



Diagrammatics of organization

Nick Butler, Emma Jeanes and Birke Otto

In this open issue of *ephemera*, we bring together a series of papers that engage with the diagrammatics of organization in various ways. Specifically, each contribution examines the production of a particular subject within a network of power relations: the entrepreneur within enterprise culture (Hanlon), the compulsive buyer within consumer society (Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg), the spectator within the world of art (Rodda), the cognitive labourer within the knowledge economy (Armano) and the good citizen within advanced liberalism (Barratt). Inspired by one of the articles of this open issue, which draws on the use of diagrams in the world of art, this editorial deploys the notion of diagrammatics to explore how the themes of the contributions are situated within a wider social and political context and how diagrams shape particular subject positions.

One of the most well-known organizational diagrams is Bentham's model of the Panopticon, sketched out in a series of letters and pamphlets (Bentham, 2011). For Foucault (1991: 205), the Panopticon is:

the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; it functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use. (emphasis added)

The Panopticon – a circular, multi-tiered, inward-facing structure with a watchtower at its centre – is a diagram insofar as it maps out a way of organizing space and bodies at the level of abstraction, disconnected from any particular institutional context. As Miller (1987: 3) puts it, the Panopticon is a 'general principle of construction' based on permanent visibility that can be applied to many different domains such as prisons, workshops and schools to induce penitence among prisoners, order among workers, obedience among

schoolchildren, etc. While the Panopticon has been much discussed in management and organization studies (see McKinlay and Starkey, 1998; McKinlay, Carter and Pezet, 2012), it is the *diagram* that provides an important key for understanding how effects of power and forms of knowledge serve to produce particular kinds of subjects (the docile prisoner, the disciplined labourer, the well-trained child, etc.) (Munro, 2000).

This point was emphasized by Deleuze (1988) who, in his eponymous book on Foucault, elaborates on the method of diagrammatics – that is, ‘the cartography of strategies of power’ (Rodowick, 2001: 52). Diagrams function as abstract machines that give rise to particular concrete assemblages of power (the prison, the workshop, the school, etc.). Focusing on the diagrammatic level provides insight into the ideal functioning of power, how it operates without ‘obstacle, resistance or friction’. The diagram is not a visual representation of existing reality (De Landa, 2000), but on the contrary brings into being new modes of truth (Deleuze, 1988: 35). As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *A Thousand Plateaus* (2013: 164), the diagram ‘does not function to represent...but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality’. While the diagram is ‘blind and mute’, it has the effect of making others see and speak in particular ways (Deleuze, 1988: 34). The diagram is therefore both discursive and non-discursive, rendering aspects of the world around us seeable and sayable, visible and articulable (Hetherington, 2011). To this extent, diagrams play a ‘piloting role’ in guiding potential interactions with ourselves and others (Deleuze and Guattari, 2013: 164). This is precisely how the panoptic diagram operates: as an abstract ‘map of power’ (Rodowick, 2001: 52) that is characterized by functional polyvalence for use in a variety of social and organizational settings (e.g. to reform criminals, to increase productivity, to educate).

Diagrams have the potential to cover the entire social field (Deleuze, 1988: 34). Diagrams can intervene at the microphysical level, taking hold of the minutiae of individual conduct as we find in the disciplinary diagram of the Panopticon. But diagrams can also operate on a meso-level, making a series of spatial divisions and segmentations in the manner we find in measures proposed for the plague-stricken town at the end of the seventeenth century (Foucault, 1991). Finally, diagrams can function at the macro-level on the basis of exclusion and expulsion from the social body as we find in the response to leprosy in the Middle Ages (Foucault, 2006). This bears testament to the fact that ‘every society has its own diagram(s)’ (Deleuze, 1988: 35).

