in varying stages of decay (Edensor, 2001; Gandy, 1999; Hetherington, 2004). Attending to the ghostly can attune us to how elements rendered homeless by the introduction of new organizational visions unwillingly disappear, and how this contributes to other, darker and more complex narratives that haunt organizational space like superfluous or additional inhabitants (Edensor, 2008).

Organization scholars might also learn from how the relationship between haunting and affect has been theorized. The relationship between organizing and affect has, perhaps, already been explored in organization studies, as well as in *ephemera*, through the non-representational, darkness and ambivalence, for example (see Fotaki et al., 2017, Kenny et al., 2011; as well as Karppi et al., 2016; Linstead et al. 2014; Linstead and Thanem, 2007; Höpfl, 2000). However, important insights may still be found beyond the customary boundaries of organization studies. Here, we begin in the assertion made by Meier et al. (2013) that absences, or absent-presences, are imbued with an affective quality that differs from experiences of present identities, from that which can be clearly articulated, seen and talked about. Ghosts and ghostly matters can never be fully understood, represented or brought into representation (Holloway and Kneale, 2008: 308; Lipman, 2014: 23). Instead, their lurking absent-presence is often felt, intuited or sensed in affective and embodied registers.

One route along which to trace the relationship between haunting and affect goes back to Freud's famous essay on the uncanny. The concept of the uncanny is also one of the better developed discussions about haunting and the quality of haunting moments in organization studies (Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; see also Gabriel, 1995; Sievers, 1994; Cooper, 1987). As Timon Beyes explores in this issue, the uncanny, *das Unheimliche*, literally the unhomely, refers to a feeling of unease when something familiar suddenly becomes strange. Freud explores the uncanny lexicographically in his essay, tracing the origin of the concept and its historical development. He finds that the homely initially meant familiar and friendly – a place free of ghostly influences – but over time the concept became increasingly ambivalent, until ultimately it merged with its antonym, the unhomely (Freud, 2003: 134). Through this etymological route, the uncanny came to describe the confusing, yet itchy feeling that an encountered foreign world is vaguely familiar: that the foreign has a, however cryptic, pathway back to the familiar (Beyes, this issue; Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Freud, 2003: 148).

However, as many scholars have also noted (most famously Cixous, 1976; but see also Royle, 2003), the form and structure of the text is what makes Freud's essay

so striking. The text, or its author, seems haunted by a shadow of doubt and hesitation (Cixous, 1976: 526), and so constantly undoes what is sought established. As Cixous writes: 'What is brought together is quickly undone; what asserts itself becomes suspected' (*ibid.*). Just as a particular definition of the uncanny is stabilized, the surface cracks and the concept is thrown back into indeterminacy. The strangely incoherent structure of Freud's text mirrors the very essence of the uncanny, appearing even to become its *doppelgänger*. Through Freud's essay the uncanny comes not only to signify a strange combination of familiar and unfamiliar, but also to refer to the affective feeling of beginning to doubt the reality in front you – the affective quality of experiencing a doubt cast on what you think you know. As Beyes and Steyaert (2013) have argued the uncanny is located in a strange place between concept and affect, between theory and art, between genuine thinking and blocs of sensation (see also Beyes, this issue; Masschelein, 2011: 11). Here we want to stress how the notion of the uncanny points to the close relationship between haunting and affect (see also Blackman, this issue), and how it directs attention to the way haunting is an affective encounter with something so unknowable, uncertain and strange that an affective atmosphere becomes the main media through which one can engage with it.

Grace Cho's (2007, 2008) moving work on transgenerational haunting provides another seminal resource for thinking about the relationship between haunting and affect. Cho explores the story of her mother, who came to the USA from Korea as the wife of an American soldier she met in the Korean War. In Korea, Cho's mother had been a sex worker for American soldiers, and the trauma and shame she suffered as a result became a chilling story that could never be coherently told but that deeply affected Cho's childhood and upbringing. To engage with this, on the one hand, personal but also emblematic story for hundreds of Korean women, Cho draws on the psychoanalytical work of Abraham and Torok (1994). In their work, they propose the concept of transgenerational haunting to refer to how trauma and pain are transported in affective registers between generations. For Abraham and Torok what haunts us is not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others (*ibid.*: 75). Transgenerational haunting is the affective process through which we are touched by that which could never be told, by that which has no language. Here, the ghost is the gap that the concealment of some part of a loved one's life produced in us. What haunts is the 'burial of an unspeakable fact within the loved one' (*ibid.*: 76).³

