

# Mobilities in contemporary worlds of work and organizing



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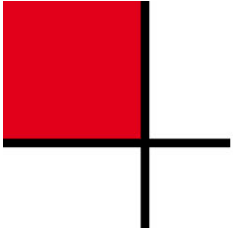
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**ephemera**

*theory & politics in organization*

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## **Mobilities in contemporary worlds of work and organizing**

Emma Jeanes, Bernadette Loacker,  
Martyna Śliwa and Richard Weiskopf

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# Mobilities in contemporary worlds of work and organizing

Emma Jeanes, Bernadette Loacker, Martyna Śliwa and Richard Weiskopf

## Introduction

Within the globalised ‘network society’ (Castells, 2001), demands for mobility and movement have become predominant aspects of contemporary social life (Bauman, 2007; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007). Exerting an influence upon different social spheres, these demands have transformed the traditional relations of the realms of government and economy, the public and private, and work and life (Cohen et al., 2015; Donzelot and Gordon, 2008). In particular, present-day governmental programmes refer to and evoke discourses around free and unconstrained movements, forms of work and careers (Baerenholdt, 2013). These discourses promote the mobilisation and activation of working subjects and their human capital (Chertkovskaya et al., 2013; Costas, 2013; Foucault, 2008) as well as, more generally, the mobilisation of production, consumption, and communication in all sorts of social networks (Corbett, 2013; Elliott and Urry, 2010; Land and Taylor, 2010).

This, however, does not mean that contemporary society, informed by ‘a more “networked” patterning of life’ (Hannam et al., 2006: 2), is simply composed of permanent flows and movements (Knox et al., 2008). Movements of people remain restricted in various ways, for example through the requirements of migration policies whereby visas, passports and permissions to migrate perform the function of regulating international movements (Urry, 2007). Even if discourses of free movement and mobilisation dominate within western society, free and autonomous movements and thus ‘boundaryless lives and careers’ are not fully sustained by current governmental policies and programmes, which might be more constraining and conservative than they purport. Put differently,

'sticky connections' (Knox et al., 2008: 885) still exist within the globalised network society as governmental programmes tend to operate through both fixation *and* mobilisation and, therewith, practices of territorialisation *and* practices of deterritorialisation, going beyond extant boundaries (e.g., of the nation-state, particular institutions or professions) (Bauman, 2007; Bigo, 2006; Urry, 2007; see also Christensson, this issue). Certain ambiguities and frictions are hence immanent within contemporary modes of government: while the mobilisation and empowerment of working subjects are broadly promoted and idealised (Costas, 2013; Presskorn-Thygesen, this issue), current governmental policies structure and regulate the movements and, more generally, the space of autonomy and freedom of individuals and groups of individuals according to very particular interests (Baerenholdt, 2008; Foucault, 2008). From a governmental point of view, it is not a matter of allowing completely unforeseen, incalculable and thus non-territorialisable forms and practices of mobility (Söderström et al., 2013). It is rather a very specific form of ('desirable') mobility that is politically promoted and sustained (see also Urry, 2007).

Given the prevalence of the phenomenon of mobility and its governmental regulation and administration, it is unsurprising that in recent years mobility and movement have attracted the attention of researchers within the social sciences, especially within the fields of mobility studies (e.g. Baerenholdt, 2013; Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2002, 2007) and migration studies (e.g. Brickell and Datta, 2011; Favell et al., 2007; Munck, 2008). With the growing body of both conceptual and empirical work on mobility, mobility studies researchers as well as scholars from other social science disciplines have been contributing to the so-called 'mobility turn', referring to the economic and social world as being above all defined and driven by movement, flow and dynamic connections (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007; see also Castells, 2001; Wajcman and Rose, 2011). Among other things, advocates of this 'turn' have interpreted the emergence of global 'cosmopolitanization' (Urry, 2007: 5), mass geographical mobilities and, more broadly, a 'world on the move' as indicators of a fundamental redefinition of established social, political and economic structures and relations (Beck and Sznaider, 2006; Beck, 2007). In this context, Sheller and Urry (2006) and Urry (2007) speak about the emergence of a 'new mobile sociology' and a 'new mobilities paradigm', based on mobile practices, relations and a language of mobility, rather than on territorially fixed societies, subjects and structures (Szerszynski and Urry, 2006). This new paradigm of mobile systems – and in particular the intellectual project pursued within the field of mobility studies – emphasise that mobility does not only constitute one aspect of contemporary social life but a 'general principle of modernity' (Kesselring, 2006: 270) that has become 'crucial in securing social relations' (Baerenholdt, 2013: 30). From this background, the study of mobility/ies can no longer be limited to a focus on the



physical movements of individuals or subjects only. Rather, the notion of mobility covers a much broader terrain as it refers to and includes 'the actual and potential movement and flows of people, goods, ideas, images and information from place to place' (Jensen, 2011: 256; see also Cresswell, 2006; Hannam et al., 2006).

Concerned with the societal implications of mobility, mobility studies commonly link mobility and movement to broader sociological questions addressing, for instance, western governmentality, power relations, social stratification and the opportunities and capabilities to access mobility (e.g. Baerenholdt, 2013, Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007). Mobility studies researchers point out that mobility cannot be separated from issues of social inequality, inclusion/exclusion, rights and democracy (Richardson and Jensen, 2008). When considered at the level of individuals, this raises questions about 'which (im)mobility for whom and when' (Jensen, 2011: 257). Specific forms of mobility are thereby related to the distribution of life-chances. As Urry (2007: 51-52), for example, argues in relation to 'unforced movement': 'to be able to move (or to be able to voluntarily stay still) is for individuals and groups a major source of advantage'. In this sense, mobility is inherently political (Baerenholdt, 2013). It may constitute a privilege for those who can make choices regarding whether to move or not, but it may also create a normalised and normalising pressure to move along recognised paths for others. In fact, the exclusion of some groups combined with the normalisation of those who are included has been defined as a new 'diagram of power' that characterises the contemporary western world of organizing (Bigo, 2006).

### **Mobility as a complex modern phenomenon**

Beyond the field of mobility studies extant analyses of the processes, experiences and implications of mobility have mainly placed emphasis on the physical or geographical dimension of individual-related mobility (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014; Cohen, 2010; Costas, 2013). Migration studies, for instance, often focus on the physical movements and migration experiences of so-called low skilled/low paid migrants and/or 'the global elites' (e.g. Favell et al., 2007; Munck, 2008). Analogously, research in management and organization studies (MOS) addressing forms and types of mobile work has typically explored geographical mobility in the context of precarious, disadvantaged workers (e.g. Garsten, 2008) or with regard to the so-called 'kinetic elite', representing a privileged group of contemporary mobile knowledge workers (Costas, 2013).

In contrast, this *special issue* draws inspiration from the field of mobility studies (e.g. Baerenholdt, 2013; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007), and explores mobility beyond a focus on individuals' geographical movements only. Considering mobility as a complex 'modern phenomenon' (Jensen, 2011), it creates a space for investigating and discussing different forms and dimensions of mobility, such as physical, temporal, social, economic and symbolic (Urry, 2007). A particular ambition of this special issue is to problematise simplistic assessments of mobility with regard to how it pertains to work by offering a diverse and complex portrayal of it, its interwoven dimensions and the advantages, potentialities, frictions, precarities and ambivalences to which it gives rise. By putting emphasis on the ambiguities that are concomitant with mobility and movement, and with regard to work- and profession-related demands in particular, the issue seeks to move the discussion beyond the either/or opposition of choice and necessity (Al Ariss et al., 2012).

In what follows, we first address different mobility forms (Ackers, 2005; Favell et al., 2007) and dimensions of mobility, and discuss how these interlink and interweave (Jensen, 2011; Urry, 2007). With reference to extant MOS (e.g. Cohen, 2010; Costas, 2013; Garsten, 2008) and work and career studies (e.g. Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013; Hall, 1996), we then critically discuss the opposition of mobility as autonomous choice and/or externally imposed demand. We thereby argue for an understanding of mobility that questions simplistic, dualistic assumptions about mobility, and instead considers complexities and frictions as inscribed in contemporary demands for and practices of mobility and movement. Following that we introduce the contributions to the special issue that, while addressing different dimensions of mobility, all evoke mobility/ies as ambiguous social and discursive constructs and phenomena. We conclude the editorial with some reflections on future research exploring how current mobility demands can affect and shape the organization of work, career and life.

## **Forms and dimensions of mobility**

Mobility and movement are not completely new phenomena but have, for a long time, shaped the life of certain groups of individuals (e.g. academics and artists) (Loacker and Śliwa, 2015; see also Rodda, this issue). In recent years, however, forms of mobility seem to have become more diverse, diffuse and complex (Kim, 2009, 2010). Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to uphold clear and firm distinctions, e.g. between mobility and migration, temporary and long-term migration, or national and transnational movements (Ackers, 2005; Cohen, 2010; Urry, 2002).

Forms of mobility and movement have been extensively discussed by migration studies scholars, both at a macro- and micro-level. Traditionally, migration studies research has focused on the investigation of international movements and migration experiences (e.g. Favell et al., 2007; Munck, 2008). More recently, migration studies work has however challenged the privileging of international over intra-national movements, for instance through addressing questions of translocalism (Brickell and Datta, 2011; Greiner and Sakdapolrak, 2013) and exploring the interplay of mobility and fixity (McMorran, 2015; Rogaly, 2015). The notion of translocalism extends our thinking about migration in that it is interested in all forms of migration, whereby 'translocal geographies are multi-sited and multi-scalar without subsuming these scales and sites within a hierarchy of the national or global' (Brickell and Datta, 2011: 16; see also Daskalaki, 2012). This shift in the understanding of migration has opened up possibilities for exploring the significance of different forms of movement at the level of those who are mobile. Here it has been pointed out that from the perspective of an individual, the experience of international migration might be considered as being of lower significance than movements within national borders (Rogaly, 2015). Further, throughout an individual's life trajectory, periods of movement can be interspersed with periods of fixity, developing into a pattern that Ackers (2005) refers to as 'serial migration'. Indeed, fixity and mobility can occur simultaneously; individuals who are viewed as immobile at one scale, for example with regard to their employment prospects, can at the same time be considered mobile at another scale, for example in relation to their home and family situation (McMorran, 2015). With these insights, migration studies point to the complexity of understanding the multifaceted types, forms and implications of movement and migration.

Forms of mobility and movement have further been discussed within the field of mobility studies (e.g. Elliott and Urry, 2010; Urry, 2002). Here authors distinguish between different forms of movement and travel, such as homeless travel, discovery or tourist travel, medical travel, military travel, business travel, as well as work-related travel (Urry, 2007). They emphasise that the social life and relations of those 'being on the move' are shaped by different dimensions of mobility. In particular, mobility studies researchers argue that for a comprehensive conceptualisation of mobility it is crucial to conceive it as irreducible to its physical, geographical dimension; i.e. as encompassing merely the movement from one location to another. In other words, scholars underline that mobility is not just a pure and unmediated movement, but a culturally mediated form of movement that is imbued with meaning. As Adey (2010: 35) puts it, 'to ignore the way movement is entangled in all sorts of social significance is to simplify and strip out the complexity of reality as well as the importance of those meanings'. Further, mobility studies scholars stress that the

imperative to move geographically is interwoven with other dimensions of mobility that constitute important sociological interests – professional, income, educational and social mobility – which can manifest in both upwards and downwards movements (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). Moreover, mobility involves a temporal (e.g. Rosenfeld, 1992), psychological (e.g. Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) as well as bodily and emotional (e.g. Conradson and McKay, 2007; Huopalainen, this issue) dimension. Finally, mobility needs to be understood as having a symbolic importance in that it might be perceived and imagined as relevant and desirable by individuals who, regardless of actually engaging in mobility practices, may consider it as a potentiality (Baerenholdt, 2013; Jensen, 2011). While at first glance the symbolic meaning of mobility might not be as obvious as its other dimensions, it should not be underestimated. It has been observed that this potential can turn into a normative demand that may result in self-defeating outcomes for individuals holding the power to be mobile. Mobility thereby ‘becomes unforeseeable and distractive, always presenting the limitless possibilities never possible to accomplish’ (Baerenholdt, 2013: 27; see also du Plessis, this issue).

The different dimensions of mobility and the ways in which they intersect are explored by the contributions included in this special issue. For example, Neiterman, Salmonsson and Bourgeault, in their analysis of the processes of othering and feelings of belonging among medical professionals, show how geographical migration triggered by the desire to improve their economic and/or political situation involves an ongoing process of negotiation and struggle as individuals experience downwards mobility in terms of their professional and social status. On a related note, Presskorn-Thygesen shows that even members of the so-called kinetic elite do not necessarily associate geographical mobility with social and economic upwards movements, but rather portray work-related mobility as an aspirational yet oftentimes ambiguous practice and experience. In Küpers’ contribution, special emphasis is placed on the non-discursive, corporeal and emotional dimensions of mobility. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology Küpers provides insights into the complexity of the ‘experiential texture’ (Elliott and Urry, 2010: 67) of mobility (see also Huopalainen, this issue). The understanding of mobility as a bodily-mediated experience of moving in and through spaces is then linked to and illustrated by the example of virtual mobilities in organizations, which in the form of ‘tele-presences’ have created new conditions and forms of work and work organization.

While the broader social science literature on mobility has been mainly concerned with different forms and types of people’s movements (Elliott and Urry, 2010; Urry, 2007), the interest of this special issue is more narrow in that it focuses on forms and dimensions of mobility in relation to the contemporary

world of work and organization. There is no doubt that mobility demands have strongly affected the professional sphere (e.g. Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Ciupijus, 2011), turning members of various occupations into temporary, and sometimes more permanent, ‘travellers’ (Colic-Peisker, 2010; Garsten, 2008). Being ‘mobile for work’ and ‘working while being mobile’ (Cohen, 2010) appears to be all but uncommon in the present-day network-based economy. Among other things, this can set in motion the (non)professional belongings and identities of working subjects (Daskalaki, 2012). As Cohen et al. (2015) argue, mobility has resulted in the collapsing of the boundary between work and non-work, destabilising dichotomies of ‘home’ and ‘away’, and increasing complexities of belonging and identity (see also Neiterman et al., this issue; du Plessis, this issue).

In this context, the implications of mobility for work(ers) and careers have in recent years attracted a certain amount of interest from MOS scholars (e.g. Cohen, 2010; Corbett, 2013; Costas, 2013; Daskalaki, 2012; Loacker and Śliwa, 2015). As we have argued, research on mobility and mobile work within MOS has previously placed emphasis on the geographical dimension (Cohen, 2010; Garsten, 2008). Meanwhile, mobility has also been explored in the context of work flexibilisation (Tietze and Musson, 2002), new communication technologies and virtual work environments (Brodt and Verburg, 2007), work satisfaction and job attachment (Pittinsky and Shih, 2004), and with regard to questions of work-life organization and balance (Kaufmann, 2002; Loacker and Śliwa, 2015), thereby touching upon other dimensions of mobility such as the psychological, social and symbolic. Despite the partly different foci of extant MOS studies, there seems to be a broad agreement among scholars that the ‘post-industrial paradigm’ of work organization operates less through fixing and enclosing individuals, but through strategies of mobilisation and the activation of working subjects and life in general; namely by encouraging ‘controlled circulation’ (Weiskopf and Munro, 2012) throughout all forms of social networks.

While recognising the valuable insights offered by recent MOS research on mobility, we simultaneously notice that critical analyses of the complexities, frictions and fissures associated with mobility and its multiple dimensions are still rare. In particular, within the two sub-fields of MOS where mobility has received most attention – career studies (e.g. Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996) and studies of internationally mobile workers (e.g. Cerdin and Selmer, 2014; Dickman and Baruch, 2011) – the somewhat dualistic evaluations mentioned above are still prevalent. We find that both fields often offer studies that analyse mobility as conceptually widely uncomplicated and empirically all too easily classified in dichotomous terms, such as ‘good’/‘bad’ and ‘choice’/‘necessity’, which we question below. A more comprehensive and

granular approach, to which the contributions in this special issue aspire, might contribute to shifting the discussion to a different plane and create a conceptual space for speaking about mobility and work in new ways.

### **Mobility beyond choice and/or necessity**

Career research provides a prime example of dichotomised assessments of mobility as either ‘intrinsically good’, stemming from free choice exercised by independent agents, or as ‘bad’ through being an externally imposed demand, taking away from individuals the opportunity to decide whether to move or not. An uncritically positive view of mobility is underpinned by two concepts that dominate the field of career studies, ‘protean careers’ (Hall, 1996) and ‘boundaryless careers’ (Arthur, 2014; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). The notion of protean career is rooted in the premise that mobility opens up possibilities to individuals for learning, development and for making (better) career choices. As such, protean careers unfold in dynamic work environments and are infused with mobility, be it across jobs, organizations or functions. Similarly, mobility is assumed to be unquestionably good within the literature on boundaryless careers which emphasises how, in ‘a new career landscape where former constraints are dissolved and shattered’ (Baruch, 2013: 197), inter- and intra-organizational mobility enables individuals to exercise autonomy, manage their self-development and choose the employment positions they want (Arthur, 2014; for a critical example, see Lopdrup-Hjorth et al., 2011). Such homogeneously affirmative views of mobility represented by established career studies researchers stand in stark contrast to the arguments made by other scholars interested in mobile and mobilised careers, who stress that the kind of working life trajectories in which individuals move between projects and locations is not a result of a greater freedom and new opportunities for improving careers and lives. Rather than highlighting mobility as a ‘career competence’ (Hall, 1996), they point to the ‘darker’ and more problematic sides of mobility, arguing that movements linked to work, career and employment are part of a strategy to employ ‘temporary workers’ (Garsten, 2008) who secure a livelihood under conditions of precarity and uncertainty (e.g. Bergvall-Kareborn and Howcroft, 2013; Garsten, 2008; Roper et al., 2010).

Similarly, we observe dualistic portrayals of work- and profession-related mobility in studies of internationally mobile workers. Here, an understanding of mobility as ‘intrinsically good’ underlies discussions of highly skilled professionals, commonly referred to in the literature as self-initiated expatriates (SIEs). SIEs are considered to be individuals who are unrestricted in their movements between countries (Dickmann and Baruch, 2011), and to whom mobility presents an

opportunity to take initiative regarding when and where to move (Andresen and Biemann, 2012). In a world of mobilised careers, they are seen as the ‘winners’ who ‘take charge of their careers’ (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014: 1281). Since their economic situation is viewed as characterised by prosperity and stability, SIEs can also benefit from another advantage brought about by mobility; i.e. engagement in diversified social networks, which are believed to further enhance their career progression (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009). On the other hand, a very different evaluation of mobility emerges from studies of migrant workers for whom mobility is an externally imposed demand and a matter of economic or political necessity rather than choice (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013). Their career options as well as choices regarding where and when to relocate are considered to be significantly limited. In the workplace, they are likely to be in a vulnerable position and to be discriminated against (Hakak and Al Ariss, 2013). For such individuals and groups of individuals, mobility hardly offers a way out of poverty and disadvantage; on the contrary, migrant workers are seen as constantly struggling to build economically sustainable livelihoods. This burden is not alleviated by the fact that they often belong to ethnic networks of a low socioeconomic status (Fang et al., 2013) upon which they cannot usefully draw to improve their work and job prospects (Hakak et al., 2010).

While not downplaying the insights and political relevance of studies of migrant workers, we argue that within the current network-based knowledge economy it appears that an increasing number of workers encounter and experience the rewarding as well as the challenging and burdensome sides of mobility demands (Loacker and Śliwa, 2015; Presskorn-Thygesen, this issue). In many instances contemporary working subjects seem to be ‘mobile for work’ (Cohen, 2010) because this is expected and taken for granted by respective occupational and organizational environments (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Costas, 2013), *and* because being mobile is considered and portrayed as rich in variety, routine-intermittent and possibility-enhancing (Cohen, 2010; Daskalaki, 2012; Kim, 2010). Besides, oftentimes workers and employees do not tend to be persistently mobile but to be captivated by and in temporary ‘circuits of mobility’ (Garsten, 2008: 99).

The ambiguity and complexity of mobility is further reflected in contemporary modes of organizing that provide working subjects with a certain scope for autonomy and flexibility as to how, when, where and with whom work and employment are organized (Ciupijus, 2011). Yet at the same time modes of organization and organizing are increasingly individualised, provisional and contested in orientation (Costas, 2013). This complexity also finds expression in the metaphor of the ‘liquid organization’ (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2014), capturing organizational modes in which various forms and dimensions of

mobility are interconnected, orchestrated and socially and technologically mediated. The notion of ‘liquid organization’ refers to modes and practices of organizing in which choice is offered, but where the freedom to choose between various mobilities becomes an obligation. ‘Necessity’ on the other hand is not only imposed by external circumstances and constraints but is also self-generated as individuals ‘faced with an uncertain today and a precarious tomorrow’ (Clegg and Baumeler, 2014: 43) manage their selves, their work and careers while moving between various ‘projects’ and working on temporary assignments with unclear boundaries and often insecure incomes (Chertkovskaya et al., 2013). The ambivalences in the experience of being ‘mobile yet located’ (Daskalaki, 2012: 435) as well as the both enriching and challenging aspects associated with mobile and mobilised work arrangements (e.g. Garsten, 2008; Kim, 2009, 2010) hence tend to make it impossible to conclusively evaluate these arrangements in terms of the dichotomies of good/bad and choice/necessity.

To move the debate on mobility within MOS forward, the papers in this special issue address the topics and concerns discussed, while offering new perspectives on mobility and its evaluation. As outlined above, the issue’s ambition has been to construct a picture of mobility as a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon that shapes the specific ways in which work and careers are organized and which is enacted differently by contemporary working subjects. In the following we introduce in more detail the five papers and five review essays included in this special issue.

## **The contributions**

‘The ambiguous attractiveness of mobility: A view from the sociology of critique’ presents the first full paper of this special issue. It is written by Thomas Presskorn-Thygesen and addresses the phenomenon of mobility against the background of Boltanski’s (1990/2012) work on the ‘sociology of critique’ and ‘sociology of morals’. The use of this conceptual framework prompts Presskorn-Thygesen to discuss mobility as a construct that is informed by both economic value and moral value(s). The nexus of these values is then explored with reference to the currently predominant (projective) ‘order of worth’, which presents an order that socially and discursively promotes mobility and movement as morally good and desirable. Presskorn-Thygesen illustrates this argument by using examples from representatives of the so-called kinetic elite, who evoke and refer to work- and profession-related mobility as attractive and appealing, while at the same time acknowledging certain ambiguities and uncertainties that come along with it. Despite being mobile and striving to ‘believe in’ mobility and its potential benefits and rewards, members of this elite group of workers also



articulate doubts regarding the extent to which being on the move ‘pays off’, e.g. in economic and social terms. However, the demand and imperative to be mobile within the contemporary ‘project polis’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) is not questioned as such, but rather portrayed as a central ideal and integrative feature of the work and life of members of the ‘kinetic elite’, which is worth living up to, ‘despite all’.

Gitte du Plessis’ paper ‘Enjoy your vacation!’ challenges our preconceived notions of vacation as a break from work and a chance for freedom. With reference to self-help memoir (and film) *Eat, pray, love*, du Plessis explores ‘vacation fantasies’ which promise us the chance to meet the neoliberal demand for self-fulfillment and self-realisation whilst on holiday. The paper reflects on how mobility is seen as part of the neoliberal promise – whether in or out of work. Yet this mobility to, for example, travel with work, does not ‘free’ workers but instead results in the encroachment of work into their lives, and often fails to achieve self-fulfillment. The vacation fantasies then become an ‘ideological supplement’ that underpins our connection with work by making us more accepting of our own alienation at work through the fantasy of finding self-realisation elsewhere. The mobility found in vacation travel, du Plessis argues, ultimately serves to tie us to our work by suggesting that we ‘live life’ on vacation, and that work provides the means or justification for taking vacations. Focusing particularly on ‘self-realisation vacations’, and drawing on the work of Žižek, she explores the fantasy of the self-realisation imperative, in which we anticipate finding ourselves, happiness and a sense of meaning in our travels (and how an industry has developed to help us achieve this). Yet this is a ‘decaf’ version. Even if we are not disappointed in our endeavours, true realisation of ourselves is unlikely since it would confront us with the reality of our working lives. This paper hints at the hierarchy of mobility, particularly that experienced by the ‘kinetic elite’, but also connects mobility to other neoliberal concerns such as the moral imperative for taking responsibility for your fulfillment and the need to ‘get away’ in order to seek to accomplish this.

In their paper ‘Navigating otherness and belonging: A comparative case study of IMGs’ professional integration in Canada and Sweden’, Elena Neiterman, Lisa Salmonsson and Ivy Lynn Bourgeault contribute to the debates on mainly geographical mobility and movement through an analysis of the narratives of international health care professionals in Canada and Sweden. The authors show how the power hierarchies underpinned by historico-economic circumstances and racial and ethnic tensions, reinforced by local migration policies and professional integration processes, play out at the micro-level of individuals. While the employment of non-native staff is crucial for the functioning of the health care systems in both countries, for participants in Neiterman et al.’s study

the process of professional integration is far from straightforward. Their experiences of belonging and being 'othered' are dynamic, fluid and differently shaped depending on specific contexts and social interactions. Rather than experiencing a 'settled' professional position, these individuals negotiate and struggle with the contradictory condition of being both expected to belong to the new context of their work and life, and of being 'othered' by the virtue of the location of their professional education and, in many cases, their ethnicity. In doing so, they are seen to constantly strive to construct coherent and 'positive' professional identities.

Wendelin Küpers' contribution 'Emplaced and embodied mobility in organizations' aims at a critical understanding of the experiential dimension of mobility which illuminates and reflects on how mobile and mobilised subjects experience their movements in and through organizational life-worlds. Küpers mainly draws on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and focuses on the body and the way bodies are placed. From this perspective organizational members are situated in and move through their everyday life-worlds. Places and spaces are not only socially constructed and imbued with meaning, they are also experienced through embodied beings. The 'lived body' is the medium for moving in and through the world and embodied spaces and places are seen as intermediary milieus for bodily movements, which influence and shape how multiple and interwoven relations of mobility unfold. Küpers' contribution implies a dynamic and relational understanding of mobility, where mobility is not understood as a movement between fixed points, but as a dynamic becoming that emerges *between* situated people, placed artifacts and emerging environments that are also, and increasingly so, technologically mediated. From such 'placed movements' experiential processes, including affects, emotions, cognitions, identities and action are generated. Küpers' approach reminds us of the dynamically complex nature of the experience of mobility, which escapes easy classification or judgement. Küpers illustrates his perspective with two examples from the organizational context: 'Moving bodies at work' and 'tele-presences' that are created by various forms of remote work, mainly enabled and intensified by the technologies of the internet. In particular the latter trigger new forms of mobility that are associated with ambivalent bodily experiences, where part of the 'sensorial architecture' of the body remains in the physical world, whereas another part is projected into the virtual world. Küpers' paper engages some of the theoretical, political and methodological implications of this approach.

In 'Who moves? Analysing fashion show organizing through micro-interactions of bodily movement', Astrid Huopalaïnen explores the micro-level of bodily movement in the context of a fashion show. Despite the growing attention given to embodiment, bodily movement, she argues, is often taken for granted as the

mundane, everyday activity of life, yet lies at the heart of organizing. The participant observer study draws together movement at many levels, from the movement of the industry in which novelty is paramount, to the change of locations and the behind the scenes activity to bring everything together, as well as the display on the catwalk – including the movement of the clothing. The need to produce an exclusive show on a low budget demands careful crafting of bodily movements on stage as well as those required to ensure that the limited materials are in place to accomplish the show. Reminiscent of Goffman's work, the paper explores the backstage movement required to accomplish the front stage performance, but also how this movement is negotiated with other movements, such as who will attend particular shows, highlighting the relational nature of movement. As well as context, like Küpers, she stresses the importance of the spatial-material dimensions of mobility and movement. There is also evidence of the practice of movement, in which seasoned organizers move in certain patterned ways, and the less experienced 'learn' from the more experienced or are prescribed how to move, through which certain norms and ways of working are established. Not only do bodily movements shape organizing, they are also constructed by it. Huopalainen's paper stresses the kinetic and reminds us that organizing implies movement and is not static.

Next to the full papers, this special issue includes five review essays of books on individual and collective mobility and movement(s) in a globalised world of organizing.

Oskar Christensson reviews the edited volume *Critical mobilities* in which contemporary forms and types of mobility are explored in geopolitical contexts such as Europe, the US and India. These forms and types are investigated from a critical perspective, foregrounding questions of inclusion(s) and exclusion(s) that are concomitant with recent demands to be 'on the move'. The volume's contributions thereby draw main inspiration from the fields of mobility and migration studies.

In Matt Rodda's review of *Life between borders* we encounter a variety of different experiences and understandings of the mobility of a particular professional group, namely artists. In this collection of personal accounts we learn more about the reasons for, and consequences of nomadic lifestyles on artists' daily life, identity, art practice and outlook. We also learn about the distinctions between migrants and nomads in terms of the impetus for being mobile.

Mikkel Mouritz Marfelt's review of *The politics of belonging* explores notions of identity and belonging through an intersectional analysis. Whilst exploring categories such as citizenship, nationality and religion, which suggest a limit to

mobility in the sense of belonging somewhere rather than anywhere, the review particularly points to questions over and resistance towards the 'naturalisation' of both physical and imaginary boundaries.

In the review essay of *Digital labour and Marx*, Chris Land portrays and critically discusses the scope and use of Marxist theory to understand commodities and the process of commodification as integrative features of contemporary digital and globalised forms of work and labour. With reference to Fuchs the review highlights exploitation attempts of neoliberal production modes as well as concomitant (non)alienation struggles that digital, mobile workers – as well as working consumers – may encounter and experience.

The last review included in the special issue is a review by Thomas Swann of *In the interest of others: Organizations and social activism*. This book investigates the political activities of social movement organizations such as trade unions and thereby elaborates on the challenges and problems that (trans)local social movement organizations face in a globalised, network-based world of work and organization.

## Concluding reflections

Thanks to the diversity of conceptual frameworks utilised and empirical studies conducted, the papers and review essays making up this special issue provide us with illuminating insights into different mobility dimensions, and how they inform current forms of work and organizing *beyond* confined organizational and occupational boundaries and thus space and time. In portraying mobility as a complex principle of contemporary 'liquid organization' (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2014) and 'liquid society', the contributions to the special issue further reveal some of the central ambiguities and frictions that are concomitant with prevalent social and discursive demands for mobility and movement, and which oftentimes operate regardless of whether movements are actually occurring or remain a potentiality (Baerenholdt, 2013; Jensen, 2011).

Against this background, we want to encourage future research on mobility, work, careers and organizing to take forward this issue's focus on the complexities and complex implications that demands to be 'on the move' evoke and produce. In particular, we call for a continued problematisation of work- and profession-related mobility as either free choice or necessity. Indeed, future research might wish to pay more attention to the mutual influence of social-discursive mobility imperatives and the emergence of 'mobilised identities', whereby a lack of predictability and stability in professional terms might become

a taken-for-granted condition that is reflected in individuals' trajectories but not problematised *per se* (Loacker and Śliwa, 2015). We would also like to urge researchers to direct their interest towards showing how different dimensions of mobility interweave and to further address, for example, the interconnections between spatial, economic, social and symbolic mobility. There is also scope for studies unsettling the distinction between different scales of mobility and hence bringing together considerations of issues surrounding intra- and inter-organizational mobility, in order to identify possible common denominators of mobility in relation to organization (Cohen, 2010). Moreover, it would be valuable for future research to explore different temporal 'rhythms' of mobility and fixity, focusing on the occurrence and links between the almost constant forms of mobility (such as daily or weekly commuting) and the less frequent but also very significant episodes of mobility, such as those exemplified by (inter)national work- and profession-related relocations (Ackers, 2005; Kim, 2010).

We envisage such research extending beyond the sphere of work. In times in which translocal network-patterns appear to be predominant and 'boundaryless' professional trajectories tend to develop as a new norm, every sphere of life is considered as a *possibly* productive and mobilisable sphere (Corbett, 2013; Land and Taylor, 2010). In this context, mobility has far-reaching consequences for our understanding of notions such as work-life (im)balance, (non)professional community, or home (Cohen et al., 2015; Colic-Peisker, 2010). For critically informed studies of mobility/ies and mobile work this implies, among other things, that it is important to also allow for new and modified social-material relations and forms of life organization that emerge as a response to contemporary imperatives for 'being on the move'.

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# The ambiguous attractiveness of mobility: A view from the sociology of critique<sup>\*</sup>

Thomas Presskorn-Thygesen

## abstract

This article examines the forms of mobility that characterize contemporary work life. In doing so, it applies the theoretical framework associated with Luc Boltanski's *sociology of critique* (Boltanski, 2012 [1990]; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006 [1991]) and argues that this framework offers a fruitful and important perspective in conceptualizing and understanding the forms of mobility that are becoming increasingly prevalent in today's knowledge work. The sociology of critique allows one to chart the economic and historical conditions of mobility critically, while its sociology of morals also allows us to explore the distinctly *normative* side of new forms of mobility without succumbing to a celebratory picture of work-related mobility. More specifically and in the context of the 'kinetic elite', the article explores how Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) analysis of a 'projective order of worth' can help us understand the attractiveness of constantly being 'on the move'. Qualitative data from three exemplars of this elite group of workers is used to illustrate how the ideal of being mobile is perceived as an often problematic imperative, but also as one which is nevertheless rewarding and worth living up to.

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## Introduction

In the Old Testament, two conflicting pictures of God's relation to movement are presented: According to the first, the realm of God can be expanded by building temples that define the geographical and spiritual boundary of Judaism towards an immobile point, namely God's permanent position. According to the second picture, however, the center of Judaism is not immobile; rather, God is taken to dwell directly in the Ark of Covenant. Each time the Jews move position, they move the Ark of Covenant and thereby the very presence of God. In the Exodus from Egypt, other slaves are left behind, but no territory is lost or gained; rather, the center of Judaism and divinity as such is moved. This is essentially what Deleuze (1977: 149) meant by paradoxically stating that nomads do not move: nomads seem to continually displace the center according to which their movement could be defined.

This change in conception adopted in *The Book of Exodus* seems like a perfect fable for the conception of mobility in today's tribe of urban nomads employed in creative or knowledge-intensive industries. As Bauman's (1998, 2007) studies suggest, novel forms of mobility create both an elite (including e.g. the versatile consultant, banker or designer working on geographically dispersed projects) as well as a new class of poor (i.e., low-level workers servicing the mobile or immigrant workers forced into mobility). On a global scale, the new elite of successful urban nomads may thus be surrounded by immobile 'slaves' working under less favorable conditions, but they are themselves indifferent to location as they constantly shift from one project to the next without remaining bound to any center. Urban nomads therefore seem to inhabit a perhaps poorly defined, but nevertheless attractive state of constant movement (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

This nomadic figure in today's capitalism has been discussed extensively by the 'mobility turn' within social theory (e.g. Adey, 2009; Büscher et al., 2010; Cresswell and Merriman, 2012; Urry, 2007) as well as by organizational studies debating work-related mobility (e.g. Costas, 2013; Garsten, 2008; Meerwarth et al., 2008; Muhr, 2012). Accordingly, it is now well-known how this nomadic figure relates to a number of changed 'features' of western working life: life-long employment is a rarity, working activities are no longer restricted to one place or specific hours, and work is increasingly being organized around short-term projects (e.g. Elliott and Urry, 2010; Sennett, 2006).

In aiming to contribute to the growing literature on work-related mobility, I address what remains a hotly debated issue, namely, the moral and normative significance of changes pertaining to work- and profession-related mobility. As

pointed out by a number of commentators (e.g. Bærenholdt, 2013; Kaplan, 1996; Sheller, 2011; Urry, 2000), research on novel forms of mobility tends to split into either celebratory accounts of mobility that privilege a nomadic or ‘cosmopolitan subjectivity’ (Beck, 2006), or pessimistic accounts that characterize mobility as ‘merely an ideological veil’ (Pellegrino, 2011: 2) that masks a renewed form of economic exploitation and various forms of inequality (Ohnmacht et al., 2009). As Ekman (2013: 294) along with Costas (2013) point out, the disagreement concerning the ‘moral content’ of mobility is also prevalent within organization studies: Has capitalism finally found a way of accommodating freedom of movement with efficient ways of organizing, as argued by optimistic strands within the management literature (e.g. Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Kanter, 2003; Kotter, 2008)? Or are the changes rather, as argued by more critical voices, to be interpreted as a primarily economic expansion of profit maximization into the private life of employees (Smith, 2006; also cf. Grey, 1994; Thompson and Ackroyd, 1995)?

In answering calls for approaches that broaden existing theoretical repertoires and go beyond one-sided conceptions of work-related mobility (Costas, 2013), this article explores the theoretical framework developed by Boltanski’s *sociology of critique* (Boltanski, 2012 [1990]; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006 [1991]; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) and argues that this framework offers a fruitful perspective. Its focus on the evolution of capitalism allows one to chart the economic and material conditions of mobility critically, while its sociology of morals also allows us to see the distinctly *normative* side of current demands for mobility without succumbing to a celebratory idea of a new moral utopia. While the controversial overall diagnosis of *The new spirit of capitalism* (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005) has received extensive attention in the literature, there is still, as argued by Boxenbaum (2014) and Pernkopf-Konhäuser (2014), something to be gained by looking more closely at its underlying theoretical framework, including the *order of worth* model developed in the earlier works of Boltanski and Thévenot (1989, 1999, 2006 [1991]). In the context of this article, I specifically focus on how this underlying framework implies going beyond the dichotomy between economic value and moral values in defining mobility while highlighting how the order of worth model bears on the investigation of the legitimacy and attractiveness of work-related mobility.

In addition, I will address the attractiveness of mobility by applying the sociology of critique perspective to the context of the ‘kinetic elite’ (Costas, 2013; Cresswell, 2006). Following Cresswell (2006), the ‘kinetic elite’ designates a group of highly versatile and often well-paid and mobile project workers employed in knowledge-intensive industries, such as diplomacy, banking (Elliot and Urry, 2010), or consultancy (Costas, 2013). Given the ambivalence of forced forms of

mobility prevalent among immigrant workers (Bauman, 1998, 2007) and temporary workers (Garsten, 1999) in particular, one should refrain from asserting mobility as universally attractive. Nevertheless, Costas (2013: 1476), following Augé (1995), has rightly noted that mobility does possess a ‘power of attraction’ in the context of creative or knowledge-intensive work. Equally, Garsten (2008: 50) points out that mobility has indeed acquired a ‘prestigious and glamorous ring’. The question explored here is *why* this is the case: Why is a highly mobile and project-oriented working life attractive in the first place? In discussing this question, I add to the mainly theoretically driven re-interpretation of work-related mobility by referring to accounts given by three exemplars of the ‘kinetic elite’: (1) a successful entrepreneur and consultant, (2) an international UN diplomat and (3) an international private banker. This allows for an exemplary illustration of the mobility experienced by the elite group of highly mobile and well-paid workers who belong to what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) call ‘projective capitalism’. My analysis does not reveal an experience of mobility as being free of tension and ambiguity. Even in this elite group, the ideal of being mobile is often perceived as a problematic imperative, yet nevertheless rewarding and worth living up to. The empirical exemplars thus illustrate how the attractiveness of a working life ‘on the move’ is articulated in distinctively normative terms.

The article is structured as follows: First, I present the theoretical background to the sociology of critique and argue for the necessity of conceptualizing mobility beyond an opposition between economic value and moral values. Second, I lay out the conceptual architecture of Boltanski and Chiapello’s approach and contrast it with other positions in social theory to clarify its distinctive focus and ability to analyze mobility. In doing so, I focus on how mobility is implicated in Boltanski and Chiapello’s analysis of the emergence of a specific projective form of capitalism and ‘projective order of worth’ more generally. Third, I briefly introduce the method used in the analysis of the empirical material before ending with an analysis and discussion of how mobility functions as a motivating and normatively tainted category among the ‘kinetic elite’.

### **Conceptualizing mobility beyond the opposition of ‘value’ and ‘values’**

The key theoretical ambition of Boltanski and Chiapello’s *The new spirit of capitalism* (2005) and of French pragmatic sociology more generally (e.g. Boltanski and Thévenot, 1989, 2006 [1991]; Thévenot, 2006; see also Cloutier and Langley, 2013; Jagd, 2011; Stark, 2009; Wagner, 1999) is the breaking of the so-called Parsonian Pact. According to ‘Parson’s Pact’, moral values are to be studied by sociology and philosophy, while economic value is to be studied by

economics (cf. Velthuis, 1999 for a historical analysis of the emergence of the Parsonian Pact within the social sciences). Rather than accepting such a split, Boltanski and Chiapello encourage a short-circuit of the rigid distinction between a sociological concept of values and an economic concept of value. Their explicit theoretical ambition is therefore to chart the interconnections between the normative constitution of society and the productive forces of capitalism. Parson's Pact suggests that we must choose a single vantage point – either value or values, either economy or social relations (Stark, 2009). Such a forced choice, I suggest, leads to an inept way of looking at the current stress on mobility within organizations and beyond. If analyzed as a purely social phenomenon, mobility would seem like an idle cog with no real economic causality, and if looked at from an exclusively economic viewpoint, mobility would seem like a mere advertising trick for an already inexorable economic logic.

Instead, one must look at work-related mobility as a substantial moral phenomenon with real economic, social and organizational effects. Such an approach has also been put forward by many of the refined attempts to develop a non-reductive account of how moral codes and ethics function within organizations, and by attempts to chart how employees and managers constitute themselves as specifically moral subjects (e.g. Clegg et al., 2007; Ibarra-Colado et al., 2006; Loacker and Muhr, 2009; Muhr et al., 2010; Weiskopf and Willmott, 2013). This tradition of practice-based approaches to business ethics has covered a diverse range of topics (for a brief overview see Wray-Bliss, 2009), and although the sociology of critique limits its focus to the orders of worth that guide compromise and conflict, these two perspectives concur in two important ways. Firstly, they treat the practical base of morality as crucial; and secondly, they regard morality as an empirical object to be studied rather than a set of abstract, prescriptive standards. Nevertheless, what makes the detour into re-reading and engaging with Boltanski's sociology of critique worthwhile is the particular connections to the broader arrangements of capitalism and social critique that it allows one to make.

In making such connections, *The new spirit of capitalism* makes itself vulnerable to objections from several sides. Some have advanced the critique that the book is too obsessed with the inevitable economic logic of capitalist exploitation (basically, it is too Marxist), whereas others have complained that it is too idealistic and insufficiently concerned with the dynamics of financial capitalism in failing to locate its discussion of 'spirit' within political economy; in other words, it is not Marxist enough (see Parker, 2013; Willmott, 2013). In breaking Parson's Pact, Boltanski and Chiapello's aim is, however, to avoid *both* economic reductivism and naïve forms of idealism (Boltanski, 2011b). More specifically, they argue that the analysis of the qualitative changes in the modes of organizing

during recent decades cannot be described exhaustively in terms of neo-classical economy or in classical Marxist terms as a way in which firms increasingly exploit what economists would call ‘positive externalities’ (knowledge, creativity, innovation, the desires of movement and freedom, etc.). Rather, these changes must also be seen as containing a distinctively moral side – a correlative modification of the *spirit* of capitalism – which could justify changes in the first place. Likewise, the change in the conception of mobility among organizations and the labour force cannot be described merely as an empty ideological effect of a much more thorough exploitation of labour. It must also be seen as containing a genuine way of evaluating typical social situations and of justifying action.

However, Willmott (2013: 101-103) is right to point out that it is an impediment to the application of Boltanski and Chiapello’s framework that they have not been very generous in describing their method *vis-à-vis* other approaches in social theory. Accordingly, I will place the underlying framework of Boltanski and Chiapello’s analysis in relation to a series of reasonably well-known theoretical positions by addressing the question: What conceptual architecture is required for breaking the Parsonian pact and for conceptualizing work-related mobility as both a moral and economic phenomenon? I will first address the question of what norms and moral values amount to in their account and then proceed to describe the interrelations of values with the economic phenomena of today.

*Examining norms: Postmodernism or Habermas? No thanks!*

What theoretical commitments must one take on in order to engage in a serious study of the normative frameworks that are active in today’s economy? First of all, it is necessary to distance oneself from the naïve ‘brand’ of postmodernism, which postulates that the dissolution of the grand narratives of modernity leads to a condition where all normative demands cease and where all forms of justification are equally valid and therefore essentially all invalid (cf. Callinicos, 1991). In opposing such views, Boltanski and Chiapello ally with Weber (1968: 31-33) in maintaining that the foundational question of sociology does not concern which norms are theoretically valid or invalid; rather, the foundational question concerns which norms are actually in force in contemporary societies. The basic problem is not the *abstract validity* of particular norms, but rather the *actual efficacy* of societal norms. On this level, it can easily be ascertained empirically that certain norms operate in contemporary society. When considering the prevalence of values such as ‘adaptability’, ‘flexibility’ or the importance of ‘staying on the move’ in the present labour market generally, and especially among the ‘kinetic elite’ (Costas, 2013; Cresswell, 2006; Elliot and Urry, 2010), it is therefore irrelevant whether such values are theoretically valid

or whether they belong to an outdated form of modernity, for it is a matter of their actual efficacy.

Boltanski's pragmatic sociology further opposes the critique of postmodernism articulated within Habermasian sociology (cf. Habermas, 1990). The Habermasian program of universal pragmatics has also emphasized normativity as an essential feature of contemporary society, but it has conceived normative prescriptions as clustered around a single, universal and quasi-transcendental structure. In contrast, Boltanski has empirically charted a plurality of mutually irreducible moral grammars. Boltanski's earlier work with Laurent Thévenot thus aims to identify the different and actually existing moral grammars within which actions and actors are evaluated (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006 [1991]).

The emphasis on the actual rather than ideal forms of morality is important in understanding the aim of the sociology of critique and the sense in which mobility might be said to have a moral function within contemporary capitalism. The aim is not, as for Habermas and other strands of critical theory, to develop a morally informed sociology – an, as it were, *moralizing* sociology – but rather to develop a sociology of morals and critique. In that sense, the sociology of critique supplements critical sociology, which bombards practice with its own prescriptions, by marking a return to the Weberian ambition of studying actually existing forms of social morality. The guiding idea, which has also recently been called for in organization studies (Boxenbaum, 2014; Brandl et al., 2014; Cloutier and Langley, 2013; Pernkopf-Konhäusner, 2014), is that the actors themselves are competent critics. Far from being 'judgmental dopes' (to use Garfinkel's expression), actors are instead deemed capable of competently navigating different moral grammars in justifying their actions and resolving conflict. Within this investigation, morality is connected empirically to a series of *orders of worth* that each contain (1) a specification of value, (2) a definition of worthy individuals and (3) a moral grammar for the evaluation of actions.

Boltanski and Thévenot (2006 [1991]) traced six such competing orders of worth in contemporary societies: the *inspirational* regime, the *domestic* regime, the regime of *fame* or opinion, the *civic* regime, the *market* regime and the *industrial* regime. These regimes all delineate forms of relative agreement that actors utilize in identifying social situations and in justifying their position in relation to pertinent conflicts or dilemmas. In *The new spirit of capitalism*, a seventh order of worth is added in which mobility is a key element, namely the projective regime [fr. *la cité par projet*]. As Bruno Latour (2005: 23) has noted, the mere move from the assumption that agents justify actions within *one* moral frame to the assumption that several such frames may be implicated adds an impressive analytical and empirical strength to the sociology of critique. These different



regimes have incommensurable moral grammars when compared with each other, but what is common to all of these regimes or orders of worth is that they serve as forms of justification in the process of finding legitimate solutions to social conflicts. In this way, social conflicts spanning from local disputes in a nursing home over debates on research strategies to collective wage negotiations can be seen as clashes between different procedures for legitimate justification.

In the later sections focusing on the ‘kinetic elite’, I will elaborate on the sense in which mobility is implicated in moral conflicts and contributes to determining a specific sort of worthy individual. Having sketched the analytical status of societal values and having pointed to a few places in which such values and forms of moral justification impinge on the study of mobility as a distinctively moral phenomenon, I will now look at how this connects with the economic diagnosis of the present put forward in *The new spirit of capitalism*.

### *Capitalism saturated with values*

Economists and organizational theorists have spoken of the new ‘knowledge economy’, ‘experience economy’ or ‘creative economy’, but too often such changes in the conditions for value creation have been articulated as if they were not particularly connected to capitalism (Kristensen, 2008: 88). There are notable exceptions – one could mention the theory of ‘soft’ capitalism (Thrift, 1998) or ‘informational’ capitalism (Castells, 1996; Hardt and Negri, 2000) – but what is distinctive of Boltanski and Chiapello’s work is their sociological engagement with organizational phenomena and ideas.

Rather than rejecting the concept of capitalism as a leftover from the 1970s, Boltanski and Chiapello perform a nuanced critique of the Marxist concepts of ideology and false consciousness while maintaining the Marxist insight into the formal character of capitalism. This formal character is expressed by Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005: 371) concise definition of capitalism: ‘Capitalism [is] a process striving for an ever greater accumulation of capital measured by a monetary value’. As a pure procedure for the accumulation of monetary value, capitalism is not essentially tied to any set of ethical values or even to any specific sort of political system. Boltanski and Chiapello are by no means alone in maintaining this insight. Deleuze and Guattari have similarly emphasized the formal character of capitalism by analyzing it as an ‘axiomatic’ (1987: 436), just as Slavoj Žižek (2006: 181) has pointed out that the present globalized capitalism is not tied to a particular culture or political system. Today, one can find western capitalism, fascist capitalism, arabic capitalism and even, as underlined by a recent special issue of *ephemera*, communist capitalism (Beverungen et al., 2013). Accordingly, the originality of Boltanski and Chiapello’s approach does not lie in

their formal determination of capitalism, but rather in the consequences that they draw from this insight: Capitalism is formally a value-free procedure of accumulation, but that is *exactly why* it is always saturated with norms and values. Since capitalism in its formal sense does not contain its own justification immanently, it must seek and lend itself normative support from other sources. Consequently, it is precisely because of its formal normative neutrality that capitalism is always normatively saturated and driven by a particular set of values (Presskorn-Thygesen, 2015).

When it comes to the specific content of such a set of values, capitalism is paradoxically sensitive to the forms of critique that it is subjected to. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 27) write, capitalism ‘needs its enemies, people whom it outrages and who are opposed to it, to find the moral supports it lacks and to incorporate mechanisms of justice whose relevance it would otherwise have no reason to acknowledge’. For Weber (2001 [1905]), the ‘spirit’ of capitalism denoted the set of ethical motivations which, although totally foreign to the logic of capitalist accumulation itself, could support the calling of making money. Critique serves a similar purpose for Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 20), since capitalism, faced with the need of justification, latches on to the pre-existing normative and critical positions whose legitimacy is already guaranteed. To these pre-established normative and critical positions, capitalism ‘only’ adds one distinctive twist, namely, the exigency of capital accumulation. It is the historical development and integration of such forms of critique, particularly from 1968 onwards, that is the primary empirical object of study in *The new spirit of capitalism*.

The focus on the historical development marks a departure from Boltanski’s work with Thévenot (2006 [1991]), for while the exact historical genesis of the different orders of worth tracked in the earlier work were left somewhat unclear (cf. Lepetit, 1995) *The new spirit of capitalism* can be seen as responding to that challenge by charting the genesis of the projective order of worth and insisting on its historicity. For several decades, disciplines such as business economics, sociology and the psychology of work found it sufficient to denote the historical period after 1968 with a number of negatively defined terms such as the ‘post-industrial’ society or ‘post-Tayloristic’ forms of organizing (Kristensen, 2008). Contrary to such a tendency of merely adding the prefix ‘post’, Boltanski and Chiapello supply us with a new, positively defined and historically specified diagnosis by suggesting that today’s form of capitalist organization is of a distinctively *projective* form. In the following section, I will address the characteristics of this new form of projective capitalism and then proceed to describe how it emerges as a historical response to criticism, thus adding to Boltanski and Chiapello’s analysis by focusing on mobility specifically.

*Projective capitalism, critique, and the demand for mobility*

What is distinctive about capitalism after 1968 – considered through a purely economic lens – is the degree to which knowledge, creativity and networks become increasingly important to the economic system (Moulier-Boutang, 2012). Even though classical industrial forms of production are perhaps still *quantitatively* dominant on an international scale, the new forms of projective and cognitive modes of productions are *qualitatively* dominant. In other words, the new forms of production relate to industry as industry related to agriculture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: as the qualitatively, if not yet quantitatively, dominant mode of production.

Technically speaking, what occurs in this development is the increasing economic exploitation of the whole assemblage of ‘positive externalities’ related to human subjectivity. The effective employment of human knowledge, creativity, language and experience as productive resources is, of course, dependent upon a number of communication, digital and transport technologies that ensure that such things cannot only be stored and commodified, but also accessed and exchanged with little effort. Mobility within knowledge work is obviously contingent upon such technologies. It is, as explored by Böhm et al. (2006), contingent upon planes and high-speed trains as potential places of work, and perhaps even more decisively on the portable digital technologies that allow individuals to work and stay in touch with project partners (Dyer-Witheford et al., 2010). The thesis in *The new spirit of capitalism* is, however, that economic and technical developments are also correlative to and partly conditioned by changes in the normative values of society.

The recent change in the spirit of capitalism, as diagnosed by Boltanski and Chiapello, is the emergence of a new order of worth related to project-oriented forms of organizing. In empirically ‘tracking’ this regime, Boltanski and Chiapello focus on novel forms of government, management and leadership and accordingly combine historical analysis with a massive study and textual analysis of management literature published in-between 1960 and 1999.<sup>1</sup> The emergence

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1 Two main methodological objections to this empirical method have been raised by organizational scholars (Willmott, 2013): Firstly, Boltanski and Chiapello’s source material is primarily of French origin: Only 18 of the 126 books analyzed are English and none are of non-Western origin. Secondly, their empirical study omits whole traditions of critical organizational research. They do not analyze works from the influential labour process theory inspired by Braverman (1998 [1974]), just as they fail to touch upon the classics of the CMS movement (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). While of a generic kind, the first criticism hits the mark: Although the managerial and ideological scene of France is obviously not insular and relevantly similar to those of many other western countries, hasty and non-careful

of this new projective order of worth can gradually be traced until it seemingly becomes dominant in the 1990s, where it is increasingly clear that management theory and practice are orienting themselves towards a new set of values. In 1992, Peter F. Drucker, who had been hailed as a management guru since the 1946 publication of *The Concept of the Corporation*, wrote that management had experienced a 'big bang'. Following Drucker's (1992) characterization of this 'big bang' as consisting in the organization being turned 'upside down', Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 71) describe the profound change as 'a subversion of hierarchies'. The new set of values is governed by a 'connexionist logic' that prescribes a flat, flexible and network-based organization and a group of project-minded employees who constantly form new relations and constellations. Hierarchical forms of organization are left behind as 'bureaucratic', whereas organizations characterized by fluid networks are deemed faster and more innovative. These changes are normatively justified with reference to an anti-authoritarian demand for more worker influence and values such as autonomy, flexibility and creativity (*ibid.*: 326; see also Ekman, 2013; Fleming, 2009; Murtola and Fleming, 2011).

The (in)famous biting irony of Boltanski and Chiapello's diagnosis occurs when one considers the origin of these values: They can partially be tracked back to the ideals of May 1968. These ideals were articulated precisely as the striving for increased autonomy, self-realization and creativity. Accordingly, the protester of May '68 nowadays appears like the perfect model of an employee in a modern consultancy firm. Beyond such crude irony, however, May '68 is only important as an event that epitomizes the peak of a brief and fleeting convergence of two much broader and historically diverse strands of criticism directed against capitalism, namely, the social critique and the artistic critique (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 169-202; Chiapello, 2013).

The *artistic critique* in its modern form begins to exert a strong influence on society and capitalism from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the artist was no longer a mere artisan, but also a cultural figure. The artistic critique often formulated itself exactly in terms of an opposition between mobility and stability. The artist, whose paradigmatic example could be Baudelaire, is a 'nomadic' free thinker who remains detached from all earthly possessions and as such stands opposed to 'the bourgeoisie', an entity rooted in property while remaining

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generalizations should always be avoided. The second objection has a partial rebuttal at least, since Boltanski and Chiapello's methodological selection criteria *deliberately* ignore critical studies of management (see Boltanski and Chiapello 2005: 60-63). The authors argue that the *Zeitgeist* of management is most aptly captured in its proponents, and they are thus only interested in texts that are 'practical' and 'directive' in terms of how to conduct business.

devoted to the trivialities of everyday routine (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 38). The *social critique* has an alternative source of indignation that stems from early French socialism and assumes its paradigmatic form in the writings of Marx. In promoting social concerns, it attacks egoism, the dominance of special interests and the divide between the active poor and the idle rich. In criticizing capitalism, it denounces poverty, inequality and hierarchy and promotes equality and dynamic forms of social organization.

Going beyond Boltanski and Chiapello's own analysis, I would add that it is worth noting that mobility also played a key historical role in the social forms of critique. As Koselleck (2002) notes, the demand for geographical mobility was a headline in the campaign for the abolition of feudalist compulsory labor during the French Revolution and more generally in Europe at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. After the abolition of serfdom, farmers and working men were to a greater degree free to leave the estates that employed them; but this change was initially a legal rather than real socio-economic change (*ibid.*: 158). A few decades later, when the critical agenda had moved on to social and economic conditions, mobility, now in the guise of social and class mobility, emerged as a key term. Indeed, as Koselleck notes in his *Begriffsgeschichten* (2006: 433), the emergence of the very concept of a 'middle class' in the 1830s was closely tied to that of social mobility. The important concept of middle class, which could assert its rights towards the state and private companies, only emerged on the background of an idea of social mobility and at the very moment when social mobility seemed like a real possibility.

Despite the indicated common emphasis on mobility, the artistic critique and the social critique were often mutually conflicting. Social critique frequently deplored the egoism of artists while the artistic critique often accused socialism of censoring creativity. Nevertheless, they share the common fate of having provided some of the terms that lend legitimacy to projective capitalism. Boltanski and Chiapello, for instance, meticulously analyze how the anti-state rhetoric of the 1970s changed its critical direction and was absorbed into capitalism. Taking the denouncement of the compromise between state and capitalism ('state monopoly capitalism') as its point of departure, social critique in the 1970s criticized the state as 'a monopoly of violence' and as an 'ideological bureaucracy'. This libertarian rhetoric resembled that of liberalism to the point that such criticisms became neo-liberal 'without knowing it' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 202). The gradual emergence of a projective form of capitalism is, in other words, simultaneously the story of how the very terms of criticism

that were initially directed *against* capitalism grew into a normative foundation *supporting* capitalism.<sup>2</sup>

In abstract but concise terms, Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005: 53) model of critique aims at examining how capitalism ensures the motivated participation of the labour force, given that capitalism always tends towards making such participation impossible. Indeed, the key concept of a 'spirit' of capitalism is rooted in this contradiction in the sense that the spirit of capitalism aims at mobilizing the labour force by providing an ethical or normative motivation for working that capitalism cannot fully establish by itself. What was once a critique of capitalism now takes the guise of an 'ethic of work' that is genuinely motivating for the actors within capitalism. In the empirical section, I look at how this new order of worth plays out in relation to mobility in more concrete and empirical terms: Why is the nomadic life of more or less constant mobility worthwhile? What morality is detectable in this trait pertaining to at least the elite group of contemporary knowledge workers? What sense of 'worth' and 'greatness' can be detected in this form of work?

## Methodology

In order to address the questions outlined above, the paper refers to empirical material stemming from semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted to explore understandings, justifications and ideas concerning mobility and to exemplify how mobility is depicted within the projective order of worth. Semi-structured interviews, in contrast to rigid 'talking questionnaires' (Alvesson, 2003; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), allow for an open exploration and documentation of the respondents' experience, knowledge and ideas related to a research topic. As such, semi-structured interviews are a particularly useful tool in reflexively exploring theoretical constructs (Alvesson, 2003). In accordance with the methodological perspective set forth by the sociology of critique, the conducted interviews specifically aimed at exploring the moral evaluations and justifications of mobility in the context of the 'kinetic elite' (Cresswell, 2006). Methodologically, the empirical analysis thus wishes to make explicit how exemplars of an elite group of workers frame and understand mobility.

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2 In explaining how such criticisms are integrated into capitalism, it is enlightening, as pointed out by Larsen (2011), to supplement Boltanski and Chiapello's argument with Foucault's idea of discourses as being 'tactically polyvalent' (Foucault, 1976: 132). For Foucault, the tactical polyvalence of discourses indicates that the direction of critical discourses is not always uniform and that critical terms are often applied contextually and tactically instead. Boltanski and Chiapello's analysis of the social and artistic critique is precisely concerned with such changes and reversals in the direction of critical discourses.

More specifically, I draw on three exemplars of the 'kinetic elite': (1) *Peter*, a Danish entrepreneur and business consultant presently involved in five geographically dispersed start-up companies in Denmark within sectors spanning from consultancy to agriculture; (2) *Mary*, a Danish UN diplomat, who has lived on four continents during the last four years taking up different diplomatic positions in New York, Kabul, Copenhagen and Addis Ababa; and (3) *Eisner*, an English and highly successful private banker working on several projects and dividing his time between London and New York. Among the respondents, a dual sense of 'mobility' is exemplified in that they undertake *shifting* projects in *geographically dispersed* settings, thus making frequent travel and movement a necessity (Cresswell, 2006). The analysis of Peter and Mary is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews I have conducted. The interviews focused upon experiences of mobility, work schedules, family issues, network activities, and roles and shifts within projects. The interviews were recorded, fully transcribed and followed up with clarificatory correspondence. The analysis of Eisner's case, however, is based on a re-interpretation of interviews and qualitative data presented in Elliott and Urry (2010). The case is used because of its highly illustrative qualities as to the 'lure of mobility' (Costas, 2013).

While caution is, of course, needed in using empirical material stemming from another study, e.g. because the full context of the data is unknown and the full transcripts cannot be checked etc., this approach also indicates the role of the empirical cases in the present article: They serve as no more, but also no less, than *illustrative exemplars* aiming to show how the present injunction to be mobile works in the context of the 'kinetic elite' (for a methodological discussion of illustrative cases see e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2006). The aim is not to establish generalizations about the perception of mobility among elite workers or other occupational groups like, for example, temporary workers (Garsten, 1999). Rather and similar to Garmann Johnsen and Meier Sørensen's (2014) analysis of elite consultants, I utilize the empirical exemplars to illustrate and explore the possibilities and explanatory power of a broader theoretical frame, namely, Boltanski's sociology of critique.

During the process of conducting and analyzing the interviews, I have focused on the ambiguities of work-related mobility and on the question of why a mobile life might seem attractive to the interviewees. The perspective from the sociology of critique makes this question pertinent since it highlights that the question cannot be answered easily by adopting what Ricoeur (1991) and Rancière (2004) have diagnosed as a problematic and suspicious paternalism towards the actors, namely that of assuming that they must suffer from some form of 'false consciousness' (Boltanski, 2012; Paulsen Hansen, 2014). On a methodological level, the sociology of critique implies that the actors' moral judgments of

attractiveness, greatness and justice cannot be dismissed as simple ideological distortions. Instead, one should devote serious attention to the type of moral vocabulary that they use in justifying their mobile way of working. In the empirical analysis, I thus pay special attention to the way in which Mary, Peter and Eisner articulate a reflexive awareness of conflicting demands of their working lives and how they justify being constantly on the move. In the subsequent discussion, I link the empirical insights to broader theoretical concerns. Specifically, I will apply the concept of a projective order of worth to discuss the morality inherent to the imperative of being mobile.

### Empirical analysis

The empirical cases Mary, Peter and Eisner, belong to different professions concomitant with different degrees of mobility. While Peter, an entrepreneur and business consultant, is usually 'on the road', Mary's work as an international diplomat takes her from continent to continent. What ties them together, however, is not only the trait typical for the elite class to which they belong – namely, the absence of a fixed workplace and their work on several projects – but also a reflexive articulation of their mobility as containing both drawbacks and an attractive side. As previously indicated, the empirical analysis of the cases of Mary, Peter and Eisner focuses on this ambiguous experience of mobility and on the question of why a constantly mobile life might seem attractive.

Peter, for instance, articulates a clear sense of the possible drawbacks and conflicting demands of his mobile life. Currently in his early 40s, Peter is hired as a business consultant at a branch of a prominent Scandinavian investment firm, but he also simultaneously devotes himself to new startup companies and business projects in various parts of Denmark. With reference to his family and his engagement in multiple geographically dispersed projects and business ventures, Peter articulates the following potential drawback:

My greatest challenge is to define when I am working and when I am not working. It is a challenge, since I can work on the train, here [at the investment firm], at the countryside or at home.

Peter is well aware of the challenges pertaining to the stressfulness of his work and the possible lines of critique that can be raised against his way of working. Nevertheless, Peter seems to incorporate this critique into an explanation of why his way of working is attractive and even worth demanding:

You need to be mobile and flexible in order to adapt to the growing amount of changes that characterize business life, but some people can't handle it. Some



people don't have flexible muscles, and so their muscles cramp. But I can handle it. And I wouldn't live without it. I consciously look for variation.

Asked about the relative job insecurity of a working life consisting of multiple projects, Peter acknowledges a certain degree of insecurity, but reverses the potential line of critique by stating that he has always regarded his wife's steady source of income as a nurse as 'much more insecure', since while she could be laid off at any moment, he will always have several projects and partners to rely on.

In a similar manner, Mary, an international diplomat in her mid-30s who is married but without children, acknowledges the ambivalences involved in moving from continent to continent for diplomatic posts at foreign embassies. She admits that other people have often found her nomadic life somewhat bizarre; nonetheless, she states that:

What above all characterizes this sort of mobile life is that the border for what is 'normal' is moved. The sort of border for what you just do without finding it weird. When I tell of my plans, other people often say: 'Alright, that sounds nuts' [laughs]. But I'll just do it. I'll just throw myself into it. Conversely, other people often have a routinized everyday life of exactly the sort that I try to avoid.

Mary, furthermore, articulates mobility as a necessity in acquiring 'the right partners' and justifies the often stressful absence of an ordinary 9 to 5 working day with reference to a mutually beneficial connection between mobility and networking:

It's just more attractive to be abroad. You get a larger network and I live off having a large network. It [work in diplomacy] is a system in which access to people and information is essential. And that's also why it is impossible to have a 9 to 5 working day. If there is a late night reception in New York with some interesting people, you show up. You have to be able to work at all times, because other people also work at all times. On the other hand, this is also the interesting thing about meeting new people. Everyone's performance is optimized by having good partners.

Like Peter, however, she also emphasizes the pressure concomitant with work-related mobility. In particular, she mentions living without the comforts of 'routine' and the safety remaining 'bound to one place'. Mary describes the characteristics of someone not fit for her job in the following way:

A person who likes routine and to stay in one place does not fit in. A person, who likes to work one case at a time. Someone who likes to have fixed goals. Persons who prefer to co-operate with a fixed set of people. That would be my personal impression of someone who would not be able to make it.

In the case of Peter and Mary, mobility is articulated as an often problematic imperative, but as one which is nevertheless rewarding and worth living up to. The ability to meet this imperative is articulated as ‘marking’ them as a particular sort of individual, and in both cases the justification in response to critique is that mobility provides flexibility and allows avoiding routine. While Peter acknowledges certain challenges of simultaneous involvements in geographically dispersed firms resulting in the fact that ‘there is no such thing as a typical working week’, he still claims to ‘thrive on complexity and chaos’. Mary goes on to praise mobility – in the dual sense of shifting tasks and frequent travels – in similar terms:

It [mobility] gives you the feeling of having challenged yourself. Of constantly gaining new insight. Of having widened your horizon. It is incredibly inspiring. Perhaps it is the experience of freedom. I don’t know. But it frees you from routines and provides new opportunities.

Such a portrayal of mobility is consistent with how mobility is presented in Elliot and Urry’s (2010) work. One of their main empirical cases, Eisner, is a successful English banker and consultant in his 40s with teenage children. He has a wide-ranging background and holds multiple positions. Currently he is hired for a project in the London branch of an investment bank. His presence at the bank’s New York branch is, however, also required several times a month, and he also travels to do consultancy work for clients he acquired in his previous jobs (*ibid.*: 70-71). Eisner sketches a normal day in the following way:

Usually, I am up at around five in morning and at the office by six thirty. I meet with clients throughout the day, which more often than not involves email and phone calls – unless I am meeting a client for lunch. I go home at about seven, have dinner and try to find some time to talk on the phone with my teenage daughter – who is at a boarding school. Then it’s back to paperwork and late night conference calls. (Elliott and Urry, 2010: 71)

As noted by Elliot and Urry, it seems that Eisner hardly experiences the physical mobility of bankers’ intercontinental travels and everyday working practices as burdensome. A lack of immediately noticing and/or experiencing travel is also reflected in an account given by Mary. Yet she acknowledges that travelling can also lead to a sense of ambivalence and confusion:

Very seldom, I get these moments of confusion where I can’t really remember what country I’m in, what the currency is and so forth. But normally, travelling is hardly experienced as anything extraordinary. It has to be more and more extreme for you to register it as ‘something’.

When Georg Simmel (1976 [1903]) wrote on the new hectic metropolitan life a century ago, travels by train or car were still experienced in ‘isolation’ as unique

events, while travelling by plane hardly stands out for Mary or Eisner (Elliott and Urry, 2010: 60). Eisner articulates mobility with reference to 'short-term projects, business on the move' and adds that he, like Mary and Peter, flourishes on 'complexity' (*ibid.*: 70). As Eisner points out, his main talent is making shifts among places and projects seem easy. Whether acting as an expert on real estate, a networker or as an invest banker, his talent is 'to make any contradictions between these roles appear untroubling' (*ibid.*: 73). Urry and Elliot note that there is an 'attractive, indeed seductive' quality to Eisner's way of working and Eisner himself confides that his lifestyle is the envy of friends and acquaintances. But, what makes such a way of working attractive and what, apart from the obvious economic benefits, would make such a mobile and fast-paced life 'high status' and worthy of both envy and desire? Mary appreciates the economic benefits of 'moving around', but simultaneously emphasizes the necessity of 'liking mobility' and finding it attractive in its own right:

It used to be economically attractive to be placed abroad as a diplomat. But it is not that advantageous any more. Now you have to do it [being mobile] because you like it. But, it *will* tend to further your career.

In the following discussion, I will apply the notion of the order of worth to the evaluations of work-related mobility evoked in the three exemplars of the 'kinetic elite'. This allows me to explore and discuss why and in what sense mobility currently appears as an attractive sign of worthiness.

## Discussion

Ibarro et al. (2006: 52) have argued that ethics and morality in organizations cannot adequately be conceptualized as something that is *controlled* by management. It must also be seen as taking the form of a demand posed to management. Following this general suggestion, it could be contended that a key to understanding mobility as incarnating a form of morality in high-end working lives would be to appreciate how mobility is not just a demand imposed on employees from management, but equally a demand posed *by* the employees. As pointed out by Costas et al. (2013: 16), the presence of such a demand can easily be missed in analyses of the many pitfalls of projective forms of organizing referring, for instance, to the issue of relative job insecurity (Hassard et al., 2012), the difficulties of maintaining a proper work-life balance (Raastrup Kristensen, 2010), or the emotional stress of being constantly on the move (Pedersen, 2008). Despite all these 'real' material problems, mobility and the constant engagement with multiple networks seem to be experienced as an attractive state (Costas, 2013; Garsten, 2008: 50).

In relating work-related mobility to economic benefits, Mary's above-quoted account seems to indicate precisely that mobility is both an attractive end in itself ('you do it because you like it') *and* a means to an end ('it *will* tend to further your career'). This duality corresponds to a point from Boltanski's pragmatic sociology that bridges the divide between economic value and moral values: Even forms of economic organization must, in order to be motivating and attractive, be able to engage its actors by convincing them that they contribute, at least potentially, to a common good (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006 [1991]). This is the basic role fulfilled by the work ethic associated with the projective order of worth (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

As indicated earlier, an order of worth contains a specification of value, a determination of worthy individuals and a moral grammar for the evaluation of actions. Phrased more formally, the order of worth model requires a *basic equality* among the actors, which does not exclude differences, but rather enables a meritocratic scale of *justified differences* among the actors. Specific persons cannot, a priori, be deemed worthy, but as a result of their *activity* worthy and unworthy persons can be distinguished from each other by means of various *tests*. Everyone can gain access to worthiness, in principle, but certain *investments* are required. Since such investments and efforts seemingly work towards a common good, it is not considered unjust for some people to have greater worth [*grandeur*] than others (Albertsen, 2008; Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991).

Mary, Peter and Eisner's mobility practices are conditioned by their involvement in multiple, geographically dispersed projects – and within the projective order of worth, the basic form of *activity* that differentiates worthy or great persons from those of lesser worth and greatness is precisely that of project work. Unlike other schemes of evaluation, such as those analyzed under the heading of the industrial order of worth (cf. Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006 [1991]: 118-124), this form of activity goes beyond stable waged work. The notion of a project blurs the dichotomies of stable/unstable activity, waged/non-waged work and, as pointed out in a study by Beyes and Krempf (2011), in some cases, it even transcends the opposition of work versus non-work. One could, however, argue that there are also traces of the inspirational order of worth (cf. Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006 [1991]: 83-90) in the accounts given by the three respondents. Most clearly exhibited in theological ideas of revelation, the inspirational order of worth is a moral frame of reference that places emphasis on 'imaginative' individuals who have received a kind of 'spiritual' revelation, and as such it evaluates worthiness and attractiveness in terms of achieving inspiration and insight. In Mary's account of mobility as being 'incredibly inspiring' and engendering an experience of 'gaining new insight' one can e.g. see elements of such a vocabulary in play. Nevertheless, and in contrast to the inspirational order of

worth, what is practiced and articulated in the case of Mary, Peter and Eisner is not a moral set of values aimed at a life of spiritual contemplation. On the contrary, and as exemplified by Peter's diverse portfolio of projects, activity and variation are encouraged regardless of whether it concerns waged work, unstable consultancy work, involvement in politics or charitable work. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 111) note, the moral grammar of a 'project' is broad: opening a business and closing a business are equally projects. They can all be undertaken with the same sense of heroism.

Within the projective order of worth, this secures a *basic equality* among actors. If a project can be almost anything, almost everyone can engage in a project. It is, however, crucial never to stick to just one project: One must always be adaptable, versatile, mobile and engaged on multiple fronts. As pointed out by, for instance, Chertkovskaya et al. (2013), constantly shifting projects in today's knowledge work is not exclusively experienced as risk taking, but also as a way of increasing one's employability. This point is also seized by Peter who states that he regards his wife's position as a nurse as 'much more insecure' than his – while she could be laid off, he will always have several overlapping projects to rely on.

Being mobile in the sense of successfully making the passage from one project to the next is of vital importance in evaluating claims of worth within the projective order of worth. If one conceives of social organization as if it were the scene of a trial where competent actors can legitimately make claims and challenge each other (Boltanski, 2013: 46), then the insecure passage from one project to the next functions as a *test* of the actors' pretensions to greatness (cf. Boltanski, 2002: 384; de Cock and Nyberg, forthcoming). You may be able to 'talk the talk' of being mobile, but the *test* of worthiness is if you manage to successfully pass from one project to another and thus be actually and continually engaged in several projects. When trying to explicate the morality and sense of justice inherent to the projective order of worth, it is important to note that a multiplicity of engagements cannot only serve as a personal 'asset' that potentially increases employability (having a broad and flexible portfolio of activities means never having to start from scratch), but also as something that works, at least with some plausibility, towards the common good. Being engaged in multiple projects means that the benefits of one's activities are spread out: one shares information, spreads the generation of profit, inspires others and exemplifies, by these means, the importance of *investing* in networking activities. Worthy individuals are distinguished from less worthy by their investments, that is, by 'sacrifices' that are made with the aim of contributing to common benefit (Thévenot, 1984). Sacrificing, for instance, the predictable safety of a 9 to 5 working day is then again part of what justifies the relative benefits of being mobile. To apply the language of investment, the privileges of worthy individuals are 'counter-

balanced' by their burdens (cf. Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006: 142). As also indicated by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 115-9), the benefits are not exclusively conceived of as personal; a large network is a personal asset in terms of receiving relevant information, but also an outlet for one's activities to work towards a common good. As Mary emphasized in her explanation of the apparent necessity of attending late night receptions in New York, 'everyone's performance is optimized by having good partners', and since 'access to people and information is essential' that is 'also why it is impossible to have a 9 to 5 working day.'

As suggested by Boltanski's pragmatic sociology, the connection to a common good is the key to the meritocratic and thus *justified* greatness of professionals like Eisner, Mary and Peter. At the lower end of the meritocratic scale in the projective order of worth, we find people who are immobile in the sense of being rooted in routine and sometimes bound to one place. As Mary states, a person who 'likes routine and to stay in one place does not fit in'. This is also emphasized by Peter who argues that a person with a preference for routine would not be able 'to make it'. Here the ability to handle the pressure of being mobile seems to be articulated as a moral accomplishment that differentiates oneself from those who are 'not able to make it'; or, to put it in Peter's words, those 'without flexible muscles'.

Conversely and at the very top of the meritocratic scale, we find professionals like Eisner, who claim the ability to easily make transitions between places and contexts to be their main talent. If the description of Eisner can be taken at face value, then his qualities seem like a mirror of the 'nomadic theology' inherent to today's conception of mobility. Put differently, Eisner appears as an almost exact incarnation of the 'ideal man' of the projective order of worth:

His [the ideal man's] principal quality is his mobility, his ability to move around without letting himself be impeded by boundaries, whether geographical or derived from professional or cultural affiliations, by hierarchical distances, by differences of status, role, origin, group, and to establish personal contact with other actors, who are often far removed socially or spatially. (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: 79)

As indicated by the framework behind the sociology of critique, the use of a meritocratic scale is, however, not merely to indicate an attractive position – it can just as easily be an instrument of critique. If certain organizational or societal structures prevent the mobility and flexibility of individuals, they thereby hinder possible ascendancy to greatness, and legitimate claims against such structures can be made. That is to say, the projective order of worth does not only serve to justify the greatness of certain individuals; it also motivates and serves as the

foundation of a *demand* for an increased mobility. While Mary and Peter do not convey the impression of a frictionless ‘cosmopolitan life’ (Beck, 2006) they, however, articulate a commitment and even a demand for the kind of flexibility that their work-related mobility implies and reflects. As a final remark, one could therefore utilize Koselleck’s (1995) vocabulary to say that the concept of mobility seems itself to have become a ‘concept of movement’ [*Bewegungsbegriffe*]; that is, a concept which offers an attractive promise to actors, thus moving and motivating them in certain ways despite their awareness that this promise might continually fail its unproblematic fulfillment.<sup>3</sup> In summary, the projective order of worth and its explication of this promise add to the clarification of how mobility functions as a motivating and normatively tainted category in today’s world of organizing. In this way, it indicates an explanation of the in itself remarkable fact that the word ‘mobilization’ has become another word for ‘motivation’ within currently prevalent discourses of management and work.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have aimed to show that the theoretical framework of Boltanski’s sociology of critique offers a fruitful perspective on work-related mobility and provides a conceptualization of mobility that allows us to indicate and analyze some of the much called for connections between mobility as a moral *and* a socio-economic phenomenon (Cresswell, 2006; Sheller, 2011). As many commentators have noticed (e.g. Bærenholdt, 2013; Sheller, 2011; Urry, 2007), the literature on mobility has often tended towards being caught in a false alternative between celebratory accounts that characterize new forms of mobility as enabling an unprecedented form of ‘nomadic freedom’, and pessimistic evaluations that characterize new forms of mobility as embodying a renewed form of exploitation. As I have argued in the theoretical exposition of Boltanski’s work with Thévenot (2006 [1991]) as well as Chiapello (2005), the sociology of critique and its breaking of ‘Parson’s Pact’ offer a perspective that goes beyond such ‘false alternatives’. On the one hand, it offers an analytical frame that allows us to historicize the conditions of mobility and to investigate its material and economic prerequisites, while on the other hand it offers an empirically sensitive framework that does not lose sight of the sense in which the ideal of mobility inherent to projective forms of work has genuine appeal to the actors engaged in it.

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3 For Koselleck (1995), such promissory content is constitutive of the linguistic items belonging to the modern political and moral vocabulary and thus of concepts like ‘equality’ or ‘freedom’. These are concepts [*Begriffe*] which motivate and move actors [*Bewegungsbegriffe*] by being promises or pre-conceptions [*Vorgriffe*] of a desirable future, which may yet fail to realize itself and, therefore, has to be demanded.

The necessity of going beyond ‘false alternatives’ in the analysis of mobility is, furthermore, stressed by the article’s empirical illustrations of how the moral imperative of mobility works in the specific context of the ‘kinetic elite’. As noted by Costas (2013), many studies of this elite group of workers have tended towards a depiction of the group as living frictionless cosmopolitan lives. In short, they have been constructed as ‘postmodern surfers’, to use Grey’s (2002) popular metaphor. In contrast to such a one-sided depiction, the empirical cases analyzed in this article suggest a more nuanced picture in which work-related mobility emerges as a challenging and sometimes problematic imperative. Nevertheless, the empirical exemplars also present mobility as a rewarding imperative that is worth living up to. In aiming to explain this appeal of mobility, I have utilized Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005) notion of a projective order of worth to show how the mobile lives of professionals like Mary, Peter and Eisner can be related to the norms, ideals and the sense of worth inherent to this order.

In spite of emphasizing a moral aspect integrative to the forms of mobility found in the ‘kinetic elite’, it is important to note that the perspective suggested here does not entail an appraisal of mobility. To use Boltanski’s own example, the analysis of the flexible normative foundations of capitalism ought to cure us, once and for all, from the view that the young trendy designer, who divides her time between the art galleries of Berlin, London and New York, is a sort of quasi-subversive hero undermining capitalism (Boltanski, 2004). On the contrary, and as already suggested by the fable of mobility from the *Book of Exodus* stated at the beginning of this article, the mobility of the ‘kinetic elite’ is often problematically conditioned by the immobility or forced mobility of others (Bauman, 1998, 2007).

In summary, this article has used the perspective of the sociology of critique and applied the order of worth model to argue that taking account of the moral appeal of mobility and its promises of greatness is a condition for posing the important question of the attractiveness of being mobile in the context of today’s ‘kinetic elite’. In several respects, this elite group – among others composed of mobile consultants, bankers and diplomats – seems emblematic of the qualitative transformations that characterize the knowledge-intensive sectors of the present economy. Rather than a mere idle cog or a symptom of some form of false consciousness, the moral injunction to be mobile, flexible and constantly on the move must be seen as a key driver of the qualitative transformations that characterize these sectors and contemporary capitalism more generally.



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Gitte du Plessis

### abstract

Questioning a view that celebrates vacation travel as a little nugget of freedom, this article analyses how workers are accompanied by a pressure to achieve happiness or personal fulfilment when they travel away for rest and pleasure. The analysis draws on the toolbox of Slavoj Žižek to examine fantasies and practices of vacation travel as they relate to contemporary neoliberal demands for self-realization. The main object of analysis is the bestselling self-help memoir *Eat, pray, love*, but also the film version of the novel, advertisements, newspaper articles and guidebooks are included. This article posits that ‘vacation fantasies’ – fantasies that portray the illusion that vacations will bring about personal actualization or wholeness in the subjects who pursue them – promise workers the self-fulfilment they are perhaps unable to achieve through their work, and by doing so, these fantasies ultimately function to keep the workers libidinally invested in their work by allowing them to be more well-adjusted to their own alienation. In this way, the mobility exercised in travelling away binds workers ever closer to their labour.

### Self-realization demands in and out of the office

For ‘privileged’ workers, mobility and self-realization is now attainable through work. Or so the neoliberal promise goes. It seems though, that the ideals of ‘work as play’ that came forth in the late 1960s have not lived up to their promise that workers were now free to become whomever they wanted, as claims to self-realization have become yet another source of surplus in the capitalist economy (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Rose, 1999; Taylor, 1991; Willig, 2009). Rather than ‘freeing’ the worker, decentralization and anti-bureaucratization has resulted in massive work-encroachment, seemingly unsolvable issues of work-life balance, and skyrocketing numbers of people diagnosed with stress and depression (Sennett, 2006; Petersen, 2011; Honneth, 2004). Also, those who

travel as part of their work are faced with ultimately stressful allure of new avenues of self-realization (Costas, 2013).

Does the institution of vacation offer some relief in this desert of work? Well, firstly it can be difficult to get a vacation these days, as current vacation practices are also fragmented due to increasing periodic employment and growing flexibility in the labour market, and the previously well-defined boundaries between work and vacation are corroding (Anttila, 2007). Particularly in the U.S., where vacations are not a law-given right of the worker, vacations are often oblique, mixed into terms such as 'business travel' and 'working vacations'. Secondly, it seems that workers also face an ultimately stressful self-realization imperative when going on vacation (du Plessis, 2014). When the worker faces a demand for self-realization in the office as well as out of it, work comes along for the vacation even when the worker manages not to bring a laptop. It therefore seems that the institution of vacation offers no mobility when it comes to being a wage earner in the contemporary neoliberal economy.

What is under scrutiny here is 'self-realization vacations' – vacations with a focus on personal fulfilment. These vacations can pertain to workers who are seeking self-realization through their work (i.e. the kinetic elite of knowledge workers) as well as to workers with no self-realization options in their career. Emphasis is on achieving something on the vacation that is not achievable in work life, and the ideal is to be active while away, for example by learning how to cook, losing weight, getting in shape, finding oneself, challenging oneself, living primitively, finding balance in life, volunteering to help less fortunate people or reconnecting with oneself or one's family. The idea is that one can realize oneself through the vacation by finding and reconnecting with one's better, true self. We see this idea in advertisements such as for Canyon Ranch, which is labelled as 'life-enhancement resorts' (Canyon Ranch, 2014) and in the 2011 advertisement campaign for Westin Resorts with the catch phrase 'for a better you' (Communication Arts, 2011).

Beginning from the claim that vacations are now fraught with a damaging self-realization imperative similar to the one characterizing modern work life, this article will run the concept of self-realization vacations through the wringer of Slavoj Žižek's political psychoanalysis in order to challenge the idea that vacations are a benign and pleasant little intermission from work. After arriving at the concept of 'vacation fantasies', Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, pray, love* (2006) is presented as a quintessential case of such a fantasy. In conclusion, vacation fantasies will be discussed in relation to issues of mobility in contemporary practices of work and leisure.



## Enter Žižek

The idea that vacations offer opportunities for self-realization and hence that the worker must get away in order to work on the self suggests that actual (work) life is unable to provide self-realization. This comes as no surprise when one takes a Žižekian view on self-realization. Building on the psychoanalytical work of Lacan and Freud, a view of the subject as autonomous and in control of its own happiness and self-fulfilment, which is at the forefront of much contemporary self-help and management literature (Mygind du Plessis, 2013), cannot be found with Žižek. Instead, for Žižek, realizing oneself is impossible and only something that can be strived for within the imaginary.

This rather dreary point of departure stems from the view that we as subjects are constituted by a primordial lack manifested by our inability to adequately describe ourselves, a traumatic realization that forces us into the socio-symbolic order. As Lacan puts it, ‘the human being has a special relation to its own *image* – a relation of gap, of alienating tension’ (Lacan, 1988: 323). This constitutive lack stimulates desire and in order to fulfil this desire the subject continuously tries to identify with socially available objects such as family roles, political ideologies, ideals of consumption, career, and so on. However, society and the identification it offers the subject is trapped in the same symbolic order as the subject itself and therefore it can never fulfil the desire, never complete the subject, always leaving the fundamental lack under every fantasy.

Ryan Murphy’s film version of *Eat pray love* (2010) portrays an example of this subject of lack as it pertains to travelling away, when the protagonist, Liz, played by Julia Roberts, is telling her friend why she needs to go:

You know what I felt when I woke up this morning? Nothing! No passion, no spark, no faith, no heat. Absolutely nothing. I’ve gotten past the point where I can be calling this a “bad moment”. And it terrifies me. Jesus, this is like worse than death to me, the idea that this is the person I am going to be from now on! I am not checking out. I need to change. Do you feel my love for you, my support for you? No! There’s like nothing! No pulse! I am going to Italy. I used to have this appetite for food, for my life, and it is just gone. I want to go someplace where I can marvel at something. Language, gelato, spaghetti, something! (Murphy, 2010)

What Liz currently has to identify with is ‘worse than death’ to her. She needs to ‘find herself’, find an identity she can live with, even if it means identifying with spaghetti, and she plans to do this by travelling away. The friend offers a question that is interesting for any identification act: ‘what if it doesn’t work?’ The Žižekian answer is that it is not supposed to. The subject needs to be able to constitute itself as a subject of an unfulfilled desire rather than as a subject of lack.

What the subject relinquishes upon entering the symbolic is *jouissance*, enjoyment, the (imaginary, never fulfilled, impossible) enjoyment attached to the primordial illusion of wholeness. As Žižek (1999: 291) puts it, ‘the trouble with *jouissance* is not only that it is unattainable, always already lost, that it forever eludes our grasp, but, even more, that *one can never get rid of it*, that its stain drags on forever’. This always already lost enjoyment is what structures the desire and being of the subject. As Žižek writes, ‘Desire stands for the economy in which whatever object we get hold of is “never it”, the “Real Thing”, that which the subject is forever trying to attain but which eludes him again and again’ (Žižek, 1999: 291). No object (or vacation, or job) can ever fulfil us:

What we desire are, namely, not just objects, like drinks, clothes or bodies, but the *objet a*, which is really not an object (in the sense of Anglo-American analytical philosophy) at all, but the *object-cause of desire*, that is, that which *makes* us desire concrete stupid objects like drinks, clothes or bodies. The *objet a* is the *lost object*, which we are looking for in everything and everyone around us: where is that which will make me “whole” again after entering language and a world of unpredictable surroundings, in which immediate and harmonious satisfaction is no longer possible? (Jøker Bjerre, 2014: 66)

The renunciation of enjoyment incurs a remainder/surplus of enjoyment (Žižek, 1999: 291), which means that enjoyment is always excessive – Lacan calls it ‘surplus enjoyment’. Surplus enjoyment as it pertains to the individual is thus characterized by a similar paradox as capitalism:

It is not a surplus which simply attaches itself to some “normal”, fundamental enjoyment because enjoyment as such emerges only in this surplus, because it is constitutively an “excess”. If we subtract the surplus we lose enjoyment itself, just as capitalism, which can survive only by incessantly revolutionizing its own material conditions, ceases to exist if it “stays the same”, if it achieves an internal balance. (Žižek, 2008: 54)

The surplus enjoyment compensates for the lack of *jouissance*, and although objects of desire never provide *jouissance*, they resemble *jouissance* and are experienced as excessive, as surplus-enjoyment. The ‘not it’ or ‘not enough’ overlaps the excess (Žižek, 2001b: 22). This ‘coincidence of limit and excess, of lack and surplus’ (Žižek, 2008: 54) is in the wording of advertisements from the vacation travel industry:

Up above the treetops and over rain-fed streams, we'll teach you how to fly. There are 37 unique zip lines waiting to take you on the adventure of a lifetime. Challenge yourself on our world-class bike trails, or explore the only official rainforest in the United States. Discover 12 tropical waterfalls and over 1,500 different species, 3 of which are found nowhere else on Earth. For over 500 years, people have come to Puerto Rico and the Caribbean to discover, explore and create memories. (New York Times: 2012b)

Flying, exploring, discovering, unique, world-class, found nowhere else on Earth; what is all this, what is in fact the memories one is invited to create? It is at once something – an excess – and nothing at all; something that the subject can feel it has attained but at the same time can keep on trying to attain forever. The adventures and explorations – the vacation mobility – all takes place within safe boundaries that will not question the status quo of the socio-symbolic order.

Žižek highlights that ‘enjoyment itself is not an immediate spontaneous state, but is sustained by a super-ego imperative: as Lacan emphasized again and again, the ultimate content of the super-ego injunction is “Enjoy!”’ (Žižek, 1997: 114). This is a paradox in that the super-ego injunction that orders the subject to enjoy ‘through the very directness of its order, hinders the subject’s access to it much more efficiently than any prohibition’ (*ibid.*). Thus, ‘permitted *jouissance* necessarily turns into obligatory *jouissance*’ (Žižek, 2006: 310). This injunction to enjoy comes with a message to let go of any guilt associated with enjoying, yet from a Žižekian viewpoint this is another impossible endeavour because guilt is the result whether we live up to or fail to follow the super-ego injunction. In another scene in the film version of *Eat pray love*, Liz is eating pizza with a friend in Naples, and the friend is not able to enjoy her pizza because of her guilt associated with gaining weight while in Italy. To this, Liz says: ‘what do you mean you can’t [eat it], this is pizza margarita in Napoli, it is your moral imperative to eat and enjoy that pizza!’ (Murphy, 2010), and a bit later, she continues:

I’m so tired of saying no, and waking up in the morning and recalling every single thing I ate the day before, counting every calorie I consume so I know exactly how much self-loathing to take into the shower. I’m going for it. I have no interest in being obese; I’m just through with the guilt. (Murphy, 2010)

Here it seems that Liz is trying to position her enjoyment between ‘too little’ (counting calories and loathing oneself) and ‘too much’ (being obese). Perhaps not surprisingly, Žižek claims that we hate our own enjoyment (Žižek, 1993: 204).

By way of Nietzsche, and as a comment to our contemporary consumerist society, Alenka Zupancič discusses a passive nihilism that defends the subject against surplus enjoyment by pacifying the enjoyment (Zupancič, 2003: 67). The point is not that the subject is asked to cut down on its ways of finding enjoyment, the subject is simply asked to regulate the exciting substances while simultaneously consuming them. Coffee without caffeine and sweets without sugar, (Žižek adds diet-coke, cream without fat and beer without alcohol, (2000: 23 and 2004)) are examples of products that offer regulated enjoyment because

the potentially harmful substance that offers excitement or enjoyment has been eliminated or neutralized. Products like these, Zupančič says, are the perfect answer to the deadlock of being caught in the super-ego imperative 'Enjoy' and the guilt trip 'but be aware that enjoyment can kill you'. To Zupančič, sugarless sweets and decaf coffee are not ascetic but hedonistic acts par excellence because in our time, hedonism has taken the form of self-regulation and as such, hedonism is moral: 'To "work out" regularly, to go on a diet, to stop smoking – such things are not perceived as restrictions on our enjoyment, but, on the contrary, as its forms or conditions' (Zupančič, 2003: 69). As another example, regular sexual activity is encouraged because it is good for one's health: 'Everything is permitted, you can enjoy everything, BUT deprived of its substance which makes it dangerous' (Žižek, 2004). Similarly, self-realization vacations offer regulated enjoyment: when the vacation has a purpose – getting in shape, eating healthily, losing weight, learning a new language, or getting closer to one's true self – the potentially harmful aspects of the vacation, for example being lazy, risking skin cancer, and eating and drinking too much, are deactivated. The moral imperative tells the subject to Enjoy your hike/ summer school/ health retreat/ language course/ marathon, or to Enjoy 'flying' attached to a zip-line. By all means: Enjoy your pizza (it is in fact healthy to do so), but don't become obese! Enjoyment is to remain safe, it must not disrupt the socio-symbolic order.

### Vacation fantasies

In the Žižekian framework, the role of fantasy is to tell us how (and what) to desire (Žižek, 1997: 7). Fantasy fills in ideological gaps by offering the subject a means to envision a way out of the dissatisfaction with social reality, and 'In this way, fantasy bestows reality with a fictional coherence and consistency that appears to fulfil the lack that constitutes social reality' (Cottrel, 2014: 90). The fantasy operates such that the impossibility of wholeness is transformed into being perceived as only a prohibition or difficulty, thus leaving the subject with an illusion that the impossibility (primordially lost) can be transgressed (Glynos, 2008b). Keeping the desire unfulfilled, the fantasy gives us an explanation for why our enjoyment is missing; we could enjoy, if only... Žižek's main example of an ideological fantasy is the role of the Jew in the Nazi regime:

What appears as the hindrance to society's full identity with itself is actually its positive condition: by transposing onto the Jew the role of the foreign body which introduces in the social organism disintegration and antagonism, the fantasy-image of society qua consistent, harmonious whole is rendered possible. (Žižek, 2001a: 90)

For analytical purposes, Jason Glynos outlines three key aspects of the logic of fantasy:

First, it has a narrative structure which features, among other things, an ideal and an obstacle to its realization, and which may take a beatific or horrific form; second, it has an inherently transgressive aspect vis-a-vis officially affirmed ideals; and third, it purports to offer a foundational guarantee of sorts, in the sense that it offers the subject a degree of protection from the anxiety associated with a direct confrontation with the radical contingency of social relations. (Glynos, 2008a: 14)

The analysis of vacation fantasy presented in this article is based on these three aspects. As an example, an article with the headline ‘I loved everything about it, but it didn’t love me back’ on the front cover of The New York Times travel section with the subheading ‘How hopes for an intimate mother-daughter escape were dashed by clashing sleep-cycles, a cold jacuzzi and yesterday’s towels; I also couldn’t find a drink’ (Stanley, 2012), can be read against Glynos’ three aspects. The narrative is there: ‘I imagined sunrise walks on the beach, giggly mother-daughter spa treatments and intimate candlelit meals during which Emma would lean in and at long last tell me what college was like besides “fine”’ (Stanley, 2012). Through the narrative, the ideal is established. So are the obstacles – that the author’s daughter wants to sleep until 1 pm every day, as well as a range of issues with the resort that prohibits the author and her daughter from spending quality time together: ‘On our third day of so-so meals, erratic service and no Jacuzzi or bike repair, I went to a manager and complained’ (*ibid.*). The transgressive aspect is also related to the resort – the bad service is what needs to be overcome, what is prohibiting the author’s enjoyment. Finally the safe identity offered is that if it weren’t for the resort or their different sleep patterns, the author would in fact be a mother who bonded with her college daughter on a perfect spring-break getaway. She can keep that identity as a possibility, putting the resort in as the obstacle preventing its realization.

With the concept of ideological fantasies, Žižek revises the Marxian formula for ideology, ‘they do not know it, but they are doing it’, from focusing on the aspect of not knowing to the aspect of doing, by arguing that today people ‘know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know’ (Žižek, 2008: 30). The ideology works because everyone is acting according to it; the question of their knowledge in relation to the ideology is not the issue:

The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*. (Žižek, 2008: 30)

Thus ‘even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, we are still doing them’ (Žižek, 2008: 30). In relation to the example of

the mother-daughter escape, even if the mother knows that the perfect resort wouldn't make her daughter open up to her, she still acts as if she believes it by writing the article as if she believes it.

Thus, we can speak of 'vacation fantasy' when a vacation is imagined as being able to bring about personal actualization or wholeness. This fantasy of a perfect, (self)-fulfilling vacation 'of a life-time' figures as the object-cause of desire, and motivates the worker to travel away again and again as a part of his or her continuous search for an always-already lost wholeness. Guidebooks speak to the vacation fantasy with phrases like 'you want to be shown those things that will make this vacation the best of your life' (Doughty, 2007: 9), and 'this region has it all: beauty, variety, and a chance of the hike or fish of a lifetime – there is nothing else like it' (Stienstra and Brown, 2009: 3). In relation to the double illusion of ideological fantasies, many workers know that their next vacation will probably not leave them happy, balanced, rested, and reconnected, that it will probably not provide meaning in their lives, and that it will probably not make them able to finish a project of realizing themselves. Still, workers can plan and go on vacations as if they believe that a vacation will fulfil these desires, and can retrospectively talk about their vacation as if it was successful, regardless of how happy and balanced they were while away. In relation to work life, the vacation fantasy offers a solution if work life itself fails to offer the fulfilment one needs: one can achieve this on vacation and bring it back into real work life afterwards. In this way, the vacation fantasy offers the illusion that one's life as a whole can be infused with meaning during the vacation, and thereby offers the illusion that one's entire life can be 'lived' in two, three or five weeks out of the year. In that sense, the vacation fantasy offers a mobility that results in sustaining the opposite of that mobility. As a travel advertisement says: 'here's to the uplifting of spirits, the re-ordering of priorities, and the unravelling of inhibitions. Live your life. Escape winter at The Cove' (New York Times, 2012a). This reader's comment to a newspaper article is another good example of vacation fantasy:

Life is too short to not appreciate every moment of it. I realize that's why I work so hard, to take these vacations. (Rosenbloom, 2006)

This excerpt from a blog provides another example of vacation fantasy:

Before the end of vacation I became more comfortable in my bikini than I did in clothes. I learned to re-love every curve, muscle, and stretch mark. I became lost in the moment and let go of all the concerns surrounding me. I fell madly in love with my boyfriend all over again, didn't care if I was out all night partying or in bed by 10:30, and re-discovered the real Meghann. It was amazing....Call it a vacation high or whatever, but I don't want this feeling of lust and pure happiness to ever end. This feeling of re-discovery is why vacations are so important.

Sometimes we need an escape from reality to remember who we really are and who we want to be. (Anderson, 2011)

Finally, this reader comment displays the notion that what was attained on vacation can be taken back into everyday life:

After a week in Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, where no one could care less about what you wear or what kind of shoes you have, I came home with a keener sense of self and a sharper mind. It was empowering to have a new set of skills, even if I can't make use of them on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. (Robinovitz, 2004)

### **Eat, pray, love**

Elizabeth Gilbert's bestselling novel *Eat, pray, love* (2006) is characterized as part travel memoir, part self-help book (Gilmore, 2010), and presents an exemplary outline of the vacation fantasy. The book is a description of how the author survived her divorce and depression by travelling for a year; to Italy 'in the pursuit of pleasure', India 'in the pursuit of devotion' and Bali 'in the pursuit of balance', and reads as a manifesto that you can get over sorrow, depression and life-crises; find yourself and realize yourself; become happy, balanced, healthy and beautiful, and find true love – if you go vacation travelling. Liz obtains the psychoanalytical 'impossible wholeness' on her travel, and describes the entire process in detail to her reader, conveying a 'true story' that the vacation fantasy is obtainable. The book is an interesting case because it, in the author's words, 'went out in the world for some reason and became this big, mega, sensation, international bestseller thing' (Gilbert, 2009). The book has sold over 10 million copies, been translated into 30 languages, and as mentioned earlier, premiered as a major motion picture in 2010. A newspaper article states, 'the book has touched a chord of longing in millions of women, even if they aren't reeling from a divorce and a subsequent disastrous love affair, like Gilbert' (Marshall, 2010). The book itself is an example of blurred boundaries of work, because Gilbert is paid in advance by her publisher to write a book about her trip. It is likely that this book depicts and speaks to desires and practices recognizable in the lives (and minds) of modern workers in relation to their vacation travels. As Gilbert asks at one point, 'is this just the fallout of a post-feminist American career girl trying to find balance in an increasingly stressful and alienating urban world?' (Gilbert, 2006: 49). The situation that provokes Liz to go travelling not only speaks to the Žižekian theory of our constant attempts to identify with things to cover an existential lack, but is also no doubt familiar to many modern people chasing self-realization:

Wasn't I proud of all we'd accumulated – the prestigious home in the Hudson Valley, the apartment in Manhattan, the eight phone lines, the friends, and the picnics and the parties, the weekends spent roaming the aisles of some box-shaped superstore of our choice, buying ever more appliances on credit? I had actively participated in every moment of the creation of this life – so why did I feel like none of it resembled me? (Gilbert, 2006: 11)

Reading into Glynos' three key aspects of the logic of fantasy as described earlier, the narrative aspect of the vacation fantasy is inherent in Gilbert's narrative of one year of travel. The ideal is for her to find meaning and happiness in her life, the obstacle is her nasty past that has left her in a state of depression. Liz starts by moving to Rome, and an idealized vacation story of happiness and freedom unfolds:

These weeks of spontaneous travel are such a glorious twirl of time, some of the loosest days of my life, running to the train station and buying tickets left and right, finally beginning to flex my freedom for real because it has finally sunk in that I can go wherever I want. One night in a town somewhere on the Mediterranean, in a hotel room by the ocean, the sound of my own laughter actually wakes me up in the middle of my deep sleep. (Gilbert, 2006: 97)

The protagonist directs her desires and identification acts at food and language:

I found that all I really wanted was to eat beautiful food and speak as much beautiful Italian as possible. That was it. The amount of pleasure this eating and speaking brought to me was inestimable, and yet so simple. (Gilbert, 2006: 63)

By doing so, she manages to get to a state where 'happiness inhabited my every molecule' (Gilbert, 2006: 64). As the narrative progresses, threats and obstacles occur and the identification acts are challenged:

Depression and Loneliness track me down after about ten days in Italy....Then they frisk me. They empty my pockets of any joy I had been carrying there. Depression even confiscated my identity; but he always does that. (Gilbert, 2006: 46)

Congruent with neoliberal ideals of personal responsibility, what needs to be transgressed and the safe identity offered by the vacation fantasy are both within Liz herself.

The Italy part of the book is a testament to the idea that one can become more whole and more fully identified with oneself by travelling and indulging in simple pleasures, and, like the movie based on the book, hints at the illusion of guilt-free enjoyment. A reader with Žižekian analytical glasses on clearly sees the super-ego injunction to enjoy:

Why must everything always have a practical application? I'd been such a diligent soldier for years - working, producing, never missing a deadline, taking care of my



loved ones, my gums and my credit record, voting etc. Is this lifetime supposed to be only about duty? In this dark period of loss, did I need any justification for learning Italian other than that it was the only thing I could imagine bringing me any pleasure right now? (Gilbert, 2006: 23)

Furthermore, not feeling guilty – and stating that enjoyment is harmless – is portrayed as a way to achieve a better version of oneself:

In my real life, I have been known to eat organic goat's milk yoghurt sprinkled with wheat germ for breakfast. My real-life days are long gone. Still, when I look at myself in the mirror of the best pizzeria in Naples, I see a bright-eyed, clear-skinned, happy and healthy face. I haven't seen a face like that on me for a long time. (Gilbert, 2006: 81)

I came to Italy pinched and thin. I did not know yet what I deserved. I still maybe don't fully know what I deserve. But I do know that I have collected myself of late – through the enjoyment of harmless pleasures – into somebody more intact. The easiest, most fundamentally human way to say it is that I have put on weight. I exist more now than I did four months ago. I will leave Italy noticeably bigger than when I arrived here. (Gilbert, 2006: 116)

After Italy, India has the transgressive aspect of the fantasy at the forefront. There, Liz lives in an ashram where she works on herself through meditation, chanting, yoga and house chores:

They want you to come here strong because Ashram life is rigorous. Not just physically, with days that begin at 3:00 AM and end at 9:00 PM, but also psychologically. You're going to be spending hours and hours a day in silent meditation and contemplation, with little relief or distraction from the apparatus of your own mind. You will be living in close quarters with strangers, in rural India. There are bugs and snakes and rodents. The weather can be extreme - sometimes torrents of rain for weeks on end, sometimes 100 degrees in the shade before breakfast. Things can get deeply real around here, very fast. (Gilbert, 2006: 128)

There are many descriptions of the hardships of ashram life:

I'm so ashamed of my rage that I go and hide in (yet another!) bathroom and cry. (Gilbert, 2006: 148)

The biggest obstacle in my Ashram experience is not meditation, actually. That's difficult, of course, but not murderous. There's something even harder for me here. The murderous thing is what we do every morning after meditation and before breakfast. (Gilbert, 2006: 161)

So I went to the chant the next morning, all full of resolve, and [it] kicked me down a twenty-foot flight of cement stairs – or anyway, that's how I felt. The following day it was even worse. (Gilbert, 2006: 164)

The transgressive climax is an evening when Liz resolves the guilt and anger associated with her divorce. A fellow ashram resident shows her up to the roof of the ashram and gives her a note with sentences such as ‘With all your heart, forgive him, FORGIVE YOURSELF, and let him go’ (Gilbert, 2006: 185), and ‘When the past has passed from you at last, let go. Then climb down and begin the rest of your life. With great joy’ (*ibid.*). The protagonist then starts to meditate:

Much later I opened my eyes, and I knew it was over. Not just my marriage and not just my divorce, but all the unfinished bleak hollow sadness of it...it was over. I could feel I was free. (Gilbert, 2006: 187)

The reward for Gilbert is the safe identity of complete happiness, of having found one’s own version of ‘God’, to once again have a sense of meaning in life:

It was pure, this love that I was feeling, it was godly. I looked around the darkened valley and I could see nothing that was not God. I felt so deeply, terribly happy. I thought to myself, “Whatever this feeling is – this is what I have been praying for. And this is also what I have been praying to”. (Gilbert, 2006: 203)

After India, the story of Bali is again the story of the ideal vacation:

I am so free here in Bali, it’s almost ridiculous....In the evenings I spin my bicycle high up into the hills and across the acres of rice terraces north of Ubud, with views so splendid and green. I can see the pink clouds reflected in the standing water of the rice paddies...The unnecessary and superfluous volume of pure beauty around here is not to be believed. I can pick papayas and bananas right off the trees outside my bedroom window...I don’t mind anything these days. I can’t imagine or remember discontent. (Gilbert, 2006: 234)

Not being able to imagine or remember discontent is completely transgressing the fundamental lack. The vacation fantasy is spelled out for the reader, and also speaks to the reader’s desire by putting itself forth as a ‘true story’:

...I’ve circled the world, settled my divorce, survived my final separation from David, erased all mood-altering medications from my system, learned to speak a new language, sat upon God’s palm for a few unforgettable moments in India, studied at the feet of an Indonesian medicine man....I am happy and healthy and balanced. And, yes, I cannot help but notice that I am sailing to this pretty little tropical island with my Brazilian lover....I think about the woman I have become lately, about the life that I am now living, and about how much I always wanted to be this person and live this life, liberated from the farce of pretending to be anyone other than myself. I think of everything I endured before getting here and wonder if it was me – I mean, this happy and balanced me, who is now dozing on the deck of this small Indonesian fishing boat – who pulled the other, younger, more confused and more struggling me forward during all those hard years. (Gilbert, 2006: 329)

The attractions of Gilbert's book are exemplified by 'Eat, pray, love tours', where one could walk Liz' footsteps and perhaps find what she found, that were widespread after the release of the novel. For example, a newspaper article claims that the number of visitors in Bali more than doubled in the four years after the book came out, and that fans of the book 'yearned for some of Gilbert's hard-won equilibrium', a desire that is 'fuelling the travel industry's newest niche: spiritual tourism' (Marshall, 2010). To talk of a desire for equilibrium fuelling the travel industry is the vacation fantasy of the readers in a nutshell. For example, 'Spirit Quest Tours' offers a tour with the headline 'change your thoughts, change your life, visit Bali', and state:

You read Eat, Pray, Love. And you loved it. And you wanted to change your life, too. But who can take a year off to travel? How about a week to experience some of the marvellous changes author Elizabeth Gilbert enthralled us with in her memoir? (Spirit Quest Tours, 2012)

As the owner of Spirit Quest Tours says:

...going on these trips is a way to reclaim themselves, to bring back meaning into their lives. Denise just wanted to remember why she loved her job. (Marshall, 2010)

The idea that a vacation can bring back meaning into one's life – can give one the self-realization one perhaps is unable to attain through work – is again the vacation fantasy at work. Judging by website references such as 'the trip to Bali was life-altering', 'I have been forever changed by Bali', 'From Ubud Bodyworks to the farewell dinner on the beach, I came away with a new family and a new me' (Spirit Quest Tours, 2012), the vacation fantasy is attainable, however one wonders when these women – and Liz for that matter – will again crave another trip or another object of desire.

Within the Žižekian framework, the only feasible way to enjoy a vacation is vis-à-vis a fantasy about it, and in this sense the fantasy must remain unfulfilled. For example, it is much easier to enjoy the fantasy of an ashram than to enjoy being in the ashram yourself. As visitors say in their reviews of an ashram in India:

Rooms are tiny with a thin mattress on a wood block and bathrooms full of spiders with mosquitoes everywhere! Only plus is you can sneak onto The Atlantis premises to get a real meal. There is nothing 'spa' about it...it was a little too much like sleep away camp for me – felt really rustic. I thought it would be a tad more luxurious...I signed up for a retreat...not rehab!!! (Tripadvisor, 2012)

Everything works best if one remains safely within the socio-symbolic order and leaves the rest up to fantasies. Subsequently, the 'self-realization' sought after on vacation is self-realization without really meeting yourself. One could say that it

is the diet, decaf version of enlightenment, because true enlightenment – the realization that you will never truly realize yourself and feel whole, or the realization that you hate your job and that you are stuck in it – is dangerous.

In addition to positing that one must travel away to attain fulfilment, *Eat, pray, love* pairs the injunction to Enjoy (and to eat! and pray! and love!) with a moralistic message that personal happiness is the sole responsibility of the subject. As Leigh Gilmore writes, ‘in the packaging of the redemption narrative in neoliberal times, the individual becomes tasked with her own redemption’ (Gilmore, 2010: 660). This is very clear in *Eat, pray, love*:

You might just as well hang it up and kiss God good-bye if you really need to keep blaming somebody else for your own life’s limitations. (Gilbert, 2006: 186)

I keep remembering one of my Guru’s teachings about happiness....Happiness is the consequence of personal effort. You fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and sometimes even travel around the world looking for it. You have to participate relentlessly in the manifestations of your own blessings. And once you have achieved a state of happiness, you must never become lax about maintaining it, you must make a mighty effort to keep swimming upwards into that happiness forever, to stay afloat on top if it. If you don’t, you will leak away your innate contentment. (Gilbert, 2006: 260)

Zupančič notes a ‘contemporary ideological rhetoric of happiness’ – she even calls it a ‘bio-morality’ – resting on ‘the axiom that a happy person is a good person and an unhappy person a bad person’ (Zupančič, 2008: 5). There is moral value in being happy today, and ‘negativity, lack, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, are perceived more and more as moral faults – worse, as a corruption at the level of our very being’ (*ibid.*). This view is also portrayed in Gilbert’s novel:

The search for contentment is, therefore, not merely a self-preserving and self-benefitting act, but also a generous gift to the world. Clearing out all your misery gets you out of the way. You cease being an obstacle, not only to yourself but to anyone else. Only then are you free to serve and enjoy people. (Gilbert, 2006: 260)

As the above analyses point to, there can be enormous pressure on the subject who travels. Facing up to the imperatives to enjoy, be happy, and realize oneself is a lot harder than the travel industry and Gilbert portrays it to be. A way of escaping our own *jouissance* and relieving ourselves of the super-ego injunction to enjoy is by enjoying through the other. Describing what he calls a ‘paradox of interpassivity’, Žižek gives the example of advertisements that passively enjoy the product they are advertising for us, for example Coke cans with the words ‘“Ooh! Ooh! What taste!” that emulate the ideal response of the customer in advance’ (Žižek, 1997: 112f.). Žižek also describes this externalized enjoyment with an example of canned laughter as the Other,

...embodied by the television set – is relieving us even of our duty to laugh – is laughing instead of us. So ‘even if, tired from a hard day’s stupid work, all evening we did nothing but gaze drowsily into the television screen, we can say afterwards that objectively, through the medium of the other, we had a really good time. (Žižek, 2008: 33)

Perhaps one of the draws of *Eat, pray, love* is that it offers its reader enjoyment through Liz, who is so good at enjoying, thus relieving the reader of the difficulty of facing up to a vacation of trying to find true happiness through eating gelato and living in an ashram. By reading Gilbert’s book or going to Bali for one week tracing her footsteps, the reader can learn everything Liz learned on her one-year journey, without investing the time and enduring the painful self-investigation that Liz did.

### Conclusion: Vacation as fetish

To Žižek, a fetish is an ‘embodiment of the Lie which enables us to sustain the unbearable truth’ (Žižek, 2001b: 13). The subject ‘rationally’ accepts the truth, yet is only able to do so because she or he has their fetish to cling to, and the subject’s acceptance of the way things are will dissolve if the fetish is taken away. So, Žižek says, when anyone asserts to be cured of any beliefs and claims to accept social reality the way it is, one should always ask ‘OK, but *where is the fetish which enables you to (pretend to) accept reality “the way it is?”*’ (Žižek, 2001b: 15). As an example of such a fetish, Žižek describes what he calls ‘Western Buddhism’, a type of spiritualism that is also advocated in *Eat, pray, love*:

Instead of trying to cope with the accelerating rhythm of technological progress and social change, one should rather renounce the very endeavour to retain control over what goes on, rejecting it as the expression of the modern logic of domination – one should, instead, “let oneself go,” drift along, while retaining an inner distance and indifference towards the mad dance of this accelerated process, a distance based on the insight that all the social and technological upheaval is ultimately just an unsubstantial proliferation of semblances which do not really concern the innermost kernel of our being. (Žižek, 2001b: 13)

I will add that the vacation fantasy is also such a fetish, in that it enables the subject to accept the reality of a whole year (minus three weeks) of work. If this little nugget of mobile ‘freedom’ was removed from the workers, they would be confronted with the reality that they are first and foremost wage-earners. In relation to neoliberal work practices, Žižek posits ‘Western Buddhism’ as ‘establishing itself as the hegemonic ideology of global capitalism’:

Although “Western Buddhism” presents itself as a remedy against the stressful tension of the capitalist dynamics, allowing us to uncouple and retain inner peace

and *Gelassenheit*, it actually functions as its perfect ideological supplement. (Žižek, 2001b: 12)

In the same way, the vacation fantasy becomes an ideological supplement for capitalist modes of work. The mobility that is practiced when workers travel away for vacation is a mobility that in essence functions to fix workers in their role as workers. ‘Excessive attachment to the part means that the fetishist “misses the bigger picture”’ (Taylor, 2014: 93). Vacations thus function to make the workers more comfortable with (or, accepting of) their own alienation, and by doing so keeps the workers libidinally invested in their work. As such, the main gap of social reality that the vacation fantasy offers a veil for is the worker’s alienation. Coupled with the neoliberal claim that it is a personal responsibility and a moral obligation of the individual to be happy and fulfilled, the vacation fantasy can keep us all tightly invested in the status quo. This makes the vacation fantasy the sugar-coating that enables the subject to swallow the (immobile) reality of work life, year after year.

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# Navigating otherness and belonging: A comparative case study of IMGs' professional integration in Canada and Sweden

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## abstract

This paper explores the *othering* processes and feelings of *belonging* among international medical graduates (IMGs) who seek to practise medicine in Canada and Sweden. Building on the theoretical literature on *othering*, *belonging*, and the conceptualisation of status dilemmas, we explore how IMGs in Canada and Sweden negotiate their professional identity, how they cope with being *othered* and how they establish a path to *belonging*. Analysing qualitative interviews with 15 Swedish and 67 Canadian immigrant physicians, who are either practising medicine or are in the process of professional integration, we demonstrate that the construction of professional identity among IMGs necessitates constant comparison between the differences and similarities among 'us' – immigrant physicians, and 'them' – local doctors. In this process, one's ethnicity, gender, and professional status are intertwined with the experience of being seen as 'the Other'. We also show that in negotiating their professional status, IMGs actively interpret the meaning of being a Canadian/Swedish physician. We conclude that feelings of belonging to a professional group (Canadian or Swedish) do not seem to be static but rather fluid, ephemeral and changing, depending on the context. Our analysis suggests that more attention should be paid to the social context in which experiences of processes of being *othered* and feeling *belonging* are being constructed and interpreted by people themselves.

## Introduction

One of the notable features of the contemporary global health care workforce is its increased mobility. Indeed, the skills of the internationally educated physicians, nurses, and other health professionals make internationally educated health professionals a particularly attractive group of highly skilled migrants.

Like many other high income countries, Canada and Sweden have a long history of offering unfilled positions in medicine to international medical graduates (IMGs). In both countries, roughly 20-25% of practising physicians have been trained abroad (CIHI, 2012; National Board of Health and Welfare, 2010).

Traditionally, IMGs are offered positions in their destination countries in areas that are undesirable to local medical graduates; this can create a sense of social exclusion among IMGs (Bernstein and Shuval, 1998; Bourgeault et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2011). While local health care systems depend on immigrant physicians, the interplay between the ideology of nationalism and racism sets a context in which IMGs must establish their professional status and path to *belonging* to their new nation (Kyriakides and Virdee, 2003). Coming to a new country, IMGs are entering two new cultural worlds – of the local culture of medicine and of a larger society. In both, they must negotiate their sense of self and their social status. In both, they are expected to belong but at the same time they are *othered* by the virtue of the location of their professional training and, in many cases, their ethnicity.

In this paper we examine how IMGs experience *othering* and negotiate their sense of *belonging* while striving for professional integration in Canada and Sweden. Drawing on Anthias' (1998) notion of 'construction of otherness and sameness' and Gilroy's (1997) notion that in every formation of a 'we' (created on the basis of similarities) there is also an excluding 'them' (on the basis of difference), we explore how these notions become prominent in immigrant doctors' stories. We analyse the differences and similarities of the experiences of being othered in two professional contexts, Canada and Sweden. Utilising the sociological literature on othering, this paper focuses on the strategies used by IMGs to cope with being *othered* and establish path to *belonging* to a host professional community.

According to Johnson et al. (2004: 253) 'othering is a process that identifies those that are thought to be different from oneself or the mainstream and it can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination'. Weis (1995) notes that the experience of *othering* is intrinsically linked to the construction of one's identity. In this paper we treat *othering* as an active process, where the agency of an individual is enacted to establish one's sense of self. *Belonging*, according to Anthias (2006: 21), is 'about experiences of being a part of the social fabric and should not be thought of in exclusively ethnic terms'. In a professional context as the one we explore in this article, *belonging* is also crucial in a literal sense, since you cannot practise as a physician if you do not *belong* to the profession and your credentials have not been recognised. Therefore, *belonging* in this article builds on the conceptualisation given by Anthias (2006), but views

*belonging* as a performative process where the physicians actively make a space for themselves in ‘the social fabric’ of the profession. Moreover, we see the social context in which the *othering* and *belonging* are negotiated as shaping the strategies utilised by individuals to construct their sense of self in relation to others (e.g. Bell, 1999).

Analysing how IMGs in Canada and Sweden construct their sense of *belonging* and how this *belonging* is intertwined with the experiences of being *othered* in different health care contexts, allows us to examine the role of different migration policies and culture in shaping the experiences of IMGs in the two countries. Our analysis is based on qualitative interviews with 15 Swedish practising IMGs and 67 Canadian immigrant doctors who at the time of the interview were either in practice or on the way to professional integration. Focusing on two countries with similar proportions of IMGs but different immigration policies and geographic context allows us to examine the universal and context-specific experiences of *othering* and *belonging* in different health care settings. We demonstrate that IMGs actively relate to *othering* processes which seem influenced by the local migration policy context. IMGs also seem to negotiate these processes in social interactions. Our paper contributes to the literature on *othering* by highlighting contextual, subjective and metamorphic nature of this process using the specific case of IMGs; to the literature on IMGs, this analysis contributes a deeper understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of the integration process.

### Research on *othering* and IMG integration

Hughes (1945) was one of the first to show *othering* processes among doctors through introducing the concept of ‘status dilemmas’ – a collision of high and low social positions, which can create contradictions. These insights were derived from Hughes’ (1945) examination of the position of African-American physicians, whose racial/ethnic identity and professional status created a tension in racially stratified American society of the 1940s. The racial/ethnic identity, Hughes (1945) suggested, is more of a master status of an individual, but professional identity of a doctor comes with a dominant social position.

The major link between the work of Hughes (1945) and more contemporary approaches to theorising *othering* processes is a recognition of the dynamic relationship between one’s agency, the social interactions in which this agency can be exercised, and the constraints of social context, which shapes the ‘choices’ that individuals make (Anthias, 1998; Bell, 1999). In this framework, *belonging* and *othering* are never fixed; they are achieved through performance and

validated in social interactions (Bell, 1999). Hughes' (1945) analysis reflects the dynamic nature of such processes by showing how African-American doctors resolve their status dilemma in communication with other (white) doctors, patients, and nurses. In each social context, they have to negotiate their social status vis-à-vis social expectations set by the individuals around them.

While Hughes' classic work analysed *othering* process of medical doctors in the context of highly racialised American society of the 1940s, recent research on the experiences of immigrant and visible minority doctors shows that they are still subjected to discrimination and social exclusion in host countries. The tension between one's status as a doctor and one's 'ethnic' status is experienced in communication with patients, colleagues and other members of health care organizations. Work by D. Hughes (1988) in the context of the NHS in the UK showed that the status of an Asian immigrant doctor challenged the respect of nurses for these physicians. Noting similar *othering* processes between immigrant physicians and local nurses in an Irish hospital, Porter (1993) examined how doctors from ethnic minority groups employed various strategies to cope with being *othered*, reaffirming their professional status in communication with nurses. Porter (1993) suggested that contemporary health care settings are characterised by a 'backstage racism', which is expressed in informal settings, such as coffee breaks or professional lounges, and extends to locally trained physicians from minority groups. Overall, this research suggests that *belonging* – both to local community/nation and to the professional group – is not automatically present once doctors receive their medical licence, but has to be constantly accomplished and validated through social interactions (Bell, 1999). The path to *belonging*, however, is constrained by one's ability to choose from the intersecting 'layers' of identities (e.g. one's ethnicity, gender, or professional status) and by power hierarchies which situate the significance of those identity 'layers' in social context (Anthias, 1998). Hence, while the physicians in Porter's (1993) study insist on being perceived as 'doctors', the nurses perceive these physicians as 'immigrants'. The *othering* processes are also situated in a larger cultural context in which the 'immigrant doctor' is denied the same level of competency and respect as locally trained physician.

Research on the *othering* processes between local and foreign trained physicians echoes ethnic and racial tensions. Immigrant physicians often report discrimination at the workplace and in communication with colleagues (Giri, 1998; Huijskens et al., 2010; Neiterman and Bourgeault, 2015). While IMGs are often reluctant to admit to racial tensions experienced in communication with patients (Bourgeault et al., 2010), scholars show that doctors' ethnicity (along with age and gender) can negatively impact patients' perceptions of physician's

competence and skills (Ashton et al., 2003; Betancourt et al., 2005; Cooper et al., 2005; Meeuwesen et al., 2006; Miller et al., 2011).

The literature suggests that physicians from visible minority groups continue to face *othering* processes, although the meaning attached to these processes varies by context and over time. It can be structured around doctor's skin colour (Giri, 1998; Kyriakides and Virdee, 2003), accent and ethnic background (Neiterman and Bourgeault, 2012), religious affiliation (Huijskens et al., 2010), gender (Shah and Ogden, 2006) or foreign training (Cooke et al., 2003; Salmonsson, 2014; Shuval, 2000). Important for this study is that IMGs seem to experience processes of being *othered* and that the *othering* processes seem to be further amplified when these dimensions intersect (Giri, 1998; Huijskens et al., 2010).

Thus, in this paper we focus on the intersection of ethnicity, gender, immigrant background, and professional status examining how IMGs experience *othering* and how they negotiate a sense of *belonging* to their professional group and larger community. Our emphasis in this paper is on immigrant physicians, both 'white' immigrants and members of visible minorities. This adds an additional layer of complexity to establishing the path to *belonging* to the host country and to the professional community while negotiating the meaning of ethnicity and gender in forming professional and social ties in the new country.

## Contextual differences and similarities between Canada and Sweden

The migration across nation-states is characterised by complex relations between governments' need to address shortages in labour market and the inherent desire to protect the nations' symbolic boundaries. This uneasy balance is actualised in racist and discriminatory practices employed by countries to 'protect' the national identity by placing restrictions on workers from nations deemed particularly 'undeserving' of entering the country (Miles and Brown, 2004). Both Canada's and Sweden's immigration history are marked by the reliance on foreign workers and racialised ideology identifying 'desirable' and 'undesirable' immigrants (Henry and Tator, 2009; Miles and Brown, 2004). In Canada, the 'undesirable immigrants' over the course of 20<sup>th</sup> century came to include not only members of visible minority groups (e.g. Asian and Chinese immigrants) but also Eastern European immigrants (Miles and Brown, 2004). In the 1970s, the Canadian government officially adopted the policy of multiculturalism, stressing the importance of diversifying Canadian society through immigration. In the past decades, Asian, South Pacific, and Middle Eastern states were top source countries for new immigrants to Canada (CIC, 2013a). In 2011, approximately 20% of Canadian population was foreign-born and 19% self-identified as

members of visible minority groups. Among the 6,264,800 population of Canadian visible minority groups, over 65% were immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2013).

The majority of Canadian immigrants are highly skilled professionals or economic immigrants who receive permanent residence based on the suitability of their skills and qualifications for the Canadian labour market (Kapur and McHale, 2005). In 2013, it was projected that skilled/economic immigrants will constitute approximately 62% of total immigration, 27% will comprise of family members seeking to reunite with their immediate family living in Canada, and the remaining 11% will be refugees (CIC, 2013b). The official ideology is that immigrants contribute to the economic growth of Canada and fill labour shortages in most understaffed areas (CIC, 2013b). This is particularly true in the case of health care – immigrant health care professionals are routinely recruited to work in Canada, although recently, due to ethical concerns about ‘poaching’ health care professionals from the global south (McIntosh et al., 2007), the recruitment practices have become somewhat muted.

In Sweden, the majority of newcomers are family unification immigrants and refugees who receive permanent residence based on their need for asylum. Swedish immigration policy today focuses on refugee and asylum seeking migrants but this has not always been the case. In the 1950s and 60s, Sweden had a vast labour migration but it was restricted in the 1970s when immigration policy has focused on refugee immigration. New rules for labour migration were introduced in December 2008, aiming to facilitate recruitment of labour from developing countries. In 2012, 1.5 million people in Sweden were born somewhere else. While about half of these immigrants came from other European countries, 1/3 came from Asia. Iraq is the third most common country of birth for this group (Statistics Sweden, 2012). Marie (2001) suggests that obtaining employment is harder for the members of visible minorities groups than to Swedes and non-visible minorities. Diaz (1993) and Hosseini-Kaladjahi (1997) found that in comparison to Swedes, immigrants had harder time to move upward in the social hierarchy. Refugees and, to a lesser extent, labour migrants, tend to be overqualified for their jobs when compared to Swedes (Hosseini-Kaladjahi, 1997; Ålund and Schierup, 1991; Diaz, 1993). These findings suggest that Sweden is undergoing a segmentation of the labour market along ethnic lines. Immigrants in Sweden are seen more as *people in need*. While the official rhetoric in Canada stresses that immigrants *belong* to Canadian society, in Sweden they are seen as *strangers*. The ideology of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity are usually used to exemplify that Canada can become home to any immigrant, that all cultures are welcomed and celebrated in Canadian society (CIC, 2013b). In Sweden, multiculturalism has not had the same impact on

shaping the Swedish identity, yet the ideology of equality is usually used to exemplify that in Sweden everyone is treated equally (Pred, 2000). Despite these ideological premises, however, immigrants in both Canada and Sweden, and especially members of visible minority groups, still experience racism and discrimination, both institutionally enforced and informally conveyed in interactions with others (Ålund and Schierup, 1991; Henry and Tator, 2009).

Internationally educated health care professionals are not immune to the experiences of racism and discrimination (Bourgeault et al., 2010). While the total physician workforