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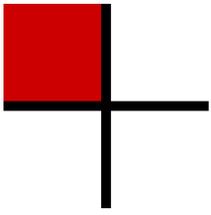
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From...To...

Campbell Jones and Steffen Böhm

The Multiplication Effect

If today one asks the question ‘what will the future look like?’, politicians on the ‘left’ and the ‘right’ seem to come up with pretty much the same answer. If there is a future, which is to say, assuming that this question makes any sense, the answer tends to be something to the effect that tomorrow will look like today, but will be different only by a matter of degree. Tomorrow will be like today but will be multiplied by something. A number usually.

According to the World Bank, the figure that defines progress, that is to say, whether or not one has achieved the future, is two percent. One must operationalise, surely. If national product is growing at a rate of two percent each year, then an economy is obviously growing. But if national product is *growing* at a rate of less than two percent, then the economy is ‘in recession’. In this case, the criterion for the multiplication effect is 1.02.

It would be infantile to dismiss calculation purely on the basis of their mathematisation or rationalisation of life. Most important are the consequences of this logic of multiplication, of which the World Bank is just an example. We might take this as a way of pointing to a logic of calculation, a way of defining the meaning of the future. Because in many walks of life, in the contemporary organized world this multiplication effect is used as a surrogate for the calculation of the ‘good’ and the ‘good future’. According to such a calculus, tomorrow is ‘good’ if it is the same as today but two percent (or any other figure) faster, bigger, grander, more efficient.

Differences

Critical theorists will be pretty quick to observe that the multiplication brings with it an insidious denial of alternative futures. Defining the future as today multiplied by X is one of the most effective ways that one could deny the possibility of a complete, or even a significant, modification of the basic ground rules on which ‘today’ is defined. The

multiplication effect reduces the Other to the Same. It gives the appearance of change while cleverly maintaining a relatively constant state. Against this, critical theory asserts at least the possibility of a radical difference.

But we should not forget that assertion of radical newness is also one of the ways that the status quo can be maintained. This is, in part, the point of Adorno's much maligned, and often misunderstood, criticism of jazz music. Adorno's point is that, despite the appearance of innovativeness and ever new styles and themes, behind the distribution of jazz music a commodity relation remains. Despite the fact that "for almost fifty years the productions of jazz have remained as ephemeral as seasonal styles"¹, this ephemerality is the ephemerality of commodity relations. Adorno argues that jazz sells this appearance of newness, and hence the jazz commodity market rests, as perhaps all markets do, on always the same, forever repeated 'newness'.

While it is fashionable to chastise Adorno for the subjective and elitist prejudices of his dismissal of jazz, and while such admonishments surely hit their target, we should not let this stop us from taking what remains crucially insightful in it. Why? Because today in academic circles the pretence of newness has become a form of radical chic. Ever new, ever different, but then, on another level, always the same. Organizational kitsch, or perhaps better, organized kitsch. Movement without movement.

Movements

The motto of real estate is 'location, location, location'. A high price for a property can be achieved only if the location is right. However beautiful a house might be, if it is located next to a working class housing estate, no (middle class, deep pocketed) customer can probably be persuaded to make the deal. Who wants to see the poor when waking up in the morning? Capital, then, seems to concentrate in certain locations. If one has a million in the bank, one buys a country estate or a townhouse in Mayfair. Equally, multinational banks and companies have their headquarters in The City of London, Manhattan or Frankfurt. Managers and consultants need to sit in shiny new glass palaces (because 'we want to be transparent to the public'). A multinational corporation needs to represent something: wealth, success, ambition, growth – its capacity for multiplication.

Is this the whole story? Marx reminds us not only of the ossification of capital but equally of its flows and movements. The monuments to capital in the big cities are ephemeral – yet still colossal – representations of something that is always on the move. Capital is not something solid, but gaseous, viral – it spreads into all holes, bodies and territories. Of course, today capital is global. Every day billions are shifted through the multiple networks of global capital markets – across boundaries and traditional locations of representation, such as national borders. But further: capital also enters our bodies. What combines the body of the management consultant sitting in a shiny

1 Theodor W. Adorno (1967) 'Perennial fashion – Jazz', in *Prisms*, trans. S. and S. Weber. Cambridge, MA: MIT, p. 122.

London office with the Chinese sweatshop worker producing plastic toys for the children of the West is that both of their bodies have been turned into commodities.

But capital is, of course, not the only thing that is moving. In fact, it seems to have become somewhat fashionable to talk of movement today. An entire industry of academics seems to be keeping busy by turning solids into air, fluidising structures, displacing, dislocating and deterritorialising things, in short, showing the ephemerality of life. It is said that modern bodies are always ‘in between’; that they are always becoming – coming *from* and leaving *to* somewhere, perhaps nowhere. This journal has been, perhaps, contributing to such movement. But then, we have always been keen to show that movement is a multiplicity, which is to say that there are different (kinds of) movements.

We could therefore identify two broad conceptions of movement. On one hand, there is movement as transport. One goes from A to B, knowing pretty much what A and B are and where they are located. One goes onto this journey because one has a clear purpose: shopping perhaps. Today it is most likely that one takes a car to make this journey (the supermarket might be located at a motorway junction for the ‘convenience’ of shoppers). The funny thing about cars is that one does not really leave home; one does not really leave all the comforts of the house behind. In fact, the car might have the more comfortable chair and the better CD sound system. So, in a way, car travel is about taking one’s home on the move. Nothing really unexpected will happen on this journey.

The other, perhaps more interesting, conception of movement is pretty much the flipside of the idea of movement as (car) transport. Here movement is seen as an endless becoming that is not predictable, nameable or measurable. This movement is not one from A to B but movement as such. Pure process. No locations. This movement is a ‘non-place’. Calling for such ‘pure’ movement, it seems to us, is, perhaps, a basic starting point to think of a different type of movement – beyond the restricted notion of car travel, for example. But considering that the machinery of capital is always moving at high speed, the question is whether it is enough to think of movement as ‘pure movement’. Pure movement “itself is an empty gesture, and the mere refusal of order simply leaves us on the edge of nothingness – or worse, these gestures risk reinforcing imperial power rather than challenging it”.² In other words, a movement that does not move us somewhere is a movement that runs the danger of being swallowed up by those who play speedy games of self-multiplication: capital, for example.

Locating Politics

A movement of ‘pure becoming’, then, might be as tedious as a movement where nothing really happens. Considering that the modern world is already moving at high speed, perhaps we are asking the wrong question. Perhaps what is needed is not more

2 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000) *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 216-217.

movement, more speed, more becoming, that is, more of the same. Perhaps, we, rather, need to slow down and arrest. Perhaps we don't lack movement and creation today, but "resistance to the present."³ But where should we locate this resistance, this politics?

For us, politics is not a place. Politics is not only done in one building – such as the house of parliament – or a set of governmental buildings in the capital cities of this world. Also, politics is not only done by politicians who talk about their political affairs on radio or TV. Politics is not that which is reported in the news. In fact, this restriction of the political to today's established places of politics is dangerous precisely because it implies the possibility of an absolute place where the social can be (re)presented.

Does this mean that politics cannot be located, that it is always on the move? In a way, yes, because politics responds to a multiplicity of power/knowledge relations that do not have a clear centre. This is Foucault's suggestion about the capillary and decentred nature of power. This, however, has often been translated into the infantile notion that power and resistance are everywhere. While politics might always be on the move it also has to respond to the specificity of power/knowledge relations; it has to organise specific resistances. Sure, politics is about displacing, taking out of place – disjuncting time and place. But, in order to be effective, it also has to put into place, we might want to say organise, specific movements of resistance. The multiplicity of what is politics does not imply that anything goes anywhere; instead, it points to possibilities of different political movements some of which are more effective than others.

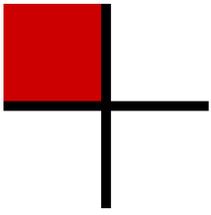
Perhaps, then, the political is about organising effective movements of resistance. Such movement cannot simply be about a 'pure becoming' that goes anywhere and nowhere. Instead, it is a movement that differentiates between different speeds and different kinds of slowness.⁴ This is to say that reality is not simply a never ending movement but something that is characterised by different types of speed and slowness that need to be analysed, critiqued and resisted. Speeding up and slowing down is an art, a political art. Perhaps, we can say that politics is about seizing the right moments for slowing things down and speeding them up. Seizing the right moment is not a movement for movement's sake but one that results in an event that responds to specific constellations of power and knowledge.

It has become clear that many of the traditional places of politics have become ineffective and sometimes simply corrupt. Today the political is on the move again: from Seattle to Prague, from Genoa to Evian, from Porto Allegre to Florence, as well as from and to many other places. We live in potentially exciting times. In many places difference seems to be possible again. But this movement does not simply move, because everything is moving and becoming. There are questions of organisation and strategy that need to be asked. Not all movements go into the 'right' direction; not all movements are effective in their resistance against domination. So, there is a question of 'from...to...' precisely because not all movements are the same. Where do we come

3 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1994) *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and G. Burchill. London: Verso, p. 108.

4 Nick Lee (1998) 'Two Speeds: How are real stabilities possible?', in R.C.H. Chia (ed.) *Organised Worlds: Explorations in Technology with Robert Cooper*. London: Routledge, p. 39-66.

from and where are we heading to? Why are we moving at all? How can we conceptualise spaces of resistance? How can something move from margin to centre? What are movements of speed and slowness? What is a postmodern movement? How can movements be organised? These, then, are some of the themes, the moves, in this issue of *ephemera*.



Prometheus

Ulrich Gehmann

abstract

This article tries to unravel major traits of contemporary mythology, settling upon the myth of Prometheus and the author's impressions during many years of business practice. First, the myth will be introduced, then, the programme resulting out of it, whereby the emphasis lies upon Occidental dualisms of conceiving the world, which have a long tradition. Afterwards, the sum of its consequences shall be looked at, together with a final reflection. According to the point of view adopted here, the myth of Prometheus has to be seen symbolically as part of an encompassing but entire world view which now is prevailing in our cultural sphere, the Occident.

The Myth

Prometheus – isn't this a figure from Greek mythology, located in the remote past of an *illo tempore* we share nothing in common with any more, the object of study of myth researchers or other specialists? What does a figure like this have to do with our present day, 'post-modern' life, a life we perceive as completely de-mystified, soberly organised to the bone and stripped off of any mythic ingredients? Before answering that question, we should look at the myth itself.

Prometheus the Titan was a rebel against the existing cosmic order, and by this rebellion, the liberator of mankind. A mythic hero who took pity on humanity and sought to improve their lot; at a great personal cost, because he was severely punished. He stole fire from the Gods and passed it over to man, thus enabling man to rise into a state of civilisation. This is the common version of the myth, a version known to all of us, more or less. A version with Prometheus as a positive figure. A version we, his followers and heirs of what I want to call a Promethean mythology, are inclined to believe.

All in all, a mythology typically Occidental, intrinsically belonging to our cultural sphere. But in order to better understand the things to come, we should look first at the nature of the mythic and its reality-shaping influence. What is a myth, by its essence? A holy, and therefore true tale. It is not just a story; nor to be set equal with a lie, as we today tend to interpret the mythic. It is a tale which is true because it is holy; sacrosanct, not to be doubted, a tale we believe in with certainty of faith. And it is not just any tale,

but a one about the world as it is, the cosmos we live in – about its nature and meaning, and about how that cosmos came into being.

For the Greeks, a myth encompasses every imagination of reality, which understands reality as a symbolic expression of powers and forces constituting the principal relations of the life of nature and of man (Hoffmeister, 1955: 418). Properties of the mythic are not confined to our ancestral *illo tempore* but are also present today, in both dimensions of cosmology and cosmogony: Every society is held together by a ‘system of myths’, a mythology; myths are ‘sharing images’ (Agmo and McWhinney, 1989: 15), images of what “is ‘true’ about an organization or society. They convey...an understanding of the history in terms of present consciousness. They tell truth out of which an organization operates” (Turner, 1990: 2).

If we understand the notion of an organisation in its broadest terms, namely as the basic living condition of man being a *zoon politikon*, a social animal, then myth is the base of culture. And it has to do with historical causality – with change, cosmogony. In both the ancestral and the present case, myths not only tell about a cosmic order existing and how it evolved, but also about the meaning of this evolution, its *logos*. A myth is a cosmological tale; and it tells about cosmogony, the principles and reasons of how that world had developed. Or, in our Occidental case, has to develop yet on a continuous basis, in a process of a *creatio continua*, the Promethean drive for the still better, the more perfected, the more powerful. When we take one of today’s prominent myths, for instance, the one telling us that free market equals democracy (in mythological terms: the liberation of all) and hence, is equal to freedom as such; that truly liberated individuals cannot but live inside the terms of such a system.

The Promethean mythology is one devoted to the deed, to progress forever, to the mythic hope of the individual’s enduring, and eternal, liberation from the chains of the world ‘as it is’. A mythology of expansion and omnipotence steered by the striving for immortality. Culminating in the myth of modernity: that in everything what can be done has to be done, also, has to be realised; this means a mythological translation has to become part of that world as it is, no matter the costs or consequences, the ‘collateral damages’ decision makers speak of. To make that world to our world completely. Which is the essence of such a mythology: That the world ‘as it is’ in its respective primordial shape, from bare nature down to enterprises, has to be encountered by us – reshaped, re-arranged, put in line with our wills and conceptions; that is, in its final mythical as well as practical consequences: transformed. That we are not able to leave this primordially to stand by its own, inside its own rights and properties, but to re-organise it; to make any ‘natural’ state we encounter to an ‘artificial’ one in literal terms, namely to the product of our destined influences. Every myth owns a “narrative core with marginal capabilities for variations” (Blumenberg, 1996: 40), and this is the core of the Promethean myth: to achieve a world as artefact. Made by man, not by itself.

An aspect of peculiar importance is that Promethean mythology, which has a focus on progress, since progress is understood as the continuous destruction of the pre-given, of the cosmic orders already in existence. For such a mythology, a myth of creative destruction applies: the meaning of evolution consists in destruction – of existing cosmic orders. Because the ‘old’ (from a mythological perspective) is conceived as

insufficient, and first of all, as restraining; it prevents us from growth, hinders our expansion. All in all, and expressed in terms of a mythological abbreviation, any existing cosmic order we meet equals a constraint, a constraint for unlimited expansion; for becoming 'better' through a process of continuous growth, whereby the 'better' can adopt a wide array of meanings, depending on the concrete case: of becoming more liberated (than we are now, inside the existing cosmic order), more efficient, more wealthy, or whatever. Thus, related to the myth of creative destruction, there is a myth of unlimited growth, of progress unlimited: the meaning of evolution consists in creative destruction because the meaning of evolution is to grow *ad infinitum*. Or expressed even shorter: the *logos* of evolution – and hence, of life as such, and of us – is growth, and thus, destruction.

This literal mytho-logical causality might, at first sight, sound strange to some reader, but its presence can be seen in everyday life, from scientific explanations to advertising sequels: Growth is 'natural', we hear, every biological species has the inherent tendency to grow, to expand (unless constrained by some counter-acting forces); there is an 'egoism of the genes' to spread out unrestricted unless impeded by some other 'egoistic' genes; hence, evolution equals a continuous fighting, that famous Darwinian struggle for existence. In a mythological translation: expansion and destruction are quite 'natural', that is, they cannot be avoided – if I want to survive, I have to be expansive at the cost of others, this means, in its final consequence, I have to be destructive. This, mythology tells us, is scientific, that is, an *objective* and 'true' explanation of natural cosmic processes, ranging from biological species to today's globalised enterprises. This holy tale about the *logos* of evolution holds valid for bare nature, the primordial cosmos, as well as for the cultural, man-made one. More and more – a Life Philosophy, a simple advertising sequel tells us. To provide examples from the everyday life of our culture about the meaning of myths, a meaning we all know, even if it represents a knowledge we do not reflect about, an 'un-thought known' (to recur to a term of Bollas); you have just to switch on your TV, and you can see many more of them.

It is a mythology which poses a severe problem – on mythological grounds: At least in its original, Greek conception, as such, *cosmos* is quite the opposite to the unlimited, the non-confined: *cosmos* is order, and order is confinement. The Greek *kosmos* denotes not only the general (and natural) world order, but also harmony, and, by that, natural beauty. An order that is systemic in literal terms: the Greek *systema* (our word 'system' derives from this) is the harmonically posed, it has *metron* (measure), it owns confining proportion (Mittelstraß, 1981: 50).

For such an imagology of the world as it is, World as such, if it wants to be 'harmonic', then it has to be confined. Of course, there might be struggle and fight, even forever. But all these quarrels and developments stay inside a pre-given cosmic order, which do not get violated through them. Now imagine what happens – on both mythological and practical grounds – if the idea of an eternal progress through continuous destruction enters into this world. For such a conception of the cosmos as the one depicted here, this would be chaos, the very opposition to order; the amorphous, unlimited, the unrestricted as such. Either there is chaos, the deep abyss, the nothing (amorphous, because non-confined), or there is *kosmos* (world), the very base of our human existence as such. Without going into further details, it is worth realising the difference of such a cosmic

order to our own. For such an understanding of the world 'as it is', it would be hubris to trespass the existing cosmic limits, to proceed (by mythic intention) beyond every confinement, in the attempt to expand 'unlimited'. An attempt reflected in what I want to call a myth of growth: that it is only growth which ensures our very survival, through eternal progress heading towards an infinite 'better' (whatever it might be). With the mythic hope of ever-increasing perfection: this efficiency programme here, it can be made even better, we can get yet more efficient than we are (already) now; we can become still better, harder, tougher, etc. managers than now; or, standing as a symbol for an entire culture, our economy has to grow constantly in order to not collapse; and so on. No wonder that a myth of modernity emerged. Because in becoming increasingly perfect (in order to survive), everything that can be done has to be done, indeed; otherwise (the myth tells) we would die.

To juxtapose these two basic mythological alternatives of how a 'world as it is' could look like: either as cycle (the old, classical conception) or as vector – the modern, Promethean conception. But this isn't the major difference to be considered here; it is another one even more severe; the idea of hubris implies that if I transcend every cosmic barrier, I will fall out of this world, I will get annihilated, destroyed. We all remember the ecological debates about ozone holes, climatic catastrophes and dwindling resources; that is, in mythological translation, the destruction of the natural, 'primordial' cosmos. Accompanied by increased unemployment, social problems, etc. that, in mythological translation too, is a destruction of that cosmos we conceive as genuinely human – the man-made world, our civilisation as the (only) place to live in. All that, we destroy. On the other hand, as long as I follow that Promethean mythology, I will become annihilated if I do not constantly destroy (through progress, etc.). We see the problem, Promethean entanglement, which will not only turn into a mythological and quite practical, but first of all, into a psychological problem. As long as I follow that mythology, I cannot escape the entanglement, I stick to it – so, what to do? To continue, by increased perfection, one day we will succeed in mastering these collateral damages; we will manage resource problems, the black rhino and increasing social disruption. One day, in the future. We will get the masters of such a world as it is. One day to be expected soon: since we continuously progress, with relentless effort and ever-increasing technical capabilities, to solve all this mess one day. Mastering the world as it is – the Promethean answer. It is a myth of domination which finds expression here; to dominate it all, problems and achievements alike, through an infinite vector-movement achieved by permanent creative destruction, the order of the order-less, in the perspective of a classical ('cyclical') mythology.

The Programme

We should stay here for a while, to envisage the magnitude of the problem in its entirety. Because, as earlier mentioned, as long as we follow such a mythology – we cannot but destroy. An overall, and hence, ontological situation reflected in a myth of movement, the certainty of faith that movement equals life. Accompanied by another 'mythos' genuinely Occidental, the myth of the paradise lost: that it was only primitives who had an intact cosmos, living in a peaceful (since non-progressive) Arcadia we have

forever lost. That it was us who were the victims of the *Logos* of evolution, that changes towards the irreversible – a myth about the condemnation of Occidental man. Telling us that it is our fate to proceed until infinity; the next horizon, the next state of being to be reached, which (hopefully) will be more perfect than the present one we are addicted to. The whole magnitude not only of the problem, but also of the psychological condition behind it may be revealed from the following statement:

Our mode of thinking and perceiving is coined by the idea of movement up to its most remote ramifications. Wide domains of our world view we owe to the Greeks. They left to us a magnificent fundament for our mathematics and geometry, for our forms of thought and expression, and yet, at the same time, we removed ourselves away from them. In some points we proceeded, in the most we lost. One of the domains in which we made progresses is the capture of movement. The need to investigate movement, i.e. the ever-changing in its most diverse forms has determined our scientific thinking and finally our expression of feeling in a fundamental way. It has its roots in the world view of the Greeks – and not just in their incapability – that they couldn't grasp the idea of movement and couldn't bring it into a precise form. They lived in a world of eternal ideas, in a world of constants...Aristotle, and with him the ancients, look at the world as something which rests in itself, as something that existed from archaic origin. This was encountered by the religious conception, that the world had been created and was put into movement through an act of will. Only lately, out of this basal idea of a world being in movement...has the consequence been drawn. This happened in the times of the High Gothic...the Scholastics...The question of Thomas Aquinas, how God created the world out of nothing, and which are the principles and causes underlying that activity of God, resulted in the question about the nature of change, and in its further proceeding, about the nature of movement. (Giedion, 1994: 33)

Movement came into the world irreversibly – and with it the threat of non-reliability. So what?, one might ask. This sounds trivial to us today because we got acquainted to the idea of change and 'progress' long since. But it isn't trivial from a mythological perspective, because it deeply affects the relation between myth and reality. The uniqueness of the idea of an ever-changing world (the vectorial model) comes out clearer in comparison with the cyclical one. Those 'traditional' mythologies of 'pre-civilised' or 'primitive' societies (in themselves, scientific terms with a mythic touch) anchor in an *illo tempore* of the world's origin, a place in time where all the relevant rules governing that world have been established, rules to be valid unchanged until today. So, the prime mythic aim consists in re-establishing the conditions of that time, as a necessary precondition to ensure the world's order, to prevent chaos, dissolution, and hence, the death of the 'world as it is' (Eliade, 1988: 40). A cosmic conception that excludes dangerous experiments, and by that, progress; and which leads to a closed cosmos. As a member of one of those primitive societies, I have to be constantly aware to keep the conditions of that *illo tempore* alive, I have to look at my acts very carefully so that they do not violate the cosmic order in existence since then. I have to not change it. Opposed to the Promethean model that has to challenge any order in existence, World is not *man-made* but from the Gods, and inherited from the forefathers. So, as a 'primitive', I have to keep it. As a logical consequence, I have to live in harmony with that world's other inhabitants, all the other animated beings next to man.

It is perhaps this difference of world view compared to our condemnation of progress why we admire those primitives when we watch them on TV, them sitting in their peaceful Arcadia, in performing their cosmos-keeping rituals, and speaking to 'brother bear'. They have humility, and no hubris. Their world moves, but no overall movement.

Which is the point of mythological importance, at this place: the form in which a mythology does affect and shape reality. In both the vectorial ('Promethean') and cyclical ('primitive') case, myths create their concomitant realities, but the form, the pattern differs – in the cyclical case, a reality is created which then is kept constant, it is one reality, one cosmic order in existence; in the vector-model, the created reality has to be constantly re-shaped, with the consequence that there is not one, but many subsequent realities, a series of cosmic orders superseding each other (we recall from above: the myths of progress and destruction). In the latter case, there is no cosmic anchorage. In the primitive case, there exists a constant cosmic order; in the evolved, Promethean case the only constant is change, that is, in mythological terms: disorder. As the tragedian Aischylos who wrote the first known tragedy about Prometheus coined it, man is an *akosmeton genos*: an a-cosmic being. This has consequences. Not only as regards the basic psychological condition of such a-cosmic beings (namely us Occidentals), but also its forming of realities. Since such a being, opposed to the primitive, has to mould its physical world, to actually *re-shape* it. It is a new quality in the relation myth-reality: there are no sacrosanct holy places in the natural world any more, this 'holy' forest here where the dryads and nymphs were housed. Superstitious bullshit, it can be destroyed in favour of an office block, or to deliver the fuel for locomotives. The primordial, 'natural' world, in mythological terms, man's Outside, is not holy any more but became material, bare matter to get formed by our will and conceptions. This new quality in man's relation to his Outside gave birth to the Promethean worlds as we know them; now, myth actually generates the realities suited to it. And through that, as an emergent phenomenon, a new reality emerges *sui generis*, a new kind of reality: what I call the world as artefact; a world we live in, nevertheless.

Expressed in mythic terms: man became *civilised*. Posing an Inside, an artificial cosmos created by himself, against an Outside, a primordial world, he is no longer part of (opposed to the primitive) and which now remains in the outskirts, outside the walls of the Polis, the town-state as a symbol for that new, man-made order; this is the first step of a Promethean emancipation: nature vs. culture. And, in the Occidental case, followed by that second step described above: the Inside acquires domination over the Outside, denying the latter's right to lead an existence in its own right. In mythic terms: there shall no longer be an Outside, everything should become an Inside – everything has to be transformed into man's world; or where this is not possible, has to stay at man's command at least, has to be controlled by him. At the end of such a mythical as well as practical process, the world as it is became a function of man: $y = f(x)$ standing at his disposal. In both its dimensions of Inside and Outside, that is the important point here, in our Occidental case – we can manage our own organisations as well, and as perfectly, as we are able to manage the African elephant or other remnants of a primordial nature. The idea of the function, says Spengler in his *Decline of the Occident*, is indicated in no other culture (Spengler, 1996: 101).

Alongside this, another (non-primitive) idea came into the world, a Promethean promise: universal management. Not just 'management' – which others perform too in their (modest and non-progressive) attempts to manipulate their respective environments – but universal management. To manage it all, from simple work routines to complicated genetic experiments; the mythic idea, and hope, to achieve a world as function. Since this would mean total control, and thus, man's total domination over any

world as it is, from the molecular micro-cosmos up to missions to outer space. But first of all, this would ensure a true *creatio continua* (next to God), the generation of a man-made world on an ongoing basis. Maybe in a vectorial world, only change is reliable, but now, we have it in our own hands again (the etymological root of 'management'), we can master even change. It became change; planned by us, controlled by us, performed by us. And, unlike the primitive, not by some outside nature we are subjected to. In fact, we became our own Gods. There is no need to be anxious any more; a primordial world which had been portrayed by mythologists as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, a great vast emptiness threatening human kind, it does not threaten us any longer. Instead, it became the object of study of mythologists or the *topos* of fantasy movies; a fairy tale, nothing more. To pinpoint an entire Occidental mythogenesis in short words.

By its inner logic, a world as function is the prerequisite of the world as artefact; to realise the latter is an expansive and encompassing way, I need a proper instrument to do so – next to a mythology delivering me the justification for doing so at all. Will without power is useless, that is, without the proper means to achieve the wanted. Especially with a look at the starting conditions in Occidental man's *illo tempore*, means are urgently needed. Since then, contrary to the above image of a harmonic Greek cosmos, which was broken apart by 'the religious conception' (our Judaeo-Christian heritage besides the Greek one), it has been conditioned not in favour of man. If we interpret the events narrated in Aischylos' tragedy as the representation of an archetypal cast of mind characterising Occidental mankind, the world depicted at mankind's dawn is not harmonic, not at all. It is a world of fight, a place where the fittest is yet to be found. It is a place populated by three competing major species equipped with *logos* the capability to understand; the Titans, the newly arrived Olympic Gods, and humans. And after his victory over the old endogenous residents – the Titans, the new ruler in power, Zeus, doesn't like human kind. Let them live in the dirt and eat their meal uncooked, he says to his companions; in fact he hopes that all mankind will perish one day. Aischylos brings the theme of the tragedy to its point when stating that for man, it would be better not to exist at all. This is not hopelessness of desperation but objective result of the myth – man is weaker than his competitors because he is just simply less competitive than those mighty Gods. He does not fit into the existing balance of power, a despicable one-day genus struggling for bare survival. An a-cosmic being that has no genuine place in this world.

Equally, Prometheus had no high opinion about the humans. His larceny of fire had political reasons: Prometheus, whose name, like Lucifer, means 'bearer of light', was one of the former rulers; he needed mankind for his plans, probably a *coup d'état* against the new order of powers imposed by the Olympic Gods. He too was convinced of the humans' objective worthlessness, but he also knew that the larceny of fire could not be revoked by Zeus and demanded back from the mortals once they possessed it. He proceeds like a marketing man, shrewd, clever and convincing: using his *logos* as the persuasive word (one of many meanings of *logos*), he tells man nothing about his true fate – that the very existence of man has no reason at all, that it lacks any meaning. In fact, he does what other Gods in other tragedies also used to do, states Blumenberg (1996). He works with blindness, pretence, the illusionary vision. Consciously, he is to pose an error in the world: Prometheus' form of *ate*, 'the doom' – for tragedians, a

Goddess of fate causing all passionate deeds done in a state of mental blindness – consists in a particular technique: in illusion. Passing down the fire to it, he provides mankind with ‘the blind hopes’ (Aischylos). Hopes which might prove to be untrue, never to be realised; but nevertheless, developing a causality by their own, in further histories’ run. On the other hand but related to it, Prometheus’ deed caused an irreversible change: the emergence of what we call culture. By that deed, he raised the former one-day genus into the status of a world power, which even Zeus was not able to make invisible again. This was the Promethean offence against the cosmic order: to have made the best out of a bad thing. In transforming man’s objective worthlessness – from a state which comprised nothing more than the bare capability to exist, into one of being worthy of existence. But still worthless in real terms; a marketing trick. The summary:

By their nature, men are as dumb as animals, not worthy of existence. Zeus wants to demolish them and is confident that they will not endure, in their state. Now it is Prometheus who, first of all, makes humans into human beings...an interpretation of fire as the creative and inventive capability, because it is the premise for the transformation and melioration of all matters of nature. Hence, culture is a way...of raising autonomy. Prometheus is author of mankind through fire; it is their *differentia specifica*, like it will be again in anthropological palaeontology. (Blumenberg, 1996: 338; emphasis in original)

To transform all matters of nature, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the former dirt he lived in, via a divine trick. We should see this symbolically, it is not so much about fire but what it represents in both myth and science – it is about a *logos* of creation, of autonomy, through enabling mankind to erect a reign by its own. *Nomos*, the man-made law (‘autonomous’ stems from this, the capability to make one’s own laws), versus *physis*, ‘the ever-growing’ nature. Although all this might be an illusion, according to the not very optimistic tale told here.

Nomos vs. *physis*, the first step of a Promethean emancipation. From now on, *physis*, the natural world of the organically (‘naturally’) growing, obeying its own causalities of self-organisation and dynamics, becomes opposed to *nomos*, the man-made law, the planned conception imposed upon those ‘naturally growing’ phenomena, the world of culture, of the civilised man. At the age of Aischylos, the first Occidental city appeared which showed a completely rectangular town-plan, that is, designed entirely by rational criteria (in nature, there are no right angles). *Nomos* vs. *physis*. With this bifurcation, the departure of man from nature had begun; the world of the purposeful, of will and conception, a world of the (intended) control, against the prime ontological state of the unplanned, which remains by itself. It is a kind of secondary autonomy, of culture against the prime autonomy of nature; since nature, too, is autonomous, albeit in other ways than we want it.

We should remain here for a while, to clearly envisage the consequences. The victims of which we are, if we translate this mythical distinction *nomos-physis* into the actual modalities of the today’s world as it is. Caused by that Promethean mythology outlined in the foregoing, in particular after that mythology got enriched by ‘the religious conception’, the monotheist idea of a *Logos* of the One: that there should be One, and not many – the one organisation, the one management, the one right way to live (in either capitalist or socialist version); us, the civilised, vs. the remainder, the pagans. All

in all: that there should be unity instead of diversity, the simplicity of best-laid plans ('culture') vs. the complexity of natural states. Because *physis*, the naturally growing, is not only the Outside – the bare physical forces we try to master with the means of our technique, or the rest of a 'natural' outside world, a residual world of the non-manmade, be it outer space or the Amazon forest. *Physis* is also in the Inside, taking place in the midst of these products we created with Promethean pride and purpose-oriented rationality: the forces of what the planners today coin as system dynamics. The so-called 'informal' organisation of things, a result of our planned conduct. The self-organising dynamics of markets in defiance of any control, for instance, or the phenomena of social disruption we face despite all plans to restrict and to manage them, down to the modern core domain of Promethean man, the individual organisation itself, remaining still complex and unmanageable despite all management efforts to cope with complexity and to trim the ongoing processes 'into line' again. In one word, in the midst of our planned world of culture, we meet the forces of *physis* again.

Hundreds of years after Aischylos, Schelling, the first Occidentalizer to investigate the myth on systematically scientific grounds, said "To tear out from the Being is Evil – to try to escape from the cosmic order in existence" (Schelling, cited in Safranski, 1999: 40), no matter whether the latter is of divine (the classical view) or a natural-systemic property (our contemporaneous scientific view). Moreover, it's interesting that the Promethean counterpart of our second cultural root, Lucifer, argues in a very similar way to Prometheus: he seduces man in promising him knowledge, the kind of *logos* which is necessary to erect a reign by own means. To recur to a key property of the mythic: both myths tell the same truth.

This might be just superstition; since today we are more advanced, meaning less timid, since we are less religious than our forefathers were. We know more about nature than any generation before, and we know that lightning is no divine sign but electric energy, which can be of use for man. And as regards our systemic entanglements: more helps more. With increasing knowledge, we'll get rid of such side effects. Nice tales, the old mythic stories. We are no primitives. Even if the problem remains – the burden of freedom.

And we feel it, as an unthought known reflected in the myth of the lost paradise, with the flight into civilisation, the best was already lost. Provided, of course, that Aischylos isn't correct in assuming that human kind has no genuine place in this world. But it may be that neither version, the pessimistic or the optimistic one, is of help for us – we have to stay here, a Promethean king and slave at the same time, in the midst of our self-induced world. *We have to continue*. Since we cannot return; the Promethean world we generated has caught us – systemic entanglement.

Further Developments

In terms of the mythological epistemology developed so far, the Promethean promise gave rise to a myth of *logos*, with all its concomitant consequences – of a peculiar *logos*. But to this later. As said earlier, first it needs a myth to quest something at all, and then,

the accompanying *logos* will happen of its own accord, in both its dimensions of an overall meaning and an instrumental capacity. First, to the myth: it was not just the promise to achieve a world as artefact; this could mean many things, and not all of them are positive, as we meanwhile have realised. Behind the world as artefact lies another promise even more convincing: that it is possible, through creating such a world, to gain unlimited freedom; a freedom from constraints, from the severity of life. And even more, that it is possible to gain that on an individual basis; that it must be possible – through the proper application of a new *logos* – to free the individual, the single being formerly living in the dirt (no matter whether in Aischylos' or today's contexts) from those constraints. It is the myth of Occidental freedom: that the individual is liberated to do what it wants, wherever, and whenever it wants. With its latest (albeit consequent) post-modern outcome: the myth that freedom equals easiness. That the individual has no longer to live in the dirt of its circumstances, that it is free to raise from pain, into a status to lead a fully self-determined life. Be individual. 'Be Yourself', a recent advertising tells us. And that, so the Titanic promise, not only from time to time, but forever – fully self-determined, this is the point, from the Titan over Kant, the Romanticists, Marx, the '68-movement and others down to recent advertising.

The modality to achieve this may differ either through individuals in groups – the *polis*, the socialist commune, or other variants of the ideal state – or through real individual individuals, as we know them from the Puritan movement or, more recently, Capitalism. But, in a way, this is not so important; this concerns the question of deviations at a mere operative level. What counts is the promise as such – the myth of freedom.

But how to achieve this, in principle? Such an ideal of the Titan can be gained only if a certain logic finds application. It is a question of the proper *logos* to achieve this new, and overall, meaning. To erect a world as artefact via a world as function we first need a world as object: our surroundings, whether natural or man-made, are no living entities deserving their own right of existence but dead matter; bare material to be formed according to your will. You, the respective individual, are the boss, not the others. Because it needs manipulation on large scale to reach such a Titanic ideal; it has as prerequisite to objectify – consequently this means to objectify everything. Mass and power are twins, it needs large masses to reach the maximum amount of work (in the physical terms of this new *logos*), i.e., the larger the masses over which you are in command, the larger your power. A simple relationship of physics, a basic algorithm of manipulation applicable everywhere, from physical operations to employees. The *logos* of engineers. This has an unprecedented range of application: from natural to social engineering. In order to objectify, you need another algorithm: the one of analysis – in its Greek origin 'analysis' means to dissolve the phenomena of this world, to break the existing entities apart into their fragments. This is the birth of science as we know it, because this is its basic myth: the certainty of faith that everything can be analysed. After that you can synthesise them again – to put the fragments together as you wish. But this will be easier – more 'efficient', in modern language – if these fragments are uniform. The more uniform they are, the easier they can be controlled, which in turn will ease the exercise of your power and, by that, will enhance it. This is the second important relation between mass and power with great practical applicability, from Lenin to Henry Ford. Finally, the Titan closes; if you obey these simple basal rules, you

will be able to reach individual freedom – your final mythic goal. Because now, equipped with this new *logos*, you can start – to erect a reign via *poiesis* and *techne*.

What is *poiesis*? The ability of man to mould reality, to form things in accordance to his purposes (from where our word ‘poetry’ originates: man’s capability for conceptualisation). *Poiesis* relates to *praxis*, man’s acting inside his new second nature, the environment of his polis; and to *techne*, the ‘technique’ as we know it. First, *poiesis* was a genuine capacity of nature from which man had copied it, then: the natural, as a *physei on*, became a technical Being, the *techne on*, that what ‘technically’ is, what has been erected, the constructed: that what has been made (Mittelstraß, 1981: 40). These are, perhaps, interesting mythological connections which reflect the human’s general line of supposed evolutionary development towards a progressive state of civilisation, from the perspective of an Occidental vista. A peculiar world view comes to unfold here, a specific *logos* of ideas, which later on evolved into an entire imagology.

In such respect the conception of *techne* is explicative. It is an instrumental ability, the ability to construct something, in the meaning of a virtually technical, that is, trained, learned ability. Opposed to the *mythos* which can only be ‘revealed’, in that it requires some deeper way of comprehension – or opposed to a *Logos* in its dimension of an ‘overall meaning’, which requires this too – *techne* embodies an ability which can be *learned* and, thus, becomes accessible to everybody who meets the minimal requirements. In enabling a consciously guided, deliberate performance, *techne* comprises not only craftsmanship, the capacity to construct something; but, since it belongs to *poiesis*, it is the ‘creative art’ as such, the art of *creating* something *anew* in an *encompassing* manner (Hoffmeister, 1955: 603; Heidegger, 1990: 16f.). The italics shall indicate those aspects which have – ages after that first formulation of Occidental technical properties by our Greek ancestors – generated today’s cosmos; closed like the old one, but in quite other ways – a recent *machina mundi*. Marcuse, in his *One-Dimensional Man*: “When technique becomes the universal form of material production...it defines an entire culture, it projects a historical totality – a world” (Marcuse, 1970: 18).

To better understand this statement, one should notice that *techne* comprises not only the manufacturing of screws, or apparatuses, but every kind of a learned, trained instrumental ability; *techne* encompasses every kind of activity which requires algorithms, fixed and repeatable (individual-invariant) procedures to become successfully performed, whether it concerns the erection of the temple of Zeus, or the application of certain management techniques. In its original Occidental understanding, its essence is creative engineering, no matter what, or who, is engineered. If we understand ‘production’ in a wider sense, then it equals every appliance of algorithms aimed at the production of fixed results. Well in line with the Titan’s promise. Because the nature of technique is nothing technical, Heidegger said that “it depends on the mythology in question over which domains of life, and to what an extent the appliance of technical procedures stretches out” (1990: 9). A simple arrow and bow is ‘technique’ already – but so too is the performance of genetic experiments, or the use of certain scientific procedures, or the combustion mechanisms used in the KZ. All of this is technique; a weapon of Promethean power. In itself, technique is a mechanical issue, from the Greek *mechane*, a means of help ready for human usage, primarily applied in

the art of warfare (little wonder, in a cosmos conceived as highly competitive), but also in any other domain where some definite results have to be reached. Mechanics is the practical knowledge of how artificially composed entities are working, what their effects are; and a *mechanike techné* is not about the working of natural entities but of artefacts which have been designed to reach exactly that what nature isn't able to deliver; it is the application of unnatural processes (Mittelstraß, 1981: 59).

This is, then, an understanding of mechanics which enabled the so-called scientific revolution in the 17th century and led to our basic conception of the 'natural sciences' as they exist today (Mittelstraß, 1981: 61). The myth of a certain *logos*, as a holy, true tale. Enforced through the Christian element, 'the religious conception' named earlier: The divine Platonic-Christian *demiurge* who had created the world like an architect – a cosmos to be understood entirely by rational means, as a *machina mundi* – became man himself; and reason, *logos* as the capability to understand: not only means-end relations, but, by being all-encompassing, it turned into a *forming* one. Now, it became a constructive reason, and mind – in analogy to God – is first of all a 'poetical' mind, a mind that *does* something. An Occidental mind is active, a basic feature it kept until the present day (Mittelstraß, 1981: 46, 50). Ensuring the realisation of the Platonic-Christian myth of a mind being (first) superior to, and (then) ruling over, matter. To condense a long evolution into a short sketch: an evolution which triggered its peculiar self-dynamics and led to today's results, automatically, so to say. For the Greeks, *automaton* is the blind accident, triggered by forces beneath it – our 'automate' stems from there, an instance not just technically coining – forces believed not to occur inside a natural cosmos (Knobloch, 1981: 14).

Results

On these grounds, a myth of *logos* could develop. A myth I experienced in my business practice as the desire to subdue *all* phenomena in this world under the aegis of a functional rationality. All, that's the point; that (by mythic intention) nothing is left outside the latter's reach, is allowed to stay as it is; that, like a king Midas, everything we touch shall become *functional*. Or, formulated in general terms, a certainty of faith that it must be possible (a) to understand *all* phenomena in this world by rational means (analysis), to dissolve them into definite cause-effect chains without remainder; and (b) to make them then functional, to arrange them according to our purposes (synthesis). To fulfil the narrative core of that myth, the Promethean prophecy: that every thing of relevance for our purposes should become functional. Functional rationality as magic ruse to dominate the world.

To put it in a broader historical context: through this kind of development 'nature' lost its meaning to embody the nature of things, their essence; (natural) things became appearances, exchangeable 'objects' to be manipulated. In a mythological interpretation adapted to the aspects looked at here: a bare, mouldable matter of an omnipotent Ego. Or, where this remains impossible or is not of interest, mere appearances of an outer world, a large, extended 'outside me'; the galaxies around us which are so many that we can't even name them – they can only be addressed as catalogue numbers; the people in

the street around me are of no interest at all as long as they don't serve my purposes, an anonymous crowd of other liberated individuals; and so forth. This, then, is a myth of movement that causes today's loss of orientation, not to speak of the Freudian 'disgust in culture' these individuals meanwhile have; the world as a new *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, evoked by our Promethean deeds. A loss based upon a conception of nature as *thing*, and leading to a future and philosophy which a contemporaneous coins as follows: they

solely rest upon the brain, and no longer upon 'natural relations';...the...recourse on an 'order of nature'...has lost its original functions of orientation and legitimisation... The science of the (physical) nature does no longer understand itself as *knowledge of orientation* but establishes itself as *knowledge of disposal*; a development which became possible in the 17th and 18th century, as regards to its theoretical preconditions, but then became real in the course of industrialisation in the 19th century. (Mittelstraß, 1981: 37)

The end point of an evolution which started with such promise; with *logos*, man's capability to understand, standing at the disposal – in all its consequences, a betrayal of Promethean dimensions. The magic ruse to ban Being, to subdue everything of relevance under the same mythical causality seemed to have turned into its curse. Leading to the post-modern *mysterium tremendum* we are confronted with: the society of disappearing, as one author characterised our present state of existence, a world unordered but full of orderly planned details which is in a process to dissolve itself, and with it, us altogether. We read:

Even the most advanced theories of society...refuse to realise one thing: that in the same degree in which technical civilisation is keeping itself alive, it does destroy the conditions of its existence. We went beyond the risk for long – the disappearance of our society will not be stopped. (Breuer, 1999, from the back flap of his work *The Society of Disappearing*)

Now, in line with that Promethean promise, we are free – free from everything. Why should there, asks his brother in mind, Mephisto, be anything instead of nothing? I want to have the primordial state again, the old chaos. And he goes to seduce Faust, the mythic hero of an entire epoch and imagology. And Faust is not saved through becoming wiser, or more modest; or at least more *reluctant* to follow the myth of modernity. He ends up as an *irrigation engineer* (Faust II, the end) – to master the symbolical prime matter of anything, the forces of the unformed, water. Domination as mythical quest, as 'challenge', in post-modern management language, culminating in the hope expressed by Raymond Kurzweil, a contemporary Faust concerned with artificial intelligence, in a recent TV interview: it must be possible to create machines which produce machines by themselves, in a 'natural' process, so to say; the inherent 'unnaturalness' of a *mechanike techne* will turn into a natural state, as a prolongation of Occidental man's *creatio continua* onto itself. The R2D2 from the Star Wars-movie, with its (still) human master, Luke Skywalker; them roaming through the universe as if nothing happened, or would ever happen, in their quest for future Promethean worlds. Nothing *seriously* threatening, because we'll manage it. One has to imagine this. Hubris? Ate? What is it? A new product blend we still don't know? No idea, man! Let's continue.

But despite their dense mythological content, let's leave such everyday emanations of our mythology and go back to the general principle: the reign of technology in a literal sense, of a technical *Logos* manifesting itself. What is taking place here?

Like Dostojewski's gambler, we needed to continue, because we realised that we can't get out of the game, that a retreat isn't possible any more. First of all, the very simple reason is that we cannot destroy the world we erected, the one we live in. So, we have to proceed in its further construction, enhanced through the fact of growth – we need growth to survive at all; of economy, of additional technological gains. All our systems were designed for that, and now, their very viability depends on it. Thereby triggering the above dynamics: the more we proceed, the more we destroy. A collateral damage to be accepted, even if it might grow into an exponential scale. Second, like that gambler, we have been playing for too long. If we would account for our gains and losses, it is only logical to continue, otherwise all the input would be lost. Third, related to the gambler's logic, there is still hope that, by further trials, we will succeed one day, that we will get the jackpot: the fulfilment of the myth of a paradise to be regained by our efforts; that a world as artefact will turn out to be as what was promised to us: a place of freedom where man has succeeded in liberating himself. No matter the variant – either as eschatological paradise, like in the case of Socialism, or as an uninterrupted chain of progressive paradises at our immediate disposal ever more perfected: the instant paradises of contemporary Capitalism. Taken together, these three factors were the ones I heard throughout my business career as to why we should continue. Prometheus is gambling.

This led to a reign of the technical comprising a new quality in the myth-reality relationship – that what system theorists call 'self-reference': probably for the first time in human history a mythology does not only generate (not just 'create', since we have to consider the 'unwanted' side-effects) its concomitant reality in an all-encompassing manner, in a 1:1 mode, so to say, but now reality also reverberates back on the myth in that it constantly enhances it. The world the myth dreams of is not only generated in real terms: myth → reality (quite opposed to other mythologies which only suppose this link), but reality also re-generates the myth on a constant basis and thus reinforces it: reality → myth. Through such a double-sided process a new *kind* of overall reality, a new cosmos, developed, a 'meta-reality', in today's diction: the one of myth ↔ reality. As a whole, the system is completely self-referential and therefore operationally closed; that is, it generates the elements which constitute it as system with the help of those elements it is composed of in both its dimensions (Varela, 1984: 25): the mythic (metaphysics, in Greek terms) and the real (*physis*). As a whole, it is a closed cosmos driven by a vectorial mythology, a closed cosmos expanding. This is unique in human history, leading to so-called 'self-behaviours' of the most diverse kind, as one can easily imagine: once the closure of such a system is reached, i.e., when it exhibits a coherent behaviour emerging from the mutually dependent components, then it automatically takes care of its internal regularities (Varela, 1984: 26) (we remember: the *automaton*). Such a system became literal auto-poietical, it 'makes' itself in a completely self-organised way and by that, became autonomous; which means in formal terms that it produces order in an intra-systemic manner as an emergent product of the system's activities (Probst, 1987: 11, 76). Even if this kind of order might lead to chaos again,

through its uninterrupted sequence of moves ever-more progressive, and ever-more 'perfect', as a whole, the system is autonomous.

So far the formal terms of recent systems theory applied to our present state of being. But in the actual terms of concrete overall realities generated, this too means that the system in question – the world we live in – became resistant to critique in a high degree: A Marcuse, for instance, may write whatever he wants, as long as the system as a whole keeps operating; that is, he might be right with his critique – one can consider it – as long as our BMWs are running, as long as our refrigerators are filled and the TV is working; as long as our present 'consumer society' is kept alive. Or expressed in the general terms of systems theory, and with a look at our concrete human belongings: so-called 'external' constraints, which the system has to fulfil in order to remain viable, had a considerable impact until the 19th century – that is, in mythological as well as practical terms, until quite recently. But with rapid technological progress, these 'constraints' had been increasingly diminished and, today, are no longer of any serious concern; for example, we do not die because of small pox, nor have to struggle with the dangers of a high infant mortality or unhealthy living conditions. In Promethean terms: we freed ourselves from the chains of *physis*, from the physical confinements of immediate threats; for us, freedom became more and more identical with easiness, ease from the forces of an immediate *physis*. In this respect – and only in this one – the Promethean promise turned into truth; into real truth, that's the decisive point here. So, why criticise 'the system'? First of all, serious critique would prevent the system from working properly; in systemic terms, critique becomes a perturbation of the running operations to ensure our way of life. Providing that critique would not seriously affect those operations in real practical terms, it is allowed: may a Marcuse and others say whatever they want. Through that, critique became the matter of professional critics – people located outside the directly productive parts of the system accountable for our material achievements, sitting in their study rooms or working as journalists, for example: people commenting on the system and by that trying to make it ineffective. It plays no role, a politician explained to me, if some intellectuals criticise the system, as long as it keeps on working; or for the imagology outlined here: critique is allowed as long as the gambling process for a better and more manageable world can continue (in fulfilment of the mythos). A faint of critique caused by the system itself, in its pursuit of a mythos of *logos*, through an ever-ongoing fragmentation of reality into narrow, specialised compartments one of which is the caste of professional critics and commentators.

But this is a faint not only present in the domain of critique. It became one of more general value; a touch *sui generis* of contemporaneous man. Two critics comment on this:

Promethean proudness [of man]...consists in owning everything, even himself, exclusively to himself alone. Remnants of this attitude...are alive still today...but they are not characteristic any more. Apparently, attitudes and feelings of other kinds occupied their position; attitudes resulting out of the peculiar fate of Prometheism: the latter experienced a true dialectic turn. (Anders, 1987: Vol.I, 24)

Prometheus won...too triumphantly, so triumphantly that he now, in being confronted with his own work, abandons his pride and replaces it by a feeling of inferiority and misery... He lacks the will to be his own Gestalt and conduct of life and create an environment which is suited to him

perfectly or even solely. Rather, he adopts...the forms of life imposed on him by rational planning and normed machine-products in the, by and large, secure feeling that this is correct. Neither does he feel the desire to live out of his own initiative; rather, he inserts himself into the organisation which is the form of the masses, and obeys the program. (Guardini, 1995: 53)

Another relation between mass and power, in addition to the ones described above, which were aimed at a domination of everything existing. Now, in decisive contrast to the original mythic intention, the existing seems to dominate us, and not vice versa. An ever-increasing gap between us and our products characterised as ‘Promethean incline’ (Anders, 1987: Vol.I, 16). As mentioned, this is not confined to conscious critics; I also experienced it in case of those in charge of the directly productive parts of the system, those managers and employees at different hierarchical levels of ‘the organisation’ who were responsible for keeping the machinery running. They are in pursuit of what Max Weber called a “technical rationality of rightness” constituting the programme (Weber, 1992: 105) – at least in the latter’s official facets; not to speak of those generated by that programme’s self-dynamics – an incline so widespread that an extra term was coined for it: ‘system-rationality’, which is the rationality of systems following their own rules, and not of the men who had triggered them; a rationality of the autopoietical apparatus with its *mechanike techne* that developed its own laws of conduct, not the rationality of a human kind. The *logos* of the machine. And the prime aim of those people ‘in charge’ consisted in finding what was called the *compromise line* – the compromise to make ‘self-destined’ decisions in such a way that the system-rationality is not violated, that the machine can go on operating. Promethean worlds cast in tragic irony. Man as antiquated appendix of his own machinery. A *logos* the impact of which may be revealed when looking at today’s most prominent technical systems.

Let’s tell this holy tale with a glance at its narrative core: since man got civilized, he’s condemned to doom, successively overthrown by the logic of his technical weaponry. He, the victim of his own technique’s products, is a Promethean slave. A tale adopting the form of a prejudice in literal terms, a judgement *ex ante* underlying our deeds (‘praxis’) and perceptions (‘theory’) alike: the myth of a subjugating technique; it is normally unthought but commonly known that, in the end, it is our technique which accounts for all the misery we have to experience in our state of being civilized. The Goddess of technique entirely determined our way of life, which thus became ‘technical’ through and through: that’s the final reason for our ‘disgust in culture’. Since we are technical, we are condemned to faint. The myth tells. A myth I heard very often in my business practice; it is widely spread – throughout nearly all social strata (that is, it is not confined to certain social groupings), from critical intellectuals to common businessmen down to the proverbial ‘ordinary’ man in the street. It is also not confined to peculiar ‘local cultures’, in the terminology of modern social anthropology; I met that myth nearly everywhere, from Western managers to former Socialist officials. Which means, in terms of its spread, the myth is ordinary, not the men. It became a firm component inside the system of a culture’s ‘body of knowledge’ – insofar the culture in question is a technical one. A myth that led to a peculiar mode of a technical rationality of rightness, embodying a ‘rightness’ of its own class: Since we are technical, and hence condemned to faint, we have to obey the programme. Completely. A programme imposed on us by a kind of progress – together with all its concomitant systemic entanglements – we are the victims of. Technique and power, from a mythic perspective. It doesn’t even need a physical apparatus of force; the only force it needs

are our beliefs in it, and the systemic realities (virtual or other) generated out of them. Our perceived basic mode of existence: Promethean worlds out of control. Although each single component of their parts had been created by will and conception, the spontaneous orders of mechanized worlds generated and kept running by mechanized individuals; obeying the powers of their own techniques. What happened to the myth of freedom, Occidental man's original dream to become truly autonomous – with the help of his 'technical' *logos*? Following the lines of his self-assessment, the intended universal application of technique led to technocracy, the unintended but universal reign of the technical; resulting in those one-dimensional worlds contemporary man is now encountered with. Technocracy, a new apparatus of force as its own dimension, emerged in man's evolution, brought about by himself alone.

Final Reflections

The discussion of his *logos* became a discussion about man's technocracy; the mythic roots of that *logos* (and hence, of 'technocracy') getting out of sight. In literal terms, it became a matter of technique, and its reign, respectively: The conceived 'super-structure' of Arnold Gehlen and others, an embracing overall matrix of man's world as it is where all science, technique, industry and society are irrevocably webbed together. Man's artificial 'second nature' technically produced; an image of our civilization – and at the same time, of an entire culture's morality – ranging from Francis Bacon to Ellul's 'technical state' of man's being. A state of ontological character following its morality of the purpose – that everything what can be done has to be done with a knowledge of disposal, to functionalize everything. 'Technique' thus turned into the collective term for the structure of the modern world *per se*, Rapp denotes, and one can imagine that both this perception of reality and its discussion gave birth to a peculiar kind of logic – a logic of man being the fainted prisoner of his self-created autopoietical circuits. To quote a few but coining examples: In his *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse states that in the medium of technique, everything – culture, politics, and economy – has melted together into an omnipresent system, one all-powerful conglomerate which incorporates or repels all (possible) alternatives. "The productivity and growth potential of this system stabilize society and keep technological progress inside the frame of existing power structures. Technological rationality thus became political rationality" (1970: 21). A rather resigned statement. No matter what we undertake, 'the system' does engulf it all; or spits it out, if alien to its chemistry. Schelsky, one of the first main protagonists in investigating the role of man in scientific civilization, says that every technical problem and success will inevitably, and instantaneously, turn into a social and, at the same time, a psychological problem. That is, man is confronted with a regularity of facts he himself generated which now return to him as a social and/or psychological claim; the proverbial boomerang-effect. But it is one that doesn't stop: these claims, he continues, allow for no other solutions than those which are technical again; in the end they are

planned and constructed by man, since this is the nature of the issue that has to be coped with. Man frees himself from natural force in order to subjugate himself again under his own force of production. (Schelsky, 1961: 443)

This shows a Promethean autopoiesis in perfect mode of self-reference; it is man's 'second nature' occupying him completely. And interpreted in terms of the mythic, they also show the tragic irony of a history which, obviously, seems to run in a version adverse to the Promethean promise: in his efforts to free himself, man became nothing but a slave. We can take the above two quotations as symbolic, standing for a cosmos of its own, a closed one. An entire imagology of what we believe 'the world as it is' really to be, plus our attitude against it: We have been all but left in the hands of a technical world.

A cultural reality and its imagology resembling the idea of the world as machine – a tale of mind, power, and reality, culminated into a 'technological' end point. And at the same time, into a myth of technocracy; or better, since more embracing, a myth that technique is everything. To formulate it in the quite broad but (quite imaginative) practical terms of a mythology that got realized inside a whole cultural sphere; in both 'East' and 'West' alike, to cite the two basic Occidental alternatives of how to gain liberation, (former) Socialism and Capitalism, not at all restricted to our contemporaneous 'Western consumer culture', according to the experiences I could gather from both alternatives.

It is a myth which embodies more than simple subjugation. This is only one outcome, just one of the 'exits' it can take; so to say, one of its 'sub-myths' only. As it is the case with any machine, it can have 'bad' and 'good' outcomes alike, and, in the end, it solely depends on the mythological perspective in question what is considered as 'good' or 'bad', respectively. In particular, for a myth of freedom so important for our imagology, the one of a technique encompassing is quite Janus-headed – the 'bad' aspects we had met already; to bring them to their point, coming down to their mythic core: If we unrestrictedly follow the mythic principle of a 'what can be done has to be done', then the application of this maxim leads to nothing but a loss of freedom; together with diverse other kinds of unwanted 'spontaneous orders'. The original myth of freedom changed into its very opposite, leading to the kind of dialectics we envisaged in the above – freedom vs. technique; or in the more general terms of the *logos* characteristic of the latter, freedom vs. the consequent (and spreading) application of that *logos*. A one-sided dialectics with one side gaining preponderance in this fight which is so characteristic for our cultural sphere. To interpret this kind of dialectical antagonism in its proper terms means to encounter the mythological.

On the other hand, less critical, less reflective with regard to the consequences, there is still belief in what we summarize under the notion of 'technique', standing as an epitome for the total of our yet unbroken mythic hopes. There is still a common ground for this imagology, despite all individual differences: the myth that, despite its cumulating 'negative side-effects' (in management language), technique is still supposed to lead to freedom. To pinpoint this belief, naming its narrative core, its inherent dialectic circle of enhancement: the more we apply this kind of *logos* in terms of both spreading diversity and intensity, that is, the more 'free' we get, the more the circle of freedom becomes restricted. It is a myth paving the way for yet an additional dialectics, the one of its own kind of progress: the myth that progress as such equals technological progress; thus, progress becomes the sole matter of applying a certain 'technology'. It is a myth taken literally and, first of all, for granted.

This, then, portrays our mythic beliefs in 'technique', the believed genuine product of our *logos* and Occidental man's freedom. They are pinned down in a schematic manner, in all their contradictory dynamics. It is a dynamics which again led, as an emergent phenomenon, to the genesis of still another dialectics taking place on the 'meta-level' (in modern diction) – namely the antagonism between these two circles. Comprising an entirely new quality of antagonism that remains unsolvable: On one hand, we believe that technique leads to progressive freedom and is a guarantee for progress as such; on the other, we know that there has been a basket full of side-effects, of 'collateral damages'; that we haven't been liberated at all. We know that the world as machine is not necessarily a world of freedom, but for sure a world of machines. Or, to express it in the terms of understanding our other cultural root: Occidental mind succeeded to create the realities of its matters.

All in all, a world of the Promethean double bind. And it is instructive to see how far, and how encompassing, this world has spread out and continues to spread out into Occidental man's 'post'-modern age, which faces such heavy contradictions, settling upon a mythology of deed, and of greed altogether (which formerly was, as a product of Ate, one of the seven deadly sins humans could do). Luke Skywalker performing his Star Wars as a mythic hero of our times can be looked at everywhere, from India to New York. An ideal of Occidental man that has become global; a profane Prometheus promising us the very same things as his forefather did: that there are no limits to the total and all-encompassing liberation of man.

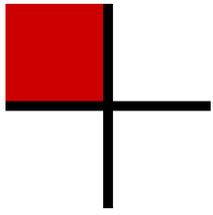
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Spaces of Consumption: From Margin to Centre

Alexander Styhre and Tobias Engberg

abstract

Organization theory is very much focused on the internal organizational processes of production of space, that is, the use of and inscription of social spaces. But organizational space is also a space of consumption, a space in which meaning is produced through the relations of certain items, entities and symbols. This paper is an attempt to align theories of consumption and space in order to show that just as organizational spaces are produced, they are equally being subject to an aesthetic of consumption. Consumption and consumerism has been examined as an embodied experience, as a political strategy for control, as an ideology pervading everyday and working life, as a social practice, and as a more deeply transformative force in late modern society. Some writers are very concerned about consumerism and its effects on society, while others embrace the new consumer-driven economy. Consumerism is not very often examined from a spatial perspective in organization theory. This paper aims at conceiving consumption as being essentially embodied and spatialized, distributed across entities, spaces, symbols, and practices of consumption.

Introduction

In this paper, space is defined in accordance with de Certeau's (1984) distinction between place (*lieu*) and space (*espace*). De Certeau writes:

A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which the elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence... A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. A space exists when one takes into consideration the vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables... In short, *space is a practiced place*. (1984: 117)

For de Certeau (1984), space is what is practiced, what is produced. Thus de Certeau speaks, just like Lefebvre (1991), of 'spatial practices', of production of space. Space is what is produced through interaction; it is what is becoming through practical undertakings and activities. Next, this paper makes use of a conceptual framework including the notions of production and consumption. These two terms are inextricably entangled. In Marxist theory, consumption plays an important but somewhat neglected role. For Marx, production and consumption are always presupposing and implicated in one another. Marx and Engels write that consumption is products becoming

“appropriated by individuals”. In addition, “production is simultaneously consumption as well” and “consumption is simultaneously also production” (1970: 129):

just as in nature the production of a plant involves the consumption of elemental forces and chemical materials. It is obvious that man produces his own body, e.g., through feeding, a form of consumption. (*ibid.*: 131)

Marx and Engels thus offer a dynamic view of consumption as being a component of production and the other way around. Consumption is therefore not an isolated process. de Certeau agrees with this view and writes:

In reality, a rationalized, expansionist, centralized, spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production called ‘consumption’ and characterized by its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility, since it shows itself not in its own products...but in an art of using those imposed on it. (1984: 31)

Both space and the duality production/consumption are thus dynamic concepts based on practices. When the notion of spaces of consumption is employed in the paper, it is used in this fluid and fragmentary manner, both embodying a produced space and the dual nature of consumption (i.e., consumption as the termination of production/consumption as a form of production). Spaces of consumption are in brief; a space of becoming, a space where consumption is taking place, where commodities are appropriated and used. Thus the notion of spaces of consumption is not intended to serve as a fixed and ready-made construct but rather to serve as an ideal type model for an emerging form of social space.

In organization theory, space is generally treated as a domain of production: Organizing is spatial practice aimed at production. The Marxist view of consumption as production (exemplified by de Certeau’s example – also discussed by Roland Barthes – of the reading of a text wherein the text is becoming produced through its consumption, its reading) is not thoroughly theorized. Therefore, the notion of spaces of consumption may be used to reintroduce a less “productivist view” of organization space (see Collins, 2003: 191-192). A space of consumption is an organized, cultural and economic space, marked by practices (see de Certeau, Girard and Mayol, 1998). In addition, it embodies aesthetics and ethical issues; a space of consumptions is thus a polysemic and heteroglot space comprising a multiplicity of qualities. In summary, organizing is a spatial practice aimed at producing spaces of consumption just as spaces of production. The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the qualities of such a space of consumption.

Spaces of Consumption

Walter Benjamin’s massive torso, *The Arcades Project* (1999), was one of the first works to actively theorize the relationship between space, aesthetics and consumption. The architecture of the arcade, popularized by the Parisian Haussmann architecture, precedes the late modern aesthetic of consumer space. In the arcade, the goods are on display at the same time as the *flâneur* is capable of passing through the arcade as an autonomous, enterprising, and choosing subject. Consumption becomes an aesthetic

experience; space and consumption are merged in the spatial practice producing spaces of consumption. The visual qualities of the arcade architecture enable a spatialization of the goods, a display and spatial distribution in consumer space. Therefore, the arcade is one of the first distinct urban spaces; spaces of production are characterized by rural aesthetics and ethics emphasizing accumulation, the physical transformation of nature. The spaces of production are paradoxically rural spaces located within urban environments. The industrial revolution was orchestrated by the increased productivity in the agriculture sector during the take-off phase. The rural proletariat moved to the urban centers and helped reproduce new forms of rural spaces. The arcade is overturning this assemblage of aesthetics and ethics and makes consumption a spatial practice distinguished from that of the spaces of production. The space of consumption is thus characterized by its *loss of facticity*; its ontological status is never once and for all determined – a certain degree of uncertainty is always present in consumption because of its symbolic qualities. Alluding to the anthropologist James Clifford, a space of consumption “is an itinerary rather than a bounded site – a series of encounters and translations” (1997: 11). In addition, the arcades have a distinct quality of ‘liminality’: they are neither inside (e.g., proper boutiques), nor outside (e.g., open street markets); not a building (representing the private sphere), nor a street (representing the public sphere), but passages *in-between* buildings, a route of transition (see Grosz, 2001; Augé, 1995) – spaces of consumption enabling for goods to be displayed and, at the same time, walking is made possible. Compare with the more recent architectural innovation of the shopping mall. Here, there is no ‘liminality’, no sense of being ‘in-between’: the shopping mall is constituting a center of relations in itself. Thus, there is a difference between the architecture of the modern arcade and the late modern shopping mall: spaces of consumption are becoming the center rather than the margin.

Furthermore, the arcades are symbolic spaces; they are spaces where art is becoming a consumer commodity. Although Benjamin has expressed his belief in the revolutionary potential of the mass-production of art (Benjamin, 1973), in the arcade, Benjamin (1999) argues, art becomes kitsch. Benjamin writes:

Kitsch...is nothing more than art with a 100 percent, absolute and instantaneous availability for consumption. Precisely within the consecrated forms of expression, therefore, kitsch and art stand irreconcilably opposed. (Benjamin, 1999: 395, K3a, 1)

Similarly, Adorno says: “[T]he tension between culture and kitsch is breaking down” (1974: 147). For Eco, kitsch is a “substitute for art”, a *supplement*: “As an easily digestible substitute for art, Kitsch is the ideal food for a lazy audience that wants to have access to beauty and enjoy it without having to make much of an effort” (Eco, 1989: 198). Linstead argues that kitsch is not only a substitute but representative of an anthropocentric, humanist ideology: “The narcissistic properties of kitsch, and the tendency of the familiar to follow a trajectory of deepening approval from the aesthetic (it is comfortable, pleasing) to the moral (it is approved, advocated, required, the natural way of things) underpin a cosmology which positions humanity at the centre of creation” (2002: 664). Kitsch here represents a certain worldview and a *modus vivendi*: a form of hedonism. In addition, kitsch shares some important characteristics with the hyper-real. They both go beyond the immediately observable, the ‘really real’, and they are distinguishing marks of the modern age. For Benjamin, kitsch is debased art; For Eco, the hyper-real conceals the anxieties of the loss of “the authentic”: “[T]he frantic

desire for the Almost Real arises only as a neurotic reaction to the vacuum of memories; the Absolute Fake is offspring of the unhappy awareness of present without depth” (1986: 30-31).

Thus one proposition can be formulated: Kitsch and the hyper-real emerge in the margin, which then moves to the center. Rem Koolhaas (1978) discusses how Coney Island, the seaside amusement resort in Brooklyn, New York, became a site of experimentation for what he calls the “the technology of the fantastic”. In Coney Island, various amusement parks such as *Luna Park* and *Dreamland* were built at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1906, Maxim Gorky visits New York and reports with great contempt: “The City, magic and fantastic from afar, now appears an absurd jungle of straight lines of wood, of cheap hastily constructed toy houses for the amusement of children... Everything is stripped naked by the dispassionate glare, The glare is everywhere and nowhere is the shadow...the visitor is stunned; his consciousness is withered by the intense gleam; his thoughts are routed from his mind; he becomes a particle in the crowd” (Maxim Gorky, cited in Koolhaas, 1978: 67-68). Koolhaas writes:

Gorky’s disgust represents the modern intellectual’s dilemma: confronted with the masses, whom he admires theoretically, in the flesh, he suffers from an acute distaste. He cannot admit to this disgust; he sublimates it by identifying external exploitation and corruption as the reason for the masses aberrations. (1978: 68)

The technology of the fantastic found its laboratory on Coney Island. In the early twentieth century, the technology of the fantastic was transferred to Manhattan, serving as one of the pillars of what Koolhaas calls *Manhattanism*, an ideology of hyper-density and “culture of congestion”.¹ The technology of the fantastic enters urban life. In New York City, the 42nd street became its first site. Today, Time Square is marked by Disney’s products and other representatives of the culture industry. It used to be a sordid place in the 1970s and early 1980s, the tourist guides tell us; today it is a space where the technology of the fantastic triumphs.

The archetypical space of consumption based on the exploitation of kitsch and the hyper-real is Las Vegas. Parisian arcades, Coney Island, Las Vegas – the trajectory of kitsch and the hyper-real in modernity; its movement from the ‘in-between-ness’ of the arcades, the leisure dome of Coney Island to the desert city: initially, all spaces on the margin. Located in the middle of the Mojave desert in Nevada, Las Vegas is a saturated space in terms of symbols (Venturi, Brown and Izenour, 1972; Ritzer and Stillman, 2001; Linstead, 2001). In Las Vegas the entire space is turned into a symbolic space taking the aesthetics of consumerism to its boundaries. Slavoj Žižek writes on capital: “‘Money which begets more money’: Money-Commodity-Money...in short, Capital is Money-which-became-subject” (1993: 27). In Las Vegas, the entire economy is based on the circulation of capital; capital is becoming a subject. The importance of the subject of money is reflected in the symbolic space of Las Vegas. However, it is important to acknowledge the difference between Las Vegas as the ‘Sin City’ and the amusement park it is turned into today. For Taylor (1998), Venturi, Brown and Izenour’s (1972) analysis deals with the culmination of a certain era, that of the ‘Sin

1 It is noteworthy that Koolhaas’ *Delirious New York* was written in the end of the 1970s, when New York City was on the verge of bankruptcy and when urbanism was contested.

City'. For instance, the casinos of the 1960s maintained a strict boundary between inside and outside; the outside was marked by the relationship between cars (their routes and parking spaces) and various signs and symbols directing the traffic. Since the 1960s, pedestrian areas have become a more significant spatial arrangement. Taylor writes:

While Venturi and his colleagues recognized certain similarities between Disneyland and Las Vegas, they never could have anticipated the extent to which the thematization of urban space characterizes the city today. From frontier villages and tropical oases to Mississippi riverboats and Mediterranean resorts, from medieval castles and the land of Oz to oriental palaces and the New York skyline, every hotel-casino is organized around a theme. Fantasies fold into fantasies to create worlds within worlds. (1998: 200)

He continues:

The primary motivation for thematizing Las Vegas is economic. As we have seen, to attract people who had never considered gambling, illegitimate vice had to be turned into legitimate entertainment. Moreover, the city had to be made hospitable to the middle class and their families. The Disneyfication of Vegas is intended to sanitize the city by white-washing its sin and corruption. Far from a den of iniquity, Vegas creates the facade of a user-friendly amusement park. (*ibid.*: 200-201)

Las Vegas has thus moved from the margin to the centre. Las Vegas was dangerous, on the fringe, ruled by the mob. Today, Las Vegas has become one of the fastest growing cities in the US and one of its most popular destinations. This is to say that the idea of the arcade is no longer one of a space 'in-between' streets and buildings; instead, it is becoming the primary space. The space of consumption is thus defeating competing spaces, the order is overturned and the parasitic space, the 'liminal' space of the arcade, is becoming the center of relations. Talking with Derrida (1987), the consumption space is no longer the *parergon*, the surrounding framework that gives order and meaning to the work of art (production in this case), but becomes the work of art itself, turning the normal, non-saturated space into the margin. Benjamin's Parisian arcades were a novel, highly modern phenomenon and architectural innovation. In Las Vegas it becomes an archetype; the arcades are the centre of relations (Venturi, Brown and Izenour, 1972).

Today, Las Vegas is becoming a role model for consumption spaces. Consumerism is blended with technologies of fantastic, hyper-real representations; kitsch and spaces of consumptions are produced. Consumption is no longer a parasitic activity, but is at the center of the economy (Baudrillard, 1998). Spaces of consumption are inscribed with qualities and values: Some talk of consumerism, others of the liberation of consumption.

Aesthetics, Consumption and Space

Gaston Bachelard says:

Imagination is not, as its etymology would suggest, the faculty of forming images of reality; it is rather the faculty of forming images which go beyond reality, which *sing* reality. It is a superhuman faculty. A man is man insofar as he is a superman. A man must be defined by the tendencies which impel him to go beyond the *human condition*. (1987: 15-16)

Man is a creation of desire, not of need, Bachelard says elsewhere (1984). To imagine is to overcome the human condition. Consumption essentially serves the same function. Imagination is based on the capability of leaving the actual in order to embrace the potential; to create images of not *what is* but *what may be*. Following Douglas and Isherwood (1979), one may argue that consumption is imagination in practice; the consumer is becoming through the consumption of signs and symbols, enabling for a potentiality: consumption is a form of social production. They write:

Theories of consumption which assume a puppet consumer prey to the advertiser's wiles, or consumers jealously competing for no sane motive, or lemming consumers rushing to disaster, are frivolous, even dangerous. (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979: 89)

This is an exceptional statement. Normally, the backside of consumption is – for good reasons – being examined and brought into the daylight: its exploiting effects, its dependence on non-egalitarian access to resources, its use of scarce resources (see e.g., Klein, 2000; Schlosser, 2001). Most consumption is a matter of taste (Bourdieu, 1984). And taste is in turn a materialization of relationships of power in a social formation (Veblen, 1994). Therefore, consumption is also an economic issue, an index of the distribution of economic resources in a society (Marx and Engels, 1970). As a consequence, certain forms of consumptions are deplored. The masses, the multitude, the common man, are often claimed not to be able to master their consumption. The intelligentsia (a Russian concept, Holquist [1984: xiii] reminds us) is prone to claim that consumption is a problematic social fact. It is often regarded as being parasitic, in-between production and the *Bildung* (education) favoured by men and women of letters (recall Gorky's contempt for Coney Island). In strict economic terms, consuming a book is not different from consuming a meal in a hamburger restaurant; it is merely contributing to the circulation of capital: but these two items have different social values; high-brow *versus* low-brow consumption. The practices of consumption are therefore subject to aesthetic and spatial practices. Space is never innocent; it is always an integral part of the practices of consumption. Since consumption is inherently political, aesthetic, ethic and economic, spaces of consumption are always produced as a field of forces, exchanges and interactions. Gorky's rejection of Coney Island is representative of the privileged position of the intelligentsia. Spaces of consumption, such as Coney Island, are therefore just as politicized as the spaces of production theorized by labour process theorists. As a consequence, such spaces need to be examined *qua* spaces of consumption.

Douglas and Isherwood (1979) write:

If it is said that the essential function of language is its capacity for poetry, we shall assume that the essential function of consumption is its capacity to make sense. Forget the idea of consumer irrationality. Forget that commodities are good for eating, clothing, and shelter; forget their usefulness and try instead the idea that commodities are good for thinking; treat them as a nonverbal medium for the human creative faculty. (1979: 62)

They continue: "The meaning is the relations between all the goods, just as music is in the relations marked out by the sounds and not in any one note" (*ibid.*: 72-73). Consumption is always a *systemic* concept (see Barthes, 1983); it is not solely located in the very act of consumption, nor is it centered on the very commodity *per se* (Baudrillard, 1993, 1998): it is the totality of different processes and entities.

Consumption is based on the use of symbols that in turn produce meaning in social formations. Consumption of goods *makes sense*; goods inscribe qualities into human beings and forge relationships between individuals. Consumption is therefore *spatialised*, to use Bergson's (1998) term; it is based on the spatial arrangement and organization of consumers into categories, clusters, strata and groups. In a similar manner, space is striated and divided. No consumption without meaning, no consumption without space. Meaning emerges from consumption. This is the point worth making. "What is worth saying once is worth saying twice or more" (Aragon, 1991: 28).

From Margin to Centre

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre (1991) argues that there is no 'facticity' of space; space is not an assembly of *facta bruta*, but space is continuously *produced* through various human actions and undertakings. Adhering to a Marxist tradition of thinking, Lefebvre tends to favour the concept of production ('production of space') at the expense of consumption. In our account, space is not only produced; it is equally consumed or becoming a space of consumption. Consumption is always spatial: it is based on the spatial-aesthetic arrangement, associations, and display of commodities in social space. Consumption is spatial practice. Spaces of consumption are fundamentally spatial constructs, material assemblages constituted by material artifacts, signs, and symbols. Alluding to John Berger's (1972) text on art, we may say that consumption is a way of seeing, a way of perceiving the world (see also Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Spaces of consumption are also heavily monitored spaces; indeed they are subject to surveillance (Bogard, 1998; Lyons, 1994; Davies, 1990). Thus, consumption and seeing become associated. There is an interest in monitoring and determining the trajectories of consumers in spaces of consumption, to examine their movements and activities. The space of consumption is a domain wherein spatial resources are subject to minute economic control and calculation. For instance – this may be a most common sense reflection – why are luxury goods such as perfumes and cosmetics always located on the ground floor in department stores? Do they attract certain groups that are especially prone to consume, or do cosmetics stalls denote glamour and luxury that in turn have the capacity to attract less enthusiastic and dedicated consumers? Here aesthetics and economy become important categories of spaces of consumption. Spaces of consumption are by no means innocent; they are, instead, rather elusive in terms of being fabricated domains designed to attract, to speak with a marketing vocabulary, attention, desire and action. Benjamin's arcades are paradigmatic examples of spaces of consumption because they were designed to enable for spatial practices manifested in consumption. Today's consumption spaces are no longer located in the margins of, or 'in-between', the spaces of production but have become the most important spatial arrangement. Again, the shopping mall appears as its most generic form: a pure consumer space, designed to impress consumers and enable for spatial practice. It is commonplace to argue that meaning no longer derives from the space of production but from the space of consumption (see e.g., Du Gay, 1996); that the Marxist subject shaping his or her life-world through material transformations is an outmoded image of the human subject (cf. Spivak, 1999: 357). In the early 1960s, Guy Debord wrote:

For classical capitalism, wasted time was time that was not devoted to production, accumulation, saving. The secular morality taught in bourgeoisie schools has instilled this rule of life. But it so happens that by an unexpected turn of events modern capitalism needs to increase consumption, to raise 'standard of living' . . . Since at the time production conditions, compartmentalized and clocked at the extreme, have become indefensible, the new morality already being conveyed in advertising, propaganda and all forms of the dominant spectacle now frankly admits that wasted time is the time spent at work, which latter is only justified by the hierarchized scale of earnings that enable one to buy rest, consumption and entertainment – a daily passivity manufactured and controlled by capitalism. (1981: 73)

According to this view, spaces of consumption are no longer produced in the shadow of spaces of production but rather become their role model. Again, a movement from margin to centre may be identified. There are several alarming examples reported that support this idea. For instance, Klein (2000, Ch. 4) reports that American schools have admitted multinational fast-food companies to promote their products on school premises. In addition, such companies are often involved in developing and promoting teaching material. Schools are thus turned into spaces of consumption (see also Hertz, 2001; Ritzer, 1998). Spaces of consumption are the primary domain for the society of the spectacle (Debord, 1977), the society in which consumption plays an important role in terms of veiling the economic and social inequalities and the underlying mechanisms of social reproduction of power. Spaces of consumption are therefore two-sided: on one hand, they are (to some extent) domains for liberation and desire – this is Douglas and Isherwood's (1979) position; on the other hand, they are the stages on which the machinery of social reproduction is played out – Debord's (1977, 1981) position. As a consequence, organization theory researchers need to take this double function of spaces of consumption into account: it is both a domain of liberation and of repression in the same manner as spaces of production are two-sided.

Final Remarks

Welcome to Dachau . . . and welcome to McDonald's (Schlosser, 2001: 233)

(Text in a promotion leaflet distributed at the visitors' parking lot outside Dachau, the first concentration camp built by the Nazis.)

In Benjamin's view, consumption spaces of the nineteenth century were located in specific domains of shared social space. In today's society, consumption spaces tend to colonize domains that have previously been sheltered from what Baudrillard (1998) calls the institution of consumption. In spaces of consumption – by definition, according to Benjamin – the boundary between the domain of art (the realm of purity) and that of kitsch (the realm of symbolic saturation) dissolves. McDonald's enters the concentration camp, which today is supposed to be an historical site suited for reflection and redemption. There is a most disturbing irony here; the space of mass production of death (Bauman, 1991) and the space of mass production of food come together in one single site. The boundary between the sacred and the profane (Durkheim, 1995) becomes violated. This is not only an ethical violation to our agreements but also an aesthetic gesture that one may refuse. Nothing frivolous at these historical sites; no Ronald McDonald clowns, no fast-food promotion, no 'Happy Meals'. Writing poetry after Auschwitz is perverted, Adorno (1981: 34) argued. What about promoting fast-

food at its entrance? If nothing else, this is a sad example of how different spatial practices may clash. Benjamin's (1999) arcades are no longer parasitic spaces gnawing on the roots of the spaces of production, but become the center of relations, a centre where 'money becomes subject'. Marx and Engels (1970) insistence on seeing the mutual relationship between production and consumption is here manifested in the confusion of consumption and production spaces. One may argue that the problem is that consumption spaces are colonizing social space, that we see possibilities for consumption expanding into domains that previously have been excluded from consumption. The food court enters the museums (for example, the Tate Modern in London, a reinvention of the arcade in an old production facility), the cathedrals and the national parks. But there is also a movement in the other direction: shops are becoming museums and tourist attractions (for example, the renowned New York City Prada Shop designed by Rem Koolhaas/OMA). Brands on display in places previously not thought of. The meaning and aesthetics of such spaces and its propensity for surveillance will follow. Thus, we may be further departing from the free exchange of liberal ideologies of consumerism and the free choice advocate (see Bourdieu and Haake, 1995; Bourdieu, 1996).

Speaking from an organization theory perspective, organizations are not only making use of space in their production of services and artifacts. Labour process theorists have been successful in examining the production spaces of the organization. Organizing is a spatial practice (see e.g., Hernes, 2003), a production of space, and therefore it is, when following Marx and Engels (1970), also a consumption of space. The duality between production and consumption may be a fruitful domain for investigation. Rather than leaving the analysis of spaces of consumption to the field of cultural studies, organization theory can engage in analyses of the production of spaces of consumption.

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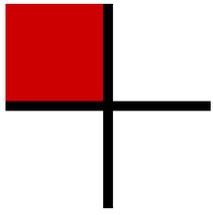
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Organizational Space/Time: From Imperfect Panoptical to Heterotopian Understanding*

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abstract

Within the managerial arena the last century can be characterised, or perhaps caricatured, as being concerned with the pursuit of control and efficiency. In this pursuit space and time were treated as *a priori* categories that have been commodified, rationalised and considered deterministically. The last two decades have, however, seen an increasing emphasis on the role of the intangible intellectual, emotional and attitudinal properties of organizations. While organization studies, and theory building, shifted in favour of these intangible factors, mainstream authors, together with many in the managerial community, continue to ignore these studies except where they contribute to establishing further control. Consequently many have critiqued contemporary management practice as exercising total, panoptic, control over the time/space of employees. While accepting the rhetorical strength of these studies, we argue that control is necessarily imperfect, as disorder remains immanent in the construction of order and is subject to its own process of becoming. However, the suggested 'imperfect panopticon' itself falsely dichotomizes important aspects of spatial/temporal experience in placing control against freedom, good against bad. In contrast the conceptualisation of space and time developed in this paper suggests these categories should be understood theoretically as complex and post-rational. We seek to inform an emergent heterotopian theory/practice that embraces complexity and ambiguity, proposing a new perspective that we believe is significant for innovation, knowledge and power.

Introduction

The emergence of the rhetoric of the 'post-bureaucratic' organization has led to an increasing emphasis on the role of the intangible intellectual, emotional and attitudinal properties of organizations. As postmodern organization theory has engaged with the complexities and ambiguities of the relationships of people, organization and these intangibles, the theoretical debate on them has largely excluded consideration of the contribution of the physical context of organization (Baldry *et al.*, 1998; Hatch, 1987, 1997), and issues of spatial and temporal resources of the organization have largely been taken for granted (Styhre, 2001). Some from academe consider that, within the

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practice arena, time remains largely commodified (Hassard, 2002) according to chronological measures, and space remains subject to measurement and allocation as a setting (Goodsell, 1993) and structure (Baldry *et al.*, 1998) for governance and control. Others, however (e.g. Becker and Steele, 1995; Duffy *et al.*, 1993; Duffy, 1997), consider that new forms of physical design enable freedom from Taylorist (Taylor, 1911) physical and chronological constraints within new forms of post-Fordist (Duffy *et al.*, 1993) workplace.

In seeking to develop a complex understanding of how resources of time and space can both enable and constrain organizational action, we critique the simplistic view of space and time as simple *a priori* categories available for manipulation and control. We examine the way that both space and time can be understood as an arrangement of symbolic and expressive markers, evoking sensations, thoughts and memories amongst the actors that experience them (Butler, 1995, Gagliardi, 1992). Such markers provide a rich typology, ranging from the overtly physical to the transient and ephemeral.

Adopting process metaphysics, we build upon Lee's (1998) conceptualisation of organization as a representational activity designed to slow the infinite speed of the world creating areas of relative stability. We consider how organizations develop processes running at multiple speeds, and how the numerous timings created through these varying speeds lead to an ever-lengthening 'smear' of organizational practices consisting of multiple speeds, times and places. We observe that the contemporary organization can be viewed as endlessly trying to control its context through the creation, reconfiguration and destruction of these spatial and temporal resources. Disorder is argued to be intrinsic to the technologies characterised as exercising total control of the subject, hence the organizational context is better described as an 'imperfect panopticon' (Hannah, 1997). This conception can, however, be critiqued as maintaining the dichotomous setting of 'good' against 'bad', and 'control' against 'freedom'. Instead, we maintain that whilst the organization seeks to control actors within its context, so these actors also control the organization. Here, organization and organizational actors must be conceived postdichotomously, in that the organization is both comprised, and independent of, its actors at one and the same time. Within this conceptualisation, organization, actors, and spatial and temporal contexts of action are, simultaneously, both enabling and controlling of each other.

Developing this discussion, we seek to establish the grounds for consideration of the contemporary workplace within a postdichotomous reality framework (Beech and Cairns, 2001), as a heterotopia (Foucault, 1994); both tangible and intangible, fixed and floating in time and space, good and bad, and enabling and controlling. This we see as being possible – probable – by application of the principles of Janusian thinking (Rothenberg, 1979), in which human beings are capable of holding, and commonly do hold, two contradictory and seemingly irreconcilable propositions as being true at the same time, without conflict, resolution or synthesis. Finally, we posit that these complexities of organizational space/time can only be understood by processes of immersion within them, engagement with them, and through development of pragmatic epistemologies (Calori, 2002), in which researchers and researched share *real-time/real-space* (2002), but with recognition that this occurs within multiple postdichotomous realities (Beech and Cairns, 2001) of contextual thinking/acting.

Conceptions of Space and Time

Modernist theories base themselves on assumptions that spatial and temporal resources are pre-existing 'natural' resources that provide the setting for human action. This position is evident in much of mainstream organizational literature (e.g. Joroff *et al.*, 1993; Johnson and Scholes, 1999). The praxis of this approach is grounded in a rational space/time relationship, seeing these as the contexts of human thinking/acting. Where space and time are discussed, it is almost exclusively in terms of manipulating the former in order to get more output in terms of the latter. Both are understood as simple, singular and unidirectional.

The epistemological assumptions of 'natural' space are rooted in the scientific method – the explicit idea that rational thought can create a 'mirror' of the world through a unitary authoritative knowledge of the world. The instrumental use of time and space that this perspective adopts can be seen most clearly in the early literature on organizations. Taylor (1911) provides perhaps the paradigm example, however, studies on the relationship between workplace environment and productivity extended to both workplace and office (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). For example, in 1919, Vernon (Sundstrom and Sundstrom, 1986) produced studies of the monthly output of five English tinplate factories, as well as the corresponding outdoor temperature, over a six-year period. He concluded that output fell as temperature rose and as a result improvements were made to working conditions. This marrying of economic imperative with (apparently) utilitarian ideals continues to be reflected in contemporary workplace literature where a stream of research (e.g. Bitner, 1992; Aronoff and Kaplan, 1995; Leaman and Bordass, 1997) has sought to explore the relationship between the physical environment and the evaluation of occupancy satisfaction, health and productivity in workplace, concluding that the one had some kind of empirically identifiable influence on the other.

The conception of time employed within the preceding studies is of a linear-quantitative time (Hassard, 1996) an "absolute, true, and mathematical time" (Chia, 2002: 863) available as a commodified resource for planning and control, given value only through the rubric 'time is money' (Lackoff and Johnston, 1980). Hassard (1991) argues that social time is inextricably linked with the normative environment of social life. From the earliest years our actions have been shaped to coincide with the normative timings associated with eating, drinking and sleeping. This socialisation extends into the school, where attendance is regulated into hourly, daily and weekly periods during which activities such as eating and playing are regulated by institutional rules. This school training conditions the individual for the workplace, the individual having learned to accept 'chrono-logical', coordinated clock time as a necessary part of social life and a major element of organization.

As previously argued, 'natural' conceptions of time and space provide the backdrop for much of contemporary organization theory. Both 'resources' have been, and continue to be, the site of ongoing attempts to simultaneously control both the context, and the actors within it. Yet the treatment of these as 'natural' resources, in which scientific rationalism establishes control, is not the sole paradigm for either resource. For space in particular, the ideal of defined behavioural outcomes – particularly employee

productivity – through management of organizational space has become the ambition of management, in support of wider business objectives such as improved efficiency, effectiveness, output, etc over time. Our discussion now examines evidence that time and space are equally organised and controlled by those who occupy the workplace.

In contrast to earlier perspectives, contemporary researchers in space and time have examined the socially constructed nature of both categories. Addressing space first, researchers have investigated the ways in which the diverse physical artefacts of, and social interactions within, the workplace are used by people (Turner, 1971). Unlike the assumptions of ‘natural’ space, no assumptions are necessarily made about the deterministic impact of physical or other aspects of the working environment. Rather, the space of artefacts emerges from the interplay of artefacts and the emotional responses of the individuals within it. For example, based on observation of social behaviour in a study of library reading rooms, Sommer (1969) found that occupants established personal space through sitting in such a way as to discourage others from approaching them, by creating boundaries through the arrangement of their personal effects, or by establishing rights to particular seats by regularly occupying them for significant periods of time. According to Sommer (1969), these ‘occupation rights’ are likely to be enforced through social support from other regular users. In organizational settings these rights manifest themselves in the personalisation of the working area as a visible expression of an individual’s identity, interests and ownership (Aronoff and Kaplan, 1995; Elsbach 2001). These territorial rights are jealously guarded often in spite of formal management policies.

The subtle differences in physical artefacts are often imbued with personal or social meanings. These meanings are not limited solely to the personal technology of the office, but extended to the physical and architectural setting. Thus organizational artefacts, their physical setting and social interaction help shape the cultural values, beliefs and norms of the organization and create the landscape of organizational identity – its ‘organizational space’ (Strati, 2000a: 118). In these terms, organizational space and its artefacts are akin to a literary text reflecting the authors intentions and personality (Ward *et al.*, 1989). Indeed Hillier (1996: 129) uses the term ‘intelligibility’ to differentiate between different spatial configurations. These ideas have been influential in the design and management of the workplace, bringing a new emphasis on patterns of movement and interaction in the developing context of the rhetoric of the knowledge economy (e.g. Grajewski, 1993; Duffy, 1997; Arge, 2000).

Although the artefacts of the workplace – walls, cups, machines – are generally recognised for their utility, often they both invoke a response – ‘that ugly photocopier’ – and are invested with emotional qualities – ‘my miserable computer’, or ‘that cosy room’ (Fineman, 2000: 2). Strati (2000b) is careful to distinguish between sensory responses – which he attaches to the aesthetic experience – and emotional responses, which he sees arising from psychic rather than sensual origins.

Equally, Lefebvre (1991) distinguishes between objectively defined space – ‘spatial practices’ – and more subjectively defined mental, cognitive or ideational spaces – ‘representations of space’. He posits that the interaction of these two creates lived space – what he describes as ‘space of representations’. He concludes that space is never

empty and always embodies diverse meanings for the actors who share in it. Space may be physical and geographical, but 'space' is also a metaphor for people's range of intention and understanding – things seen, but also things thought. Thus organizational actors may find both freedom and control within the spatial constraints within which they operate. Indeed, as Surman's (2002) study reveals, the transition to homeworking leads many bank teleworkers to recreate the symbolic markers regulating space and time to delineate between home and work, control and freedom.

Research on time has increasingly recognised that 'natural' mono-temporal interpretations of time fail to capture the complexity of organizational practice. The 'periodisation' of sectors of time is most famously identified by Roy (1960) in the example of 'banana-time', the daily ritual of a group of workers in one organization. Gherardi and Strati (1988) go beyond a straight periodisation of time, arguing that their study of organizational times in three companies revealed that, far from being singular and consistent, numerous times existed within the organizational context. These times are distinct from, but in dialectic relation to, external clock time. Gherardi and Strati (1988) argue that the unfolding of time has numerous dimensions of duration. As such, the same event can be interpreted in many ways within and across multiple times. Here, rather than an homogenous clock time imposed on individuals, coordination of activity must be achieved through negotiation of perspectives using temporal boundary objects (representations of linear time) such as timelines in project planning (Yakura, 2002). The organizational context is rich in processes and documents that require temporal coordination (e.g. production plans, financial reporting, performance measurement). Predominantly these are regular and repetitive generating what Moore (1963) describes as the 'rhythms of production'. Moore's analysis reveals the challenges of social action as maintaining a balance between the synchronising of events, such that they occur at the same time in an appropriate place, and the sequencing of action such that events occur in the correct order. For Moore, the coupling of synchronisation, with the required frequency of an action, results in what he terms the *rate*, the structuring of time coupled with the allusion to speed.

Invoking the term speed returns our discussion to 'spatialised' practice (i.e. the rate over which territory is covered) and should alert us to the underlying nature of temporal experience. Time, as it is experienced, is argued by Butler (1995) to rely on the codification of events in memory that bring to present, and projected future, impressions of the importance, duration, frequency and interdependencies that combine to produce the experience of time. It is experienced, not as a regular succession of equal moments as in clock time, but as irregular periods of duration. This parallels Bergson's (1913) phenomenological analysis of 'real' time. For Bergson the constraints of 'natural' clock time generate a response of "the smuggling of spatial metaphors onto the plane of consciousness" (Chia, 1998: 351) leading us to conceive of time as passing from past to present whilst always facing the future to which we advance. 'Real time' is time as it is experienced; as the continuous stream of emotions that arise and subside over a period, the duration of internal sensation. Thus time might 'fly' when you are having fun, but 'drag' when engage in a tedious task. Bergson links this inner duration to memory that accumulates with a growing picture of the individual's past, that constitutes "the heavier and still heavier load we drag behind us as we grow older" (Bergson 1913: 38). Note

that while Bergson gives precedence to the time of experience, this itself relies on a directional and spatialised notion of social time in order to give it meaning.

This discussion of time and space in which both are seen as multiple and subject to negotiation, and/or manipulation, by both self and other would appear to problematise, but not preclude, the notion of space and time employed by those seeking to control the organizational context. This next section seeks to question the very basis upon which the practices of organization are founded, by examining the role of representation, and technology in particular, within an ontology of becoming.

Organizational Stability

To Nietzsche (1968), we mistake as solid and essential that which is in flux, substituting an 'unreal' fixity on what is, for our inability to cope with what has been, and what is to be. If managerial control is to be a reality, it implies the appearance of some kind of stability. Yet in responding by promoting the metaphysics of change that this suggests, Chia (1999) observes that 'all things flow' is one of the most common and vague generalisations that has been produced. Our discussion, whilst accepting that all things are in a process of change – becoming and perishing – seeks to examine this 'flow' by considering the notion of speed. Firstly, we consider the possibility of achieving a general stability by escaping the process of perishing altogether, and hence uncover the infinite speed of disorder. Secondly, we debate the possibility of the slowing of reality to achieve relative stabilities. Lastly, through a discussion of the way in which rhythms and artefacts contribute to the maintenance of these stabilities, we describe the impact of our conceptualisation of fragmented time on control within the 'single' enterprise and on the organizational actor.

Conventionally, organization seeks to eliminate the disorder of the world by the endless pursuit of a 'solution'. Lee's (1998) essay on the nature of stabilities in social theory seeks to problematise this notion. Lee follows Cooper's (1993) examination of whether the 'temporal reversal' resulting from the modelling, rehearsal and testing of events can be extended, such that a general 'techno-fix' is developed that would allow humanity to outpace the disruptive influence of undesigned change. Adopting Cooper's argument, Lee (1998) maintains that in constructing representations, we are building extensions of bodily parts and functions that blur the distinction between human and non-human, by folding interior and exterior into one another. Lee demonstrates that although the 'convenience' of technology allows the subject to withdraw from the world (and the disorder this brings), the subject cannot stand apart from the world and is at once constructor of, and constructed by, the technology by which he hopes to withdraw from the world. Thus, far from being able to achieve an 'escape velocity' that would allow us to outpace disorder, we reflect our representational understanding of the world which brings with it disorder's trace (Cooper, 1990). Our pursuit of the techno-fix is therefore fruitless as the world proceeds before us, like a horizon, travelling at infinite speed.

The foregoing might seem to preclude any durable form of stable large-scale organization. What is conceded by Lee, drawing this time on Serres (1982), are

localised 'bundles of times' – pockets of stability in which meanings and categorisations remain stable over extended periods of time. Chia (1999) argues that an expanded view of organization as an activity rather than a given might reveal the “interlocking acts of ‘arresting’, ‘locating’, ‘regularising’ and ‘stabilising’ arbitrary portions of an intrinsically fluxing and transforming ‘real’” (Chia, 1999: 210). In the process of naming and differentiating an entity, we capture an area that has its own process of becoming and perishing. Thus, rather than being a dualistic choice between infinite speed or stability, multiple speeds can be said to exist, at the same ‘time’, without conflict or contradiction until the ‘will to power’ (Nietzsche, 1968) requires the alignment and synchronisation of them.

It is worth considering at this point the implications of this conceptualisation for the model of a ‘single’ organization. Such an organization is differentiated from its competitive environment and would seek to move at a slower speed than its context. However, rather than presenting a consistent and coherent body, there are a variety of speeds at work in the firm, as well as multiple pockets of stability overlapping, and partly synchronised with, other areas inside and outside the formal organization. We might, in two dimensions, visualise the organization as an ever-lengthening ‘smear’ where practices in those functions most concerned with control, for example accounting, chase the horizon most vociferously but, paradoxically, by being the most highly organised, have the slowest speed. In order to ensure the continuity and cohesion, organizations attempt to secure the elements in place by installing practices designed to arrest and locate the company in space and time. For Cooper and Fox these practices constitute *glossing*, “a socially instituted, socially controlled way of fixing the mobile” (1990: 578); a fixity that can never fully capture the world, and that will inevitably succumb to the mobile. Cooper and Fox argue that the processes of forecasting, planning and decision making are not simply the ‘temporal reversals’ of our previous discussion, but are abstractions, isolated from their ‘real life’ contexts, that are glossed and presented as objective.

Discussion

Control remains the *sine qua non* of modernist perspectives on management action (Czarniawska-Joerges 1988), and as organizational time and space expand to become ubiquitous – ‘24/7’ working in the ‘virtual office’ – arrangements and techniques that enable continual control over workers activities have been sought in management. Foucault’s (1977) analysis of the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham’s vision of a perfect disciplinary prison, has become the central metaphor for a string of writers wishing to critique contemporary control techniques (see McKinley and Starkey, 1998 for review). In the panopticon the prisoner is located such that she is exposed to observation, either from her fellow prisoners or from an anonymous and invisible authority, located, but unobservable, within a central watchtower. The perfection of the ‘disciplinary gaze’ reputed to be achieved by the panopticon ensures the prisoner endlessly fears retribution and, consequently, exercises a self-discipline that ensures conformity to institutional norms. The space and time that the prisoner inhabits is constantly regulated.

Contemporary organizational practice is argued to provide such a 'disciplinary grid' (Townley, 1994) that exercises totalising control over the subject. However, as Ball and Wilson (2000) note, Foucault offered the panopticon as an example of disciplinary power, and was reluctant to extend the ideas to other institutional settings, seeing the factory as the site of relative, rather than total, normalisation (Gordon, 1986). Thus, critics of writers who have mourned the death of worker recalcitrance as a result of panoptic control, have argued both that the model of subjectivity adopted is limited (Ball and Wilson, 2000) and that, whilst the methods of resistance may have changed in response to new technology, the central problem of control-resistance-identity remains (Gabriel, 1999). Indeed, Hannah (1997) argues that the idea of the panopticon itself operates to maintain 'normality' amongst the already 'normal'. In an analysis that critiques the application of the panopticon in an organizational setting, Hannah concludes that panopticonism exists in many different forms in social life, but argues that the diversity of spatial and temporal locations inhabited by each individual ensures that the 'prisoner' of society is only an inmate in an 'imperfect panopticon'.

Resistance lies both between areas of practice and in the 'imperfection' of the practice itself. The dynamics of this are evident in Ezzamel, Willmott and Worthington's (2001) study of Northern Plant. In 'the factory that time forgot' management could never present the fully worked out account of the operation of the new work practices demanded by workers. This imperfection served successfully as an instrument of resistance for this group. Following our analysis, the partial stabilities proposed by management were ridiculed as contradictory and hypocritical. The fissures in the workers' own stabilities both between themselves and the shop stewards, and between the various skills levels in the factory, were concealed in the act of resistance allowing an apparently complete, and coherent, sense of identity to be maintained (Knights and Willmott, 1985) in the face of contradictory positions.

The reading of space and time presented in this paper is one in which both categories, and the experience of them, are revealed to be constructed within a context that is forever in the process of becoming and change. Indeed, we might observe that the logical extension of our reframing of organization, would be that the actor is driven to pay more attention to an increasingly localised set of activities – result, the compression of individual workspace and the experience of time famines (Perlow, 1999). This would indeed be true apart from the requirements of other sets of actors (the department, the function, the organization) who also demand detailed coordinated action over an ever-widening field – result, the expansion of organizational workspace. Thus, the individual's presence is required in a number of localities and, even when *glossing* techniques are employed, the threat of disorder ensures that, as organization attempts to create stable practices over distance, the requirement for co-presence in a growing number of arenas increases.

The individual as organizational actor is implicated as the force that, individually and collectively, attempts to tame disorder by establishing relationships between concepts, activities, people, ideas and objects. In addition, the actor seeks to maintain these relationships through re-enactment or substitution of a technology in place of the self. These moments are not, however, the result of a centred agency, but rather the result of the writing of the interwoven texture of organization (Cooper, 1989; Cooper and Fox,

1990); texts that are implicitly part of the drive towards stability and yet carry the trace of disorder with them. This interplay of organizational space and time with overlapping forces of localised practices, and wider issues of synchronisation and explanation, creates a *sheath of influence*. Within this, actors are at once constrained, the mechanism of the panopticon, and yet they are implicated in the (re)creation and extension of these practices upon which, to a greater or lesser extent, the stability of their subjectivities rely. Given the incomplete nature of this control, we follow and extend Hannah (1997) by arguing that the ‘imperfect panopticon’ occurs not simply because of the variety of spatial and temporal locations we inhabit, but because we construct those times and spaces from the multiplicity of possible spaces available from the range of temporal and spatial markers available.

According to Gagliardi (1992), organizational space provides benchmarks for organizational knowledge, evoking images, sensations, memories and thoughts in the people who work and live in it. In these terms, it is far from obvious that space is even an objective property of buildings or physical artefacts. As Hetherington (1997) points out, even the most intimate of places are not solely produced by acts of human volition and intentionality, but emerge from arrangements of space, time, artefacts and events. So, they must be considered both controlled by, and controlling of human thinking/acting. Space is shown to be simultaneously real-and-imagined, a concept explored by Soja (1997) in the context of planning theory. Soja argues that a postmodern planning theory must recognise the ambiguity and multiplicity of the postmodern period, moving beyond the search for order and stability of modernist planning theory towards “*the disordering of difference*” (1997: 246, italics in original), resituating planning as an ontological activity which recognises the “existential spatiality of human life” (1997: 246). The complexities of this ‘psycho-physiology’ (Cairns, 2002) of workplace are illustrated in the example of office redesign in which ‘the same assemblage of physical artefacts’ is first imposed upon, then deconstructed by a group, then reconstructed by them at a later date, such that “it is both the problem and the solution.... It is seen both as setting for governance and as enabler of freedom, within a single manifestation” (2002: 816).

Towards a Complex, But Pragmatic, Understanding of Organizational Space/Time

In this paper, we have briefly outlined a range of conceptions of space and time, finding a tradition within both managerial practice and in mainstream organization studies of treating these as *a priori* categories to be understood in singular and linear terms and subject to manipulation and control. We have called attention to the diversity of the spatial and temporal mechanisms available to organizational actors. We have argued that these markers, and the meanings attached to them, form overlapping areas of relative stability, defining, and being defined by, those who participate in their (re)creation. While control mechanisms serve to *gloss* the mobile, we have argued that control is necessarily incomplete and that the organizational context must be understood as containing a multiplicity of possible times and spaces. In the following section we seek to move beyond the debate on organizational control by challenging the basis upon

which the notions of both perfect and imperfect panopticon rest, in that they dichotomise and exclude aspects of freedom/control, privacy/accessibility. We argue that challenging the 'author-ity' of these categories allows us to grasp the complexity of organizational activity revealing counter-sites, or 'heterotopias' (Foucault, 1986, 1994), constructed from the jumble of practices, behaviours and artefacts, whether they are fixed, transient or ephemeral.

In one of his last essays, Foucault (1986) sought to develop a typology of heterotopias. Heterotopias are places that are at once connected to other places and yet outside them – places that are situated in and across time, places that hold multiple, seemingly contradictory and exclusive, meanings to individuals at one and the same time. In his account 'Of Other Spaces', Foucault (1986) identifies a number of characteristics of heterotopias, whilst emphasising that there is no universal model. He suggests that they always presuppose a system of opening and closing that makes them both separate and joined to the spaces around them. In some way, they intensify the meanings of the spaces that enfold them. They are interlinked to the passage of time, whether of long duration – the museum or archive – or, of short duration as in the space of celebration. In some way they are capable of juxtaposing, in one real place, several different spaces – as with the cinema screen within the body of the cinema. Most importantly, they are rich in cultural allusion and meaning.

Foucault's particular insight was to contrast space, as the institutionalisation of history, with space as the relationship between sites:

We are in the epoch of simultaneity, we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment I believe when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skin. (1986: 22)

Little work has been done in developing a typology of heterotopian spaces within organizations, and in the light of our arguments, it may be ironic that Foucault identified the prison as an example of the heterotopia of crisis and deviation. Nevertheless, we argue that adopting this new perspective is significant, because such spaces, and the experience of them, are filled with power/knowledge (Soja, 1997), both through the physical artefacts and through the attribution of meaning to these artefacts. We argue that heterotopias are an unrecognised feature of organizational space, and are a response to the imperfect nature of organizational control, but that heterotopian workplaces themselves create new sources of knowledge and power in relation to organization and actors. These heterotopias will not be found, or at least recognised, in the 'natural' or the 'formal' world of organizational space and time. They emerge from the jumble of practices behaviours and artefacts of the organization, the transient and ephemeral – the autonomous workgroup, the transient project team, the myths of power and status. Heterotopian workplaces are both enabling and controlling, open yet closed off, fixed and transient, and contracting yet expanding to become all-encompassing.

Organizational space can be read as heterotopia at a number of different levels. The characteristics of the heterotopia can be found, for example, in the simultaneous and non-exclusive freedom/control, welcome/wariness in rituals of entrance and exit through reception space. Many contemporary workplaces – including offices, hospitals

and schools – are both open and welcoming, yet are closed off and subject to controlled entry due to organizational security needs, and in response to real and perceived threats of violence. In offices, heterotopian characteristics can be seen in the totem-like symbols of the executive suite, in the blurring of personal and organizational artefacts within the private office and, as we have already argued, in the real/constrained autonomy of the workgroup that seeks control of its work setting. The use of new information and communication technologies and the implementation of forms of flexible working enable the organization to create new folds and boundaries in space and time, allowing the worker to break free of spatio-temporal fixity, whilst enabling the organization to ‘fix’ her in space and time. At another level, multinational organizations place buildings in space, such that they are both part of the local community, yet are detached, and detachable from it. The workplace of the new organizations moves across the world in response to changing market conditions, today plugged in to the network in Glasgow, tomorrow unplugged and moved to Mumbai.

In concluding this paper, we have sought to develop a postdichotomous (Beech and Cairns, 2002) conceptualisation of contemporary workplace through reference to Foucault’s concept of heterotopia. We consider that the contemporary workplace is an example of a heterotopia *par excellence*, but that in the search for control, conventional management of space and time within organizations often fails to recognise that workspace is such a transient and ephemeral space. We propose a new perspective on issues of space and time in organizations, a perspective that we believe is significant for innovation, knowledge and power. This requires a recognition that what is fixed is mobile, what is valued is simultaneously without value, and that what is essential is disposable. In this perspective, time expands as it is compressed and space is bounded but without physical boundary. We consider that, only through a complex, contextual investigation of such heterotopias from within their multiple space/time realities, an investigation that values the researched as researchers – and in which the ‘official’ researchers are themselves researched, for their value-laden preconceptions that must be consciously surfaced and acknowledged – can pragmatic epistemologies (Calori, 2002) of the workplace be conceptualised, that will inform critical thinking/acting within the management of organizational space.

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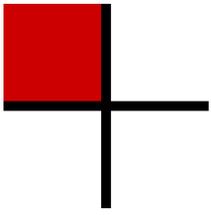
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Where Do We Go From Here? Notes on the Anti-Capitalist Movement After Evian

Max Watson

abstract

At the end of May this year, the G8 leaders of the world met in Evian, France, and the European anti-capitalist movement met at the same time to protest against their world of war, imperialism, third world debt and famine. The protestors gathered in Geneva and Annemasse, as the 30km red zone around Evian made entrance into the town impossible for all but the delegates of the richest nations on earth. After joining the protests and some of the debates in Geneva, I would like to take the opportunity of this note to report back on some developments from the Evian protests, and introduce some of the questions and issues of organisation faced by the anti-capitalist movement. The Evian anti-G8 protests were an opportunity to bring together the European social movements, the anti-capitalist movement, and the anti-war movements. The coming together of the European Social Forums in Florence last year made the anti-war movement truly international. What exactly is the relationship between the anti-war movements and the social forums? How are they to develop, locally and nationally, in the UK? What need is there for such organisation? And on what level are the social forums actually creating alternative democratic assemblies to the G8 World leaders of imperialism?

Introduction

The Evian protests against the G8 summit from 30th May to 3rd June were an impressive display of unity and strength. There were mass debates, protests and demonstrations over nearly a week of activity (the 100,000 or so who marched were taking part in Switzerland's largest demo in history). But the event was at times badly organised, and the protests themselves were often marred by the media's obsession with the violence of the 'Black Block' anarchists. The organisers of the protest were quick to condemn the violence. The arguments about the use of non-violence, direct action, and the tactics of the global anti-capitalist movement do need to be had out openly. But there is a deeper, more fundamental question for the anti-capitalist movement; this debate is about the nature of and indeed the need for its organisation.

There is clearly a need for some kind of organisation, which can in some way represent the growing 'anti-globalisation' movement. The World Social Forum (WSF) in Brazil, 2001 was applauded by most as at least an opportunity to build an alternative democratic forum on a world scale. This event inspired the establishment of locally

based social forums across the world. In Italy they were instrumental in organising the massive Genoa protests, in the summer of 2001, and have since become an influential and important dynamic in the resistance to the government of Berlusconi. The Geneva Social Forum was the main organising body of the protests around Evian. In Spain, as in Italy, they were central to building the anti-war movement. Indeed it was the European Social Forum (ESF) gathering in Florence last November, which called for the 15th February day of global action against the war in Iraq. The social forums are soon becoming the main international organisations behind the anti-capitalist and anti-war movements. So how should they develop in Europe, and what will they look like in the UK, where they are still being born?

The International Anti-War Movement

The ESF was the driving force behind the largest ever mobilisation against war in history. The 15th of February 2003 will be recorded as the first co-ordinated day of global political protest; the results of which are immeasurable. It was the coming together of the ESF in Florence last November, and its links with counterparts right across the world, which made this momentous event possible.

From the outset the anti-war movement was internationalist. It soon began to forge and build stronger ties in the western world – throughout Europe and the USA. The Cairo declaration marked a further step in the direction of a globally organised anti-war movement. Those Egyptian activists celebrated the anti-war demonstrations in Cairo, which were heavily attacked, as ‘our Hyde Park’. Activists in the US looked to the UK, and we in the UK kept an eye on our counterparts in Spain, Italy, Germany and France. A truly international movement had been born which became known as the world’s only other superpower.

After the most successful political mobilisation of an anti-war movement, the G8 protests and counter-summit in Evian was an opportunity to see how we could build on that international unity, diversity and strength. They had mobilised forces far bigger than their own, and now the NGO’s, peace groups, political parties, trade unions, campaign groups and representatives from the ESF came together in a counter summit against the G8 leaders of imperialism.

There was clearly a mood for building on that internationalism. George Galloway, among others, spoke to a huge, three hour long meeting on the anti-war movement. In a rousing speech, he called for a forging of links with peace movements in the Middle East. As the resistance to the occupation of Iraq gathers momentum, he promised of an ongoing ‘Intifada’ against the US and UK in Iraq. The parallels with the historic struggle of the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation are obvious. And an importance was stressed on the need to cement the solidarity networks with those in the Middle East fighting against their own, harshly repressive governments. Quoting Lenin, Galloway called the UN a ‘thieves kitchen’, and went on to pose the choice for the world which Rosa Luxemburg had posed at the beginning of the last century of war: ‘Socialism, or Barbarism’?

Others spoke against the need for further blood shed in Iraq, which is precisely what an Intifada would mean. Here, the debate around pacifism bubbles to the surface of the 'peace' movement. Somebody spoke in favour of the resistance of Hamas in Palestine. The important point here is that these differences were voiced.

Another global day of action against war was called for the 27th September this year. And there was an important call, from an Iraqi opposition representative, for a global conference against war and occupation to be held in Baghdad. This could be a fantastic opportunity for the global anti-war movement – this meeting displayed a movement that had grown in confidence.

The next meeting in the university, which had been booked by the organisers for the 'counter-summit', was on the social forums in Europe. New interesting debates were introduced. A Spanish delegate, for example, highlighted the fragility of the social forums. He pointed out that there was no necessary correlation between the anti-war movement and the politics of a nation: Despite consistently huge demonstrations against the war, and around 80-90% of the population against the war, the Aznar government still managed to gain 30% in local elections in Spain. Important global questions were raised which the European social forums clearly need to address.

Peace Movement & Social Forums: 'One and the same thing'?

The ESF had called for the 15th of February as a global day of action against the war on Iraq, and the local social forums had strengthened many European anti-war movements. But where are their equivalents in the UK? We had one of the strongest anti-war movements in Europe, yet one notable omission from the debate on social forums in Geneva was the lack of any real UK social forums at all. There was one speaker from the group that is helping to found a London Social Forum. There are launch meetings in the North of England as well, but there is no such thing yet as a coalition of social forums in the UK, despite the strength of the UK anti-war movement, and the continuing visibility of the anti-capitalist youth.

At the counter-summit in Geneva, John Rees of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) disclosed an interesting point of view on this question. He said that it had become clear that the social forums and the anti-war movement had 'already become one and the same thing'. What exactly does this mean? The biggest achievement of the ESF was the call for a global day of action against the war on Iraq, giving birth to an internationally co-ordinated global peace movement, and proving that the social forums are more than simple 'talking shops'. However, because one movement ('the movement of movements') gave life to another, this does not make them 'one and the same thing'.

How could it be so? The Stop the War Coalition (STWC) in the UK (and indeed Globalise Resistance) has repeatedly opposed the setting up of social forums. Where they are being established they are being done without the assistance of the SWP. In London, where a large gathering has been organised to discuss the social forums of the European model, the STWC has called for a national 'activists conference' on the same

day (21st June). We would be correct to assume, then, that in fact the social forums and the anti-war movement are two distinctly different things.

A Social Forum, according to the London Social Forum (LSF) website, “is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and inter-linking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth”.¹ This is somewhat more than a large ‘anti-war’ meeting space. It is something much bigger than that.

At its peak of activity, the Stop the War Coalition led the call for a People’s Assembly for Peace. Following in the footsteps of the Chartists and the Suffragettes, the anti-war movement had called for an alternative representation of the people, who opposed the war. The Peoples Assembly was committed to peace, and called for a campaign of civil disobedience, to prevent the UK government from going to war with Iraq. It also voted to reconvene itself, at an unspecified date in the future. There was a call for building local ‘peoples assemblies’ in the meantime, which built links with other campaigning groups, religious groups, trade unions, and college and school students. In other words, there was a call for the Peoples Assembly to launch local social forums, build them, and then re-meet on a national level at a later date to discuss further action against the war.

This was the opportunity the UK stop the war movement missed. The organisers opposed this move, and whilst the conference hall was completely divided, the chair took it upon himself to speak against the motion. And he then counted the vote ‘against’. Not only was this a wasted opportunity for the peace movement to become something much bigger, but it made a mockery of the whole notion of a *more* democratic ‘Peoples assembly’. The ‘Peoples assembly’ has not met again in London (though Manchester has just had its first ‘Manchester People’s Assembly’, and by all accounts a success).

Another World is Possible – Representing the ‘Leaderless’

With all this in mind, it is clear that the future social forums in the UK will come into being, as they are beginning already, without the aid of either the SWP nor its ‘front’ organisations (perhaps Manchester is an exception?). This follows the development of the anti-capitalist movement in general. In the UK the 18th of June 1999 saw the dramatic birth of a movement, which seemed to come from nowhere. Reclaim The Streets parties, which focused on urban traffic and pollution – decisively environmental in its political character – along with Critical Mass, another radical environmental grassroots activist network, had drawn radical youth towards it as an alternative to the traditional socialist left. These were the developments of the anti-Criminal Justice Act movement, as well as the anti-road protests of the early to mid 1990’s. The many other

1 www.londonsocialforum.org

networks of activists who were building grassroots campaigns took a decidedly bold move by setting a date to declare war with capitalism. They revived the 1980's anarchist slogan 'Stop the City'. With little more than 'capitalism sucks' as a uniting slogan, and actively using the Internet on a wide scale for the first time, the anti-capitalist movement was decidedly new, and importantly 'leaderless'. (Many activists were arrested after 'J18' and accused of being 'organisers' – the establishment was fuming that there was simply no real organisation to target).

Globalise Resistance (GR) emerged in the UK after the Seattle protests rocked the world in late 1999, only 6 months after June 18th, which the bourgeois commentators had hoped was simply a one-off riot. The setting up of GR symbolised the recognition of a new anti-capitalist movement (not calling itself 'socialist' by any means) that the SWP needed to orientate towards and to become part of (and then to become resented by many already involved, and soon to be dubbed 'Monopolise Resistance'). After the EU summit demonstrations in Gothenburg, where the police shot a protester, and then in Genoa, where Carlo Giuliani was killed, the stakes had been raised. The WSF in Porto Alegre, 2001, was another turning point. The self-proclaimed leaders of the 'movement' were suddenly radical NGO's, trade union leaders, Lula of the Brazilian Workers Party, and European groups like Attac in France.

The worldwide anti-globalisation movement has witnessed its own 'leadership struggle' of the 'leaderless' anti-capitalist youth. Who keeps these 'leaders' to account? How democratic are the social forums anyway? The World Social Forum has been criticised by large sections of those networks involved in the anti-capitalist movement. A number of problems arise; they do not allow political resolutions to be passed; and they have a ban of 'political parties' in place. They stand accused of being organised behind 'closed doors' by bureaucrats of large NGOs and trade unions. The method of 'consensus building', rather than 'majority vote' deciding, has also been criticised for a lack of democracy. These are all decisive issues for the legitimacy of these self-proclaimed 'leaders'.

Furthermore, the WSF 'leaders' have been condemned by the more radical of the 'anti-capitalists' for being 'neo-reformist': not radical enough to represent the genuinely revolutionary, youthful anti-capitalist movement who have lead and inspired the movement from the outset themselves. A statement was issued at the World Social Forum representing this sentiment: "the NGOs, the union bureaucracies, and the directors of the institutionalised political parties are changing the content of the struggle of the young anti-capitalists into the reactionary policy of 'humanising capital'. Humanising capital is utopian and reactionary... We say the World Social Forum is a ruse for those who wish to divert the anti-capitalist fight towards the policy of class collaboration and elections, continuing to apply the poverty of capitalism."²

This is right; the anti-capitalist youth who took to the streets of London, Seattle, Gothenburg, Melbourne, Genoa and Geneva did not choose their 'leaders'. Nor do they choose a reform of the World Bank and IMF – they want them overthrown, and the debt of the poor nations cancelled. They want an entirely new world. There are many 'yesses'

2 'Anti-capitalism: from resistance to revolution', www.workerspower.com, p.12.

in the ‘movement of movements’, and the WSF needs to be able to hear and represent the revolutionary demands of the young and determined anti-capitalists. Those revolutionaries should be active, keen builders of local social forums, delegating radical representatives to regional and global gatherings; not turn away from them and denounce their reformism.

George Monbiot talks of the need for a new kind of organisation – in order to ‘reclaim governance from its crisis of legitimacy’. He envisages a body ‘such as the WSF’ becoming a ‘World Parliament’, which would have “a moral power which no other body at the global level has”.³ Could the WSF, and all the local, regional and national social forums be an alternative form of governance in embryo? The WSF and the local social forums, uniting around the idea that ‘Another world is possible’, are apparently building the political foundations of that alternative world as we speak. If this is the case, then those activists who gave that movement life should be well represented and listened to inside these ‘open meeting spaces’.

In his newly released *The Age of Consent*, Monbiot calls for the establishment of a ‘Fair Trade Organisation’ to overlook the problem of third world debt. To force the US to comply with an overhaul of the WTO and IMF, he also proposes a “democratised UN General Assembly where votes are weighted by size of population and in accordance with a global democracy index, to incentivise high standards of governance. This restructured assembly would also take over the functions of the UN Security Council which... has already largely been sidelined by US actions over Iraq.”⁴ Democratising the UN? This is a clear case of a utopian ideologue harbouring illusions in the world governments we already have. It is these kinds of dangerous concessions to the status quo, which we need to guard our movement against.

So what is our model to be? There is clearly a need for democratic space to debate these issues, and many more besides. The fact that the European Social Forum called the date of the 15th of February against the war has proved it has become more than just a ‘talking shop’. But the ‘movement of movements’ must not be scared of engaging politically with each other in open debate. The reformists, NGOs, union leaders and radical campaign groups must be open to criticism. So too should the more radical, left, revolutionaries, and those who are afraid of ‘hierarchical structures’. They must learn to work together to build a new movement, in a new kind of organisation. The leaderless youth must be given a voice – a space to express their dreams – in the social forums. They must be open, democratic, and the ‘leaders’ (such as Monbiot) held to account. And at the same time, these ‘leaders’ of our movement need to be defended when under attack (e.g. George Galloway who is being ‘witch-hunted’ for his stance against the war, and José Bové, who was dramatically arrested in his home by 80 armed police in France on Sunday, June 22nd – a campaign for his release has already begun).

And the social forums must be much more than ‘democratic’ debating societies. Where social forums are developing in the UK, they must ensure that they are not merely

3 George Monbiot (2002) ‘Strategies of Resistance’, *ephemera: critical dialogues on organization*, 2(2): 153-154.

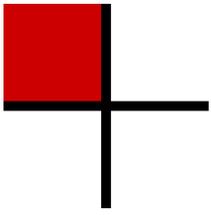
4 Michael Meacher (2003) ‘The Age of Consent’ (Review), *The Guardian*, Saturday, 21 June.

intellectual discussion groups, afraid of actually initiating any activity themselves – they should follow the lead of the European social forums in this. In Italy, the Genoa Social Forum mobilised against the police brutality of the G8 protests, and brought the country to a standstill. They have since built stronger links with larger trade unionists and fought together against the policies of the semi-fascist government of Italy. This should be the model for France, where the anti-capitalist movement is tentatively building stronger links with the public sector unions who are striking against the privatisation of their pension funds.

This is the way forward for the ‘movement of movements’. The social forums must become central to the linking of the social movements and resistance campaigns which already exist, so that they encompass a cross pollination of ideas, traditions, and methods of struggle. A support network of activists against the effects of neo-liberalism, imperialism and war. They must be international councils of action for the exploited, oppressed, and for those who resist, before they can become alternative ‘World Parliaments’. These are exciting and challenging times for our ‘new’ movement. We must not be afraid to live up to that challenge.

the author

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Virilio: From Space to Time, From Reality to Image

Jacob Thommesen

review of:

Paul Virilio (2001a) *A Landscape of Events*. Cambridge, MA: MIT. (PB: pp. 120, £10.50, ISBN: 0-2627-2034-5)

Paul Virilio (2001b) *Virilio Live: Selected Interviews*, ed. John Armitage. (PB: pp. 299, £20.99, ISBN: 0-7619-6860-1)

Paul Virilio (2002) *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light*. London: Continuum. (PB: pp. 192, £12.99, ISBN: 0-8264-5822-X)

Introduction

After the second Iraq war, where high-technology weapons once again demonstrated their decisive role – in fact, much more so than the much-debated, yet still quite elusive ‘weapons of mass-destruction’ – it seems appropriate to review Virilio’s book on the first gulf war, *Desert Screen*, which has only recently been translated into English. Virilio sees this war as a demonstration, not only of future warfare, but also of a future society characterised by extreme, even ultimate speed. And his book remains interesting reading to those who, for instance, still worry about the role of the media in this type of conflict: he offers an interesting answer to the question of what has happened to the ideal of a critical press.

Comprised of articles written during the crisis leading to the Gulf War in 1990, this book is also quite representative of his work, because he regards this event as a confirmation of the ideas of speed, technology, warfare, and society which he has been developing since the early nineties. The title refers to what Virilio regards as the third phase in the Gulf War, after the well-known first two phases: desert *shield* and desert *storm*. Readers with a growing appetite for Virilio’s thinking may supplement *Desert Screen* with John Armitage’s selection of interviews with Virilio, *Virilio Live*, which offers interesting discussions and a more ‘dialogical’ introduction to his ideas; and Virilio’s own *A Landscape of Events*, a less focused selection of texts written between 1984 and 1996.

Virilio's work focuses on the role of, and interconnections between, technology, information technology, warfare, city architecture and politics. Each of these issues will require further elaboration, but first I shall attempt to present one of his main arguments, which ties together most of them and could perhaps illustrate his somewhat alternative and provoking approach.

Speed, Warfare, Architecture and Politics

A key concept in his work is *dromology*, which is derived from Greek – *dromas*: running, fast – and may be translated as the science of speed. For Virilio, the one and simple rule of technology development has been that of an ever-increasing speed; and this rule seems to define fundamental aspects of warfare and society. In short, the logic of speed has driven the development of warfare, which on its part has defined the architecture of cities, finally setting the conditions for political regimes.

To spell this thesis out, let us focus on the evolution of warfare, which can be characterized by three phases. The first and longest was based on *defence* and weapons of *obstruction*, designed to block attackers. In this phase, fortified cities could survive *sieges* for months (even years), and this created a space for political life, thus centred on a local, geographically defined unit. The phase of defence ended with the invention of artillery, weapons of *destruction*, against which walls could no longer offer protection. In the second phase, the war of siege was replaced by the *offensive* war of *movement* – and the medieval city lost its role as political centre, to be replaced by the nation state. Since then, however, technological development has brought warfare into the third phase: the combination of high-precision bombs and communication satellites (representing a fourth front) to guide them to their target has annihilated the advantage of movement. Arms of *interdiction* and *absolute speed* have rendered vulnerable the mechanised forces based on *relative* speed. And this development has brought new conditions for political regimes, reducing the role of the nation state, and of any form of political debate.

Allowing for some degree of simplicity, the causal relations implied by this line of argument may be depicted somewhat like this:

Speed/technology → military and warfare → architecture of cities → political regimes/structures

This argument – which is neatly summarised by Brügger and Petersen (1994) in their introduction to Virilio, *The War, the City, the Political* – clearly illustrates the more controversial aspects of Virilio's thinking. For one, the basic technological determinism may raise some critique, i.e. from those arguing the social construction of technology. Furthermore, the idea that society is fundamentally shaped by military considerations is also somewhat unique and incompatible with more common explanations. Finally, some might argue that only an architect would regard the architecture of cities as decisive for political life.

Yet, despite this reviewer's lack of comfort with the whole 'package' of his thinking, Virilio's work does offer many interesting and useful observations that may certainly inspire and influence further study in and between various fields.

Annihilation of Space and Geography

A central argument in Virilio's thinking is that due to the acceleration of technology, and the culmination of this acceleration in absolute speed, time has conquered space. Space no longer 'matters', because we can receive information from everywhere on the globe in real-time, delivered by communication technologies at the speed of light, and because we can, in principle, travel anywhere, if not quite at absolute speed, then at least in a very short time. Geographical distance is no longer an obstacle, as illustrated – according to Virilio – in the first Gulf War, where missiles were guided from a control centre in the US. A more civilian example is the option to travel, for example, to Japan in a matter of hours: due to the annihilation of distance, there will no longer be any 'exotic' places left on earth (Virilio, 2001b: 84).

It seems fair to assume that this latter example is not merely about a new sense of distance due to improved (faster) means of transportation; it also implies that *cultural* differences will diminish, that traditional cultures are no longer protected by geographical distance. This argument calls for a short comparison, in order to illustrate Virilio's perspective: one may want to draw a parallel to Marx's assertion that every place on earth would soon be subsumed, every ancient culture replaced by the ever-expanding logic of the market: "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned" (*Communist Manifesto*).¹ Marx's argument, too, combines the *geographical* aspect of the unlimited spread of market economy, with the *cultural* aspect: the law of equivalence replacing traditional values and norms.

It would seem that they arrive at more or less the same conclusion – globalisation at the expense of local, traditional forms of life – yet offering quite different explanations: Where Virilio focuses on technology as a driving force behind globalisation, Marx emphasized economic laws. Or, as Armitage puts it: "where Marx wrote of the materialist conception of history, Virilio writes of the military conception of history", emphasizing that the latter is driven by technological development (Virilio, 2001b: 2). On one hand, this comparison invites a critique of Virilio's explanation as (even) more one-dimensional than the one offered by Marx: after all, the analysis of political economy is richer and less simplistic than clinging to the 'safe bet' of technological development (i.e. more speed). On the other, Virilio's critical perspective on technology may also be regarded as more complex than Marx's quite optimistic vision of technology – the means of production – as a potential driving force for the emancipation of Man.

And while we are at Marx's conception of technology, it seems appropriate to conclude this comparison by acknowledging that – despite the conflicting perspectives – the

1 Cited from Berman's translation (1982: 95).

contrast between Marx and Virilio is somewhat modified by the fact that Marx, too, attributed a fairly significant role to technology in the globalisation of economy: he saw the development of infrastructure as a basic requirement for market expansion; an argument that does bring him somewhat closer to Virilio's focus on speed and transmission.²

The Tyranny of Real-Time

According to Virilio, the above 'shrinking' of space brings us to 'the tyranny of real-time', which has severe implications for politics. Military and political decision makers alike are required to act on instantaneous information – act in real-time – which leaves no time for debate or analysis. Decisions must be made swiftly, and thus by a single person, such as the US president, rather than by some pluralist political body – there is no time for democratic control. "No politics is possible at the scale of the speed of light", Virilio says. "Politics depends upon having time for reflection. Today, we no longer have time to reflect, the things that we see have already happened. And it is necessary to react immediately. Is a real-time democracy possible? An authoritarian politics, yes. But what defines democracy is the sharing of power. When there is no time to share, what will be shared?" (Virilio, 2002: 43).

The role of the mass-media in the first Gulf War illustrated that 'the free press' could no longer challenge the authorities, as they, too, fell victims to 'the tyranny of real-time': the urge to bring up-to-date images made critical distance and analysis virtually impossible. Virilio speaks of the fusion of propaganda and journalism, as the logics of propaganda has changed from secrecy and silence (under-information and no information) to 'information overload' (without using that particular term). It is worth noticing that Virilio's argument is not a 'traditional' critique of ideology: the problem is not that information from the US military during the Gulf war was loaded with propaganda and ideology. Rather, Virilio emphasizes the problem that journalists were flooded with a massive stream of information, which they were unable to digest – again, there was no time for reflection and analysis.

Computer-based defence systems offer an even more drastic example of the 'end of politics' in decision-making: Virilio here refers to the attempts to design a computer program that would react automatically to a nuclear attack, because the possible observation of enemy missiles would not leave sufficient time for a human decision maker, let alone a larger, collective agent.

2 Marx emphasized the extension of the market economy, subsuming all ancient cultures and values. Yet Marx obviously recognized the relevance of technology and infrastructure. So what is the decisive factor: the logics of market speeding up development of new technology; or technology as a precondition for the extension and fusion of markets? The whole comparison with Marx should be concluded by remarking that Virilio himself seems rather uninterested in Marx: "I am no Marxist, nor have I ever been one" (Virilio, 2001b) – thus neither is he a fierce anti-Marxist.

These defence systems are symptomatic of a tendency to automation – in warfare as in other aspects of life: people being replaced by machines.³ Virilio keeps coming back to two examples from the Gulf War: at the beginning there are the missiles taking off, now to be guided only by a program locked on a given target; and, at the end, Iraqi soldiers surrender to a drone, an unmanned airplane.

These examples call for a few more words on the role of warfare in Virilio's thinking. On one hand, he seems to regard warfare as merely *illustrative* of the impact of new technology; that is, rather than having an actual effect on politics, military technology offers a clear example of the general consequences of technology. As he says in an interview with the Danish Niels Brügger: "war serves to illustrate the situation because this is where it is most obvious; it is my laboratory, nothing else" (Virilio, 2001b: 90). However, on the other hand, he also seems to maintain the more radical – and controversial – thesis that society is shaped by military logic, i.e. when he argues that "the technologies in the home are the direct inheritance of the rise of the tele-technologies of war (that is, of military intelligence)" (Virilio, 2002: 84), or when characterizing "post-industrial society as the military society" (Brügger and Petersen, 1994).

Information Technology: Image over Reality

Another crucial aspect of the above-mentioned real-time decision-making is that it is based on indirect perception: information is brought by IT – operating at *absolute* speed – rather than acquired by someone who is *present* at the event, which would be unmediated perception. Virilio argues that image has gained priority over reality. The stealth airplane illustrates this point, as its very design is explicitly defined by the image it creates on a radar screen. Referring to the instrument panel of American high-tech bombers, Virilio also argues that "postmodern' war requires a split observation, an immediate perception (with one's own eyes) and a mediated perception (video or radar)" (2002: 54).

In his critique of the consequences of new technology Virilio – a former pupil of Merleau-Ponty – thus seems to imply a phenomenological ideal of direct or primary perception as a contrast to the images delivered by communication technology. This perspective deserves some further critical consideration in this review, as I find it rather central to his general approach. For a preliminary clarification of this discussion, however, it seems appropriate to distinguish between three different issues in relation to information technology: first, there is the general question of mediation as opposed to pure, immediate perception or experience; second, there is the question of the particular *form* of mediation, as Virilio focuses on *images* (still or living) rather than text – as, for example, in Pierce's semiotic terminology: *iconic* rather than *symbolic* signs (Fiske, 1990); and finally, there is the question of the *transmission* of these signs. I have

3 Again, Virilio's confidence in the potential of computer technology seems to echo the IT evangelists – it is difficult to see automation as the central tendency in the development of work.

already treated the third issue – the consequences of the ability to transfer signs at the speed of light – and I shall therefore focus now on the first two.

To some extent one may compare Virilio's critique of communication and mediation being insincere to perception, experience and truth to several other intellectual traditions. One example is the more conservative version of phenomenology of the 'back to basics' style: cherishing tacit knowledge and face-to-face (preferably non-verbal) communication. Another example is the – in its intentions – more progressive critique of ideology. In an interview with Virilio, Christiane Calut thus compares his arguments to Adorno's statement that "every step towards communication cheapens and falsifies the truth" (Virilio, 2001b: 124). Although such critique certainly is essential in Adorno's thinking, this reference can be misleading, if it is taken as an 'undialectical' ideal of presence and immediacy: for all his critique of rationality, Adorno did not scorn reason and discursive thinking in favour of tacit knowledge (Adorno, 1970, 1991). Although the issue here is not to defend Adorno, the point I am trying to make is that, if one is concerned about the general dialectics of mediation vs. perception/experience, little insight seems to be gained by making a detour via modern computer technology – or rather: Virilio's fashionable focus on new technology should not distract attention from the fact that this discussion is also carried out elsewhere, in relation to good, old-fashioned media such as language or writing. Furthermore, taking inspiration from Virilio requires that one is aware of the risk of launching a critique that clings to a pre-modern ideal of direct, unmediated perception – a danger inherent in Virilio's approach.

Besides feeding on the general discussion of mediation, Virilio also points to specific aspects of modern communications technology, to the particular *type* of mediation (or sign): the emphasis on *images* rather than words and concepts. While he also emphasizes the aspect of *transmission* enabling real-time images, his argument may be compared with the semiotic characteristic of images – photos in particular – as 'natural signs', void of meaning, because they *present* or *show* something rather than *represent* it. And this is even more characteristic of living images, where the 'having been there' (Barthes, 1980) – 'I've seen it with my own eyes' – of the photograph (offered by, for example, the newspaper) is replaced by the 'being there' – 'I'm watching it now' – offered by direct transmission of events on TV (or the Internet) (Ingemann, 1996).

It is worth emphasizing that in this argument, Virilio does not suggest that indirect perception is intoxicated by some suspicious cultural (potentially ideological) meaning, but rather that this form of perception annihilates reflection: the "hunger for direct news" marks the "tyranny of real-time" and the "end of the mediated era" (Virilio, 2002). One may spur a slight paradox here: on the one hand he is a phenomenologist longing for direct, un-mediated experience; on the other hand, he is a modernist – despite his reputation, he does *not* consider himself a postmodernist (Virilio, 2001b) – emphasizing the need for (time for) analysis and reflection. On one hand, 'tele-presence' is criticized as illusory, not being 'present' enough; on the other, real-time images are criticized for not leaving time (and distance) for reflection. I choose to welcome this paradox as 'dialects' rather than incoherence.

As already suggested, Virilio's critique of the 'tyranny of real-time' can be compared to the traditional conception of the photograph as a 'photographic' memory: it does not

depend on a cultural code, and it has not been (totally) shaped by the subjective creator, certainly not in the same sense as a painting. For instance, Benjamin (1991) argues that elements in the motive avoid the photographer's subjective filter applied during the production process. While some regard this more direct relation between the photographic 'sign' and the object it refers to as a guarantee for authenticity – Benjamin (1969) was rather optimistic in foreseeing the dissolution of a pre-modern *aura* due to modern technology – it also means that the image is unsuitable for reflection and analysis: for instance, Horkheimer and Adorno (1968) argue that in order to show/picture the world, the image reclines on *knowing* the world – its immediacy prevents analysis. Virilio's approach to modern media seems closer to this latter line of argument, emphasizing the 'irrational' character of the image rather than praising its authenticity.

Of course, several objections may be raised against the idea of the photograph as immediate and cultureless – an idea that has been criticized by semioticians and structuralists. Barthes' (1964) analysis of the 'rhetoric of the image' is an influential example, drawing attention to the connotative and ideological level of meaning in the image. And today the potential for digital manipulation seriously undermines the 'objective' status of the photograph in the media. How does this approach fit with Virilio's argument? On one hand, it supports his emphasis on the illusory and mediated character of what others more enthusiastically have called 'tele-presence'. On the other, it seems to differ from his argument about the immediate and overwhelming character of real-time news – according to Virilio, there is no time, *neither* for analysis on the 'receiver' side, *nor* for actual manipulation at the 'transmitting' side (and one should recall that Barthes chose to focus on advertisements, where images are carefully selected and designed). This argument thus again draws on Virilio's main argument about the significance of speed and transmission – an aspect that distinguishes his thinking from semiotic analyses focusing on the two issues discussed above: mediation in general, and the question of the *type* of mediation (or sign), the 'natural' signs offered by images.

The Fallibility of Reading the Future

It seems appropriate to close this review by returning once more to the issue of technology and warfare, which has resumed actuality with two recent hi-tech wars. It will also provide an opportunity to explain his method. Leaving aside the idea of society being shaped by military logic, one might question whether Virilio exaggerates the significance of technology in warfare, that is, whether he accepts at face value the picture presented by the proponents of televised high-precision missile systems. Without being an expert in military history, I seem to remember that those bombs were never quite as smart and precise as announced by military spokesmen. And it has also been argued that at least the more recent war in Afghanistan was not won from the air

but depended quite largely on ground personnel (at a mere ‘relative speed’⁴). Furthermore, the example of automatic defence systems also seems to show that he echoes the optimistic arguments about the potential for Artificial Intelligence. He accepts that this degree of automatization – not only in warfare, but also as a general tendency – is a realistic vision, while the fact is that research in AI has failed to deliver for decades. (On other hand it *is* a relief that he does not simply argue that AI is impossible due to phenomenological insights).

Thus, while Virilio offers a critical antidote to the choir of IT evangelists, i.e. the idea of us all getting together in the global village (which he explicitly criticizes), he may be criticized for a similar tendency to attribute too much importance to the isolated factor of technology. And perhaps this critique could be extended to his method in general, that is, trying to read signs of the future in various contemporary events without resorting to any elaborate empirical study, picking out convenient examples without over-zealous attention to their actual representativity – a method Brügger and Petersen (1994) label ‘archaeology of the future’. On the other hand, those may be exactly the conditions and risks involved in trying to grasp the future: the intention is to identify future tendencies rather than merely describe contemporary reality. Although the critique of his empirical ‘method’ should not be completely silenced, neither should critique silence the observations of an analytical and somewhat cynical ‘visionary’.⁵ I certainly find many of his ideas and arguments inspiring for further study, without having to subscribe to all of his theses.

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4 Afghanistan may provide an example to the contrary – it was won by the Northern Alliance supported by American air power, and the lengthy struggle to chase out the remaining Taliban and Al Qaeda warriors from Tora Bora illustrates that geography still matters.

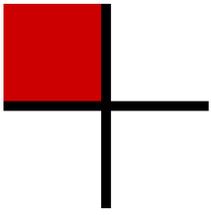
5 One cannot simply criticize Virilio by confronting his theses with contemporary facts. And he may exaggerate tendencies in an attempt to expose the essential, corresponding to Adorno’s argument that only the extremes are true.

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From the Modern to the Postmodern (And Back Again)

Carl Rhodes

review of:

Philip Hancock and Melissa Tyler (2001) *Work, Postmodernism and Organization: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage. (PB: pp. 243, £21.99, ISBN: 0-7619-5944-0)

As I was reading Hancock and Tyler's *Work, Postmodernism and Organization* with a view to writing this review, in a daydream I imagined being asked a question by the mythical student to whom the book is addressed:

Carl, I'm interested in postmodernism but I find it all very confusing. Do you know of any book that offers a "lucid and critical introduction to the evolving relationship between postmodern theory and the practice and theorization of work organizations" (p. 3)? One that draws together the key ideas and theories so that they can be understood?

In response, I would definitely advise them to read Hancock and Tyler's book. The reason I would do so is that the book provides a concise reference to much of the history, ideas, theories and theorists that inform and constitute what seems to be considered when the terms 'postmodernism' and 'organization theory' are used together. In the introduction to the book, Hancock and Tyler state their goal as being to "map out for those new to postmodernism, or to the work that has sought to synthesize it with organization theory, what has been written and said about it" (p. 2). In particular, they propose to do so in way that is both engaged with, and critical of, the very notion of postmodernism. Given the diversity and controversy over the various postmodernisms that have been touted in organization theory, it is indeed an impressive task that the authors set themselves. On its own terms, I found that the text dealt with this task quite well.

Hancock and Tyler offer an often descriptively styled rendering of postmodernism and organization theory. This begins with the three chapters in Part One, "Postmodernism and Organization Theory" which discuss what the authors delineate as two traditions of postmodernism. The first is the idea of postmodernism as a new form of organizational production and distribution that has emerged in recent times. The second is

postmodernism as a meta-theoretical position that has brought the ideas of writers such as Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida to bear on organization theory. The three chapters in the second part of the book move away from the more general mapping of postmodernism and take up three themes that the authors associate with a 'postmodern sensibility' – these being organizational culture, emotion and organization, and sexuality in organizations. The final part of the book consists of one chapter. This attempts a "critical reflection on [the book's] central concerns – namely, the relationship between the ideas that have come to be associated with postmodernism and work organizations" (p. 6) with a focus on employee subjectivity.

The breadth of coverage and depth of understanding that Hancock and Tyler demonstrated in the book generally impressed me. Of course my own understanding of what constitutes the main 'topics' of postmodernism is slightly different to theirs – for example I was a little surprised that more attention was not paid to power or power/knowledge as a topic in and of itself. I also thought that the absence of a more detailed examination of language, discourse and organization was missing and I was unable to find any consideration of metaphor or narrative. But this may be quibbling – the book deals with a great deal of complex theory in a cogent way that might be of value to people who want to understand more about postmodernism and organizations and are not sure where to start.

So, as I have stated, I would recommend the book and I do think that it achieves what it sets out for itself. Despite this, I found the book troubling; not because of what it does, but because of the character of its goals and how it goes about achieving them. As I was reading, I found myself casting my mind back to the mid-1990s when I first became interested in postmodernism and organizations. In fact at that time I did fall very much into the category of persons for whom this book claims to be written – "students of organization theory, be they based in university business schools, Sociology departments or perhaps outside mainstream academia" (p. 3). Would I have wanted a book like this then? I probably would. As I was grappling to come to terms with ideas that were new to me, and that were often written in a seemingly obfuscating style, I might have welcomed a book on postmodernism; especially one that was written "in an attempt not to lose too many readers along the way" (p. 3). Instead, however, I encountered a range of postmodernisms manifesting themselves as both an intellectual challenge and a source of inspiration for my own thinking in relation to my practice (at the time) as a manager. Postmodernism was (and is) difficult.

What Hancock and Tyler seem to have tried to do is to offer some relief from such difficulties by providing others with a 'map'. As I cited earlier, the book sets itself the task to "map out for those new to postmodernism, or to the work that has sought to synthesize it with organization theory, what has been written and said about it" (p. 2). Elsewhere they state that, in part, the book "*charts* the literature that has sought to make common cause between the ideas associated with postmodernism and the theoretical analysis of organizations" (p. 3, emphasis added) as well as claiming that others too have sought to "map out the contested terrain on which the various debates on postmodernism are taking place within organization theory" (p. 77) So what, then, can be said of this cartographic impulse to 'map' postmodernism? Indeed, Hancock and Tyler are not naïve here and they comment on this themselves when they write that they

do not “claim that our cartographic endeavours are in any way neutral or objective. For, in writing this book, we have developed our own critical perspective on postmodernism, one that has to a greater or lesser extent informed every chapter” (p. 2). Thus, on the one hand the writers propose a critical engagement with postmodernism yet still appear compelled to provide some form of map of it. On the other hand the book seems opposed to a postmodernism that has brought into question the notion of representation that enable Hancock and Tyler to remain wedded to their relatively unaccounted ‘cartographic endeavour’ – as if a book might provide a subjective map that can guide one through the territory of which it purports to provide a representation. Hancock and Tyler do not seem to have suffered from the ‘crisis of representation’ that has caused some to question whether language can provide a neutral, objective or power-free representation of social reality or whether it is writing itself that produces social reality – even when the social reality is that which gets called theory.

That Hancock and Tyler have written a book about postmodernism, an attention to issues of representation might question what it *means* to write about something in the first place. Such dilemmas have, for me, been one of the ‘difficulties’ of postmodernism. Of course, their book cannot be equivalent to or identical to postmodernism and organization theory, just as my review is not equivalent to or identical to their book. The connection between the text and its subject is that one claims to be *about* the other. It can be said that this *about* is a way of writing a new text that in some way relates to, but is not the same as, its subject – writing, thus creates difference. *About* seems to be quite a good word to understand this relationship – given my comments earlier, its possibilities might be more productive than those of ‘mapping’ and ‘representation’ which evoke a denial of the difference that writing produces. In thinking *about* this, I looked up the etymology of *about*. It comes from the old English word *abutan* – *a+butan*, where *butan* relates to being outside, without or except, and the prefix *a-* relates to being on or in. Hence, *abutan* relates to being on the outside of something. As it has developed in modern English, a common use of *about* as a preposition relates to being concerned with, being engaged with or being connected to – but not being the same as, mapping nor representing. Thus, a book *about* postmodernism might be considered as a book that connects with postmodernism in particular ways, rather than being a book that somehow represents or maps postmodernism. Despite the authors’ claims to ‘mapping’, I find that to think of what it is ‘about’, in the sense outlined, is a more interesting way to read the book.

The question that such a reading proposes is not whether this book provides a critical map of postmodernism and organization theory but rather the way in which the book (and its authors) engage with postmodernism. Considered thus, I am twice removed in this review – I am writing a review *about* a book *about* postmodernism. In each case such connections might be considered as being productive as much as representative – this suggests that writing does make a representational claim but in so doing it can also be regarded as the presentation of something other than that which it purports to represent, such that writing has *effects* based on its connection with, and construction of, its ‘others’. Thinking in this way implies that *Work, Postmodernism and Organization* does not map or chart postmodernism and organization theory so much as constructs it in a particular way – a way that can only be apprehended by further connections (such as mine).

In terms of my own connection with this book I am left thinking that while at times it does try to do things with postmodernism (especially in the final chapter) its claims to map postmodernism and to proclaim what “we [sic] might be *witnessing* in the contemporary organizational era” (p. 213, emphasis added), relies on the presupposition that objective description is both possible and desirable. What this also pointed me to was the question of the relationship of the writers of the book to their work. Their connection with postmodernism appears to be such that they wish to simultaneously engage with *it* and distance themselves from *it* while they construct a particular image of *it*. This relationship appears at times ambivalent, even possibly indicating an authorial nervousness about being name-called as ‘postmodernists’ by those who use the term pejoratively. The authors seem to want to pose approvingly as having credibility in regards to postmodernism while also undercutting their position in doing so. Could this be a way, perhaps, to have radical chic while checking one’s credentials in doing so? Management as a discourse is entwined with checks in both senses of the US spelling of this word. Radical chic? Conservative check? ‘Chequemate’?

From the outset, it seems that Hancock and Tyler are somewhat afraid that writing a postmodern text will frighten people, scare them away, or more generally alienate them from the text. In response to this, they adopt a conservative representational stance in the apparent belief that such a disposition will be more communicative and ‘representative’ of this thing called postmodernism. The authors go to some length to point out that although their book is about postmodernism it is not in itself a postmodern book. A few examples from the text:

Clearly, whatever this book is, it is not a postmodern book. Its content and style ... tends to follow traditional academic conventions and ... does not shy away from the authorial voice. (p. 3)

Whist ostensibly a book about postmodernism, this was not intended to be a postmodern book; although exactly what such a book might look like is, of course, open to debate. (p. 92)

It was never our intention to court the label “postmodernist”. (p. 184)

The authors do actually give some hints as to what they believe a postmodern book about organization theory might look like. They even point to Gibson Burrell’s *Pandemonium* (1997) as an example.¹ They suggest that, unlike theirs, a postmodern book might include “a seemingly endless disassembling or deconstruction of the taken-for-granted assumptions of modern science” (p. 2). They also hint towards such a book as being based on “epistemological and ethical relativism”, “rejection of a linear narrative”, “emphasis on a reflexive style of writing”, the avoidance of “traditional academic conventions”, and a shying away from the “authorial voice” (p. 3).

The book does a reasonable, albeit conservative, job of introducing postmodernism as it might be written about by authors who do not wish to be tarred with the brush of postmodern writing. To situate the book in these terms makes any review that I might have written problematic. Should I have chosen to write a postmodern review of a non-postmodern book about postmodernism? Maybe it should be a non-postmodern review

1 Ironically, however, while Hancock and Tyler are very careful to tell us that their book is not postmodern, in Burrell’s text he seems to feel little need to tell us that his is.

about the postmodernism in a non-postmodern book? Perhaps I am fortunate in that as well as positioning their own identities in relation to postmodernism, they also construct identity positions for their readers. In what seems like a pre-emptive defence against reviewers, the authors are concerned about possible reactions to the book. They place their potential critics neatly into two camps: “those who are hostile to the meta-theoretical claims of postmodernism” and “those who have defended the radical claims of postmodernism” (p. 184).² From the former they fear that the book will appear as a

hapless attempt to promote a perspective on organizations that represents little more than a misappropriation of what is, at best, a fanciful creation of disenchanted European intellectuals, or, at worst, a deliberate attempt to obscure the introduction of a reactionary agenda within the social sciences. (*ibid*)

From the latter they fear being

decried as little more than unreconstructed modernists, dabbling in ideas beyond our grasp and, in turn, perpetuating the follies of modernist social science that would have best been discarded. (*ibid*)

What is interesting in their defensive reactions is that the authors do seem to expect the book to be read by people (such as myself) who are outside of the audience for whom, in their introduction, they state that the book is intended (students). The sort of students who they refer to do not seem to me to be the type of people who spend their time decrying people as ‘disenchanted European intellectuals’ or ‘unreconstructed modernists’. Such banter is more commonly that of the seasoned academic. Further, the trouble with creating identity slots for readers to step into is that, contrary to the authors predictive expectations, readers responses to the book may fall into neither of the camps that they posit: some readers may want to make up their own minds. Where possible, the present reviewer likes to think of himself as one such iconoclast!

As I stated at the outset I commend the authors on achieving their aim “to draw together and introduce students of work and its organization to the literature and ideas that have been generated by the increasing interest in postmodernism” (p. 211). It is precisely in this strength, however, that I found the book problematic. Its attempts at *drawing together* seem to try too hard and claim too much – at times bordering on a claim to do my (the reader’s) thinking for me. As if by nature, I resist. Introducing postmodernism need not be a matter of pre-digesting it for others. As the authors suggest themselves, a contribution of postmodernism has been the emergence of new critical questions, new sensibilities and an “opening up of the range of ways of thinking about that which has previously been subsumed under the hierarchical modes of cognition that the Enlightenment left in its wake” (p. 96). Yet, in praising this ‘opening up’, the authors seem quite willing to draw together and close down – to make a definitive statement that purports to pin down something whose contribution, as I see it, has been its dynamism and its preparedness to unpin that which has been fastened on the specimen boards of those who delight in the dissection of wholes into their disjointed parts.

2 Interestingly, elsewhere (p. 212) they chastise Robert Chia for what they see as his dichotomous approach to modernism and postmodernism.

I agree with the authors that this book is not postmodern. Such agreement, however, is not because the book doesn't reject traditions of linearity and conventional academic genre, nor because it avoids rhetorical techniques of irony and relativism. Instead, it is not a postmodern book because, rather than engaging with postmodernism, it tries to totalise it. Turning back to the mythical student who I introduced at the beginning of the review – yes, I would suggest that they read this book. I would also suggest that it should not be the only book *about* postmodernism and organization theory that they read.

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