Recent discussion has focused on the notion of a ‘neoliberal diagram’ (Tiessen and Elmer, 2013) in contemporary capitalist society. The purpose of the neoliberal diagram, according to Tiessen and Elmer (2013: 3), is ‘to monetize

what once had no price: friendship, curiosity, culture, communication' via concrete assemblages such as social media, intelligence agencies, the entertainment industry, financial institutions and government structures. In so doing, the neoliberal diagram extends ceaselessly into new realms of activity in order to create particular modes of life and integrate them as nodes within its relational network (see also Hoedemaekers, Loacker and Pedersen, 2012: 378). As we will see, this issue of *ephemera* contains various iterations of – and possible lines of flight from – this neoliberal diagram.

Diagrams are never fixed but always in flux; they involve a 'practice of figuring, defiguring, refiguring, and prefiguring' (Knoespel, 2001: 147). Put simply, diagrams are both ordering and disordering with respect to the network of power relations that they map out and set in motion. In this respect, we might look towards diagrams not only for insights into modes of control but also forms of resistance – indeed, these aspects are necessarily interlocking (Foucault, 1998: 95). Diagrams are not therefore closed systems but evolving networks of relations. For this reason, 'there is no diagram that does not also include, besides the points which it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance' (Deleuze, 1988: 44).

The potentially subversive effect of architectural diagrams is apparent from the work of dissident architects Enzmann and Ettel in the former German Democratic Republic, who entered a competition in 1984 to redesign Bersarinplatz, a large square in the East Berlin district of Friedrichshain. Their fantastical plans for the inner-city junction included a subversive art-piece comprised of a raised platform from which individuals could launch themselves into 'freedom' and a laser-canon – symbolizing state power and repression – that shot them down into an enclosed cylinder surrounded by water (<http://www.enzmann-ettel.de/seite01.html>). The radical design, entitled 'Flight of Icarus', was of course never built and earned the architects twenty months imprisonment by making a mockery of 'actually existing socialism'. But their plans made sayable and seeable that which otherwise remained visually absent and verbally silent in centralized urban planning – the *modus operandi* shared by other proponents of heterotopian 'paper architecture' in the former Soviet bloc in the 1980s (Weizman, 2009). Following Deleuze (1988: 44), this leads us to conclude that 'from one diagram to the next, new maps are drawn', layered virtually upon the actual like invisible palimpsests.

If diagrammatics are to be understood as 'cartographies of strategies of power', then the contributions in this issue attempt to map the field of forces in particular domains – economics, consumption, labour, government, aesthetics – with the intention of tracing how these diagrams 'integrate the subjects they

constitute with functions of power' (Hetherington, 2011: 459). While four of the contributions in this issue – two articles (Hanlon; Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg) and two notes (Armano; Barratt) – deal primarily with the effects of diagrammatic figuring, Matt Rodda's article on 'The diagrammatic spectator' is concerned with the potential for defiguring and refiguring, sketching out potential lines of flight within an existing diagram through aesthetic practice.

In the first contribution in this issue, 'The entrepreneurial function and the capture of value', Gerard Hanlon focuses on the diagram of entrepreneurial value production. Drawing particularly on the work of Kirzner, Hanlon contrasts what he calls a 'finders-keepers' model of entrepreneurship with the more traditional idea(l) of the entrepreneur as value-producer. The entrepreneurial subject with whom we are more familiar is that of the risk-taker, innovator, the creator of jobs and wealth – in other words, 'the ideal of what capitalist subjectivity should look like' (p. 177). However, Hanlon argues that the entrepreneurial subject is better understood as one who discovers, captures and harvests value, rather than creating it. This suggests a more parasitical role whereby value is extracted from the labour of others (see also Hardt and Negri, 2009; Murtola and Jones, 2012), which inevitably raises the question: who is the producer? Hanlon points to the increasing tendency for value creation to occur outside the organization (e.g. the development of open-source software by disparate intellectual communities) and in the use of property rights by entrepreneurs to capture this value. Hanlon's entrepreneurial subject territorializes and thus restricts the possibilities of knowledge exchange and innovation as a consequence, much like a modern day form of 'enclosure'. By sketching out the diagrammatics of contemporary entrepreneurship, Hanlon seeks to demonstrate how changes in the capitalist economy – notably the shift to financialization (Teixeira and Rotta, 2012) – are linked to conditions of value capture and rent-seeking activity, rather than the productive capabilities of individuals.