³ It should, perhaps, be noted here that Abraham and Torok consider the ghost a symptom of a trauma that through processes of being dealt with in psychoanalytic therapy can be made to disappear. Contrary to this, in this issue, we do not try to expel

From folklore to Derrida, ghosts and justice are strongly connected. Ghosts are dead people coming back to disturb the living because of injustices and can be laid to rest once justice is done or the issue resolved. In the introduction to *Specters of Marx*, Derrida famously states:

If I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain others who are not present, not presently living, either to us, in us or outside us, it is in the name of justice. (1994: xix)

Ghosts remind us that something is or was not right and that we have some role in the wrongdoing or in setting things right: ‘the absence of justice (as a presence) means that a structure/organization is haunted by the ghost of the undecidable and by spectres of justice’ (Weiskopf, 2004: 212). Here, we would like to further build on the connection between the ghostly, justice and responsibility (e.g. Jones, 2003; Weiskopf, 2004), but also on the role affect plays in this connection.

For organizational scholars, an attention to ghostly matters opens up inquiries into those things in organizations that we consciously or unconsciously ‘unsee’, that we no longer talk about or understand, but that still touch us now and then in affective registers (cf. Mieville, 2009; Otto et al., 2019). As we have tried to argue, an interest in ghostly matters means undertaking an exploration of those affectively charged moments, situations or encounters that allow us to engage with something for which we have been deprived of a language for, and that now operate at the limits of what is taken to be understandable (Blackman, this issue). An interest in the ghostly connects us to questions about how, when and why something came to be placed outside the boundaries of what is seen as sensible, intelligible or understandable in organizations. It connects us to questions about seeing, speaking and surviving for displaced subjects (Cho, 2007: 153) and to moments in which bodies suddenly become sensitive to suggestive and contagious atmospheres, attuned to however-small affective disturbances and invested in reading barely-there traces of what should no longer exist (Pors, 2016b). As Gordon puts it: ‘Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as transformative recognition’ (2008: 8).

Thus, engaging with ghostly matters may enable organization scholars to dismantle stubborn assumptions in mainstream organization and management literature (as Kociatkiewicz and Monika Kostera propose in this issue) that circumvent questions of ethics and responsibility. Take, for example, the

the ghost, but instead to invite it in and explore the analytical and political insights it may offer.

assumption that leadership and change is something achieved by superior and individual managers (to see this idea eloquently dissected, see Pullen and Rhodes, 2015; Kenny and Fotaki, 2015), or the assumption that organizations are disentangled from their natural, social and political environments (as identified by Gladwin et al., 1995: 875). Ghosts tend to disturb and unsettle the categories, boundaries, practices and strategies (of unseeing) that we use to individualize certain issues or disconnect ourselves from the socio-political effects of the ways we organize. A ghostly encounter may allow us to realize that 'distance' was always only a psychological and ideological construct designed to protect us from the nearness of things (Morton, 2013: 27), and that we are, indeed, entangled to global chains of capitalism, even in our daily organizational work and efforts.

Conclusion: Ghostly matters and academic subjectivity

In this editorial, we have proposed some possibilities for thinking about ghostly matters in organizing. Taking the anecdotal case of Assistens Cemetery in Copenhagen, we have suggested that ghostly matters have to do with multiple temporalities, the collapse of linear time and strange foldings of pasts, presents and futures. We have also linked the ghostly to processes of remembering and forgetting. Moreover, we have argued that ghosts disturb categories and the processes of categorizations used by organizations to fix, stabilize and manage events, people and things. Finally, we have suggested that thinking about the ghostly opens up questions about how things, ideas and people become disposable and how organizations handle that which has become unneeded and considered as waste.

Although our exploration has been less exhaustive than perhaps warranted given how much has been written about ghosts and haunting in other disciplines, we have drawn attention to some of the work done in (post-)human geography, sociology and cultural studies that might inform current attempts in organization studies to attend to the ghostly. Specifically, we have presented work on ghostly matters as embodying multiple and intersecting temporalities as well as intimate links between haunting and affect and suggested some of the analytical possibilities this work might open up for organization scholars. We have pointed to connections between ghosts, affects and ethics by suggesting that ghostly moments are those moments where it becomes possible to come into contact with the broader social and political stakes of our daily doings, although this contact is often only felt in affective registers and provides no clear, decipherable message.

With these efforts we have tried, perhaps too hard, to tame the ghost. We have sought out and identified the ghost and endeavoured to take it seriously by making

it an object of our analytical curiosity and even inspection. What we have not done, however, is to allow it to mess with the academic subject, the one who observes, the one who analyses (Knudsen and Stage, 2016). When ghosts bring with them an eerie feeling that there is something more to say (Gordon, 2008), that glossy strategy papers or stubborn assumptions about linear progress have more to them than they let on, then how, and with what kind of authorship, can this 'more' be said?

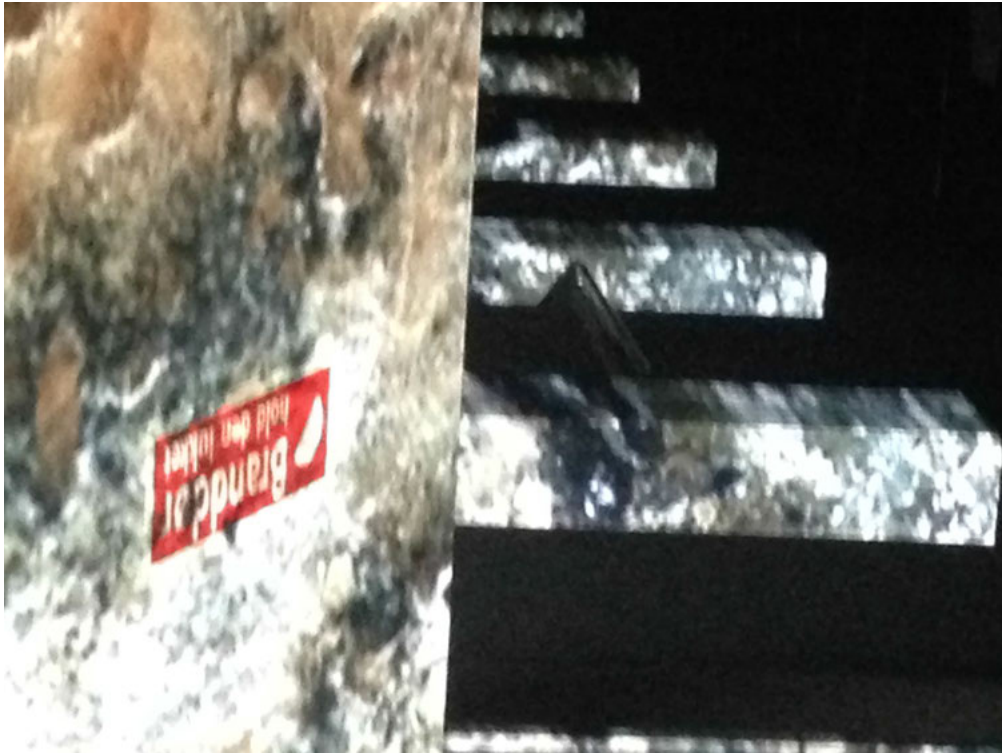


Photo from Asbjørn Skou's talk in the lower basement of CBS at the workshop on ghostly matters in organizing in December 2015.

To give this question some space, and as an ending, let us turn back time to the workshop held in Copenhagen in December 2015, where the work on this special issue began with profound and thought-provoking talks by Lisa Blackman, Kevin Orr, Monika Kostera and Jerzy Kociatkiewicz, Sibylle Peters and Asbjørn Skou, the latter talk having been given in the lower basement of CBS. (Please note in Blackman's contribution, how this event, or its representation in the internet archive, found its way into her empirical search and material.) Although dealing with such diverse settings as digital archives, local leadership, seminal scholarship in economics and psychology and theatrical work with children, all the talks forcefully conveyed a disturbance and breakdown of contained and bounded

identity. Lisa Blackman spoke about a hauntological methodology, not unlike daydreaming, of letting go of rational control over one's attention and analytical sensibilities, a process of losing oneself. Asbjørn Skou dismantled the human as a single contained individual by unfolding how bacteria and other alien organisms live inside us all, making us more-than-one, more-than-human. Similarly, if one theme cuts across the rich and diverse analyses in the work that we invoke with the title of this special issue, Avery Gordon's seminal book *Ghostly matters*, it is the complexity of personhood.

Ghosts remind us that the body that writes, the body that works, the body that orders and structures our texts, is not a superior, confined and independent subject (Skou, absent-present note, this issue). To paraphrase Jameson (1999: 39), the body that writes is hardly as self-sufficient as it claims to be, and we would do well not to count on its solidity and boundedness.

So, fellow scholars, let's call forth the ghosts! Let us unleash other sensuous capabilities to encounter it. Let us learn to listen to what ghosts might have to say about organization and management. Let us dare to be messed with by ghosts and ghostly matters.

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