In the second contribution to this issue, Thomas Presskorn-Thygesen and Ole Bjerg explore the relationship between consumer capitalism and Compulsive Buying Disorder (CBD). It is well known that consumption plays a role in the constitution of identity through its symbolic value. Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg argue that for this to be accomplished the consumer must enjoy its use-value. Those who suffer from CBD, however, lack this ability to enjoy their acquisitions. The process of compulsive buying leads to feelings of guilt and anxiety shortly after the euphoria of the purchase, and oftentimes the purchased commodities remain unused. This suggests that, with CBD, consumption is largely limited to the act of purchase itself, raising questions about the efficacy of symbolic value that is normally attached to consumer goods.

With reference to Baudrillard and Lacan, Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg argue that CBD is not qualitatively different from ordinary consumption; rather, CBD serves as an excessive illustration of the character of consumption as such. Like Hanlon's contribution, Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg's paper accordingly raises important questions about the changing modalities of value production under conditions of contemporary capitalism. In the case of CBD, the value appears not to be located in the use-value or in the sign-value, but in the act of purchase itself. CBD is thus symptomatic of the broader shift within the capitalist economy from production to consumption, in which needs are not simply 'met' by the market but are 'stimulated' – or 'symbolically structured' (p. 200) – by networks of capitalist exchange. By mapping out this diagram of consumption, Presskorn-Thygesen and Bjerg shed light on the way in which new subjects (and their associated disorders) are brought into being by trends within consumer society.

In the third and final article, 'The diagrammatic spectator', artist and scholar Matt Rodda presents an optimistic deliberation on the diagram in the field of art. The diagram as a visual information device – like a map, line or graph – is a mode of presenting and handling information. As noted earlier in this editorial, the dynamic potential of diagrams has been extensively examined in philosophy and art. Rodda follows this line of thought and presents diagrams as 'discursive machines that show abstract relationships' (p. 222) rather than presenting literal representations of reality. He contributes to existing debates on diagrams in the field of art by focusing on the relationship between diagram and reader. Rodda builds on the work of artist Sher Doruff, who describes the diagrammatic relationship as one of collaboration rather than linear information transmission from author to reader. Here, he criticizes the still prevalent partition between creator and consumer and consequently the author-centric assumptions in her work. Inspired by Rancière's figure of the spectator, he hence proposes to explore the 'autonomous reader' of diagrams. This requires a starting point of 'intellectual equality' (Rancière, cited in Rodda, *ibid.*) that acknowledges an equal position of learning. Rodda suggests that 'the spectator first and foremost engages with the practice of their own labour, which is in every way equal to that of the artist' (p. 229). This position highlights that the spectator produces his/her own experience of thought and interpretation of the diagram, independent from the aims of the author. This is important to Rodda because it sheds light on the possibilities of human agency through aesthetic work in today's information society (see also Montenegro Rosero, 2013).

Rodda's article provides an inspiring perspective to think about some of the bleak diagnoses presented in the other contributions in this issue. As we noted, they explore how – in Tiessen and Elmer's terms – the neoliberal diagram operates in the fields of economics, consumption, knowledge work and politics. Read

critically, here the subject is either a passive recipient of power or an active collaborator (inadvertently) intertwined with and mobilized by neoliberal diagrammatics. Focusing on the autonomous reader offers a complementary reading of these processes of power by taking into 'account the aesthetic potential for spectators to reorganize for themselves what can be perceived, said and done' (p.240). It is a reminder of the multiple virtualities of contemporary worlds of work and organization that point to the possibilities for maneuvering, reconfiguring or subverting power configurations. Through figures like the spectator, we are reminded to explore those details that show the obstacles, frictions and points of resistance created by the diagram.

In the first note in this issue, Emiliana Armano explores the conditions of work in the contemporary knowledge-based economy in Turin. Drawing on interviews with a range of highly skilled cognitive labourers – including IT programmers and developers, web designers, journalists and other media workers – Armano seeks to highlight the impact of new forms of employment, such as temporary project-based work, on workers' subjectivities. Rejecting the crude either-or duality between creative self-expression and oppressive net-slavery, Armano's central thesis is that these new modes of work result in a fundamental oscillation between autonomy and exploitation, between self-realization and precarity. In other words, alienation is necessarily intermingled with self-realization among cognitive labourers. For Armano, the knowledge-based economy reconstructs the individual worker as a 'hub', defined by the network of relations in which they must situate themselves in order to secure continued employment. This radically reconfigures the identity of workers: they no longer see themselves as employees tied to a single organization, but as a node in a broader network (or diagram) of relations comprised of other cognitive labourers. In the words of Gorz, 'the individual becomes an enterprise' (cited in Armano, p. 255). The consequences of this are troubling: the basic antagonism between capital and labour is internalized within each worker as well as running through the social fabric as a whole (see also Adamson, 2009). As formal employment protections recede, workers become reliant on their own capacities – not only in terms of professional expertise, but also in terms of their ability to connect and cooperate with others. This underscores the importance, for Armano, of understanding the role of the relational network as a basic modality of contemporary capitalism.

In the second note in this issue, Edward Barratt also discusses the recodification of the individual, focusing on the level of political discourse and practice – specifically, the set of programmes devised and implemented by New Labour government in the UK. Barratt argues that the 'modernizing bureaucracy' of New Labour in the late 1990s and early 2000s was an attempt to shape the relation between subjects and the state under conditions of advanced liberalism in

specific ways. In particular, Barratt suggests that New Labour sought to forge an ideal model of the 'good citizen' through various technologies of rule. This situates the New Labour project firmly within the framework of governmentality, whereby forms of expertise and practices of power are brought to bear on individuals who, in turn, are encouraged to engage in participatory modes of citizenship. These were manifested in programmes such as the 'People's Panel' and the 'Citizen's Jury', which aimed to stimulate a dialogue between citizens and the state in order to inform the direction of policy. Like the Turin-based knowledge workers in Armano's note, the 'good citizen' under advanced liberalism is expected to take responsibility for their own health, wealth and happiness; in both cases, individuals are called upon to turn themselves into enterprising selves. Indeed, self-government is coming to be increasingly mobilized as the mode of advanced liberal government *par excellence*, internalizing the conflict between ruler and ruled in the same way that cognitive capitalism produces class antagonism (i.e. the division between autonomy and exploitation, freedom and alienation) at the level of subjectivity as well as society. The two notes thus approach the same question in different but complementary ways in the sphere of work and civil society respectively.

We conclude the editorial by pointing to our front cover, which has been designed by Matt Rodda, one of the authors in this open issue of *ephemera*. It is a diagram comprised of a series of interconnected nodes. Each contribution in this issue could be mapped, along with its specific field of forces, on to a diagram of this type: the entrepreneur, the compulsive buyer, the cognitive labourer, the good citizen and the spectator may be plotted as a series of nodal relations and lines of forces. Rodda has used the motif of the Möbius fold to change one node into a folded nodal point. This indicates that the lines of forces that determine one's relation to the rest of the network are not completely fixed but may be modulated or subverted. The dashed and wavy lines on the diagram suggest this as they intervene and disrupt the order of the diagram. Such lines of flight offer opportunities for further inflection and potential. We suggest therefore that the notion of the diagram is a useful one as it not only draws attention to directed, intended and organised lines between points but also allows us to explore those other fleeting and divergent lines that do not 'connect up'.

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the editors

Nick Butler is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

Email: nick.butler@fek.lu.se

Emma Jeanes is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

Email: e.jeanes@exeter.ac.uk

Birke Otto is a member of the editorial collective of *ephemera*.

Email: birke.otto@hcu-hamburg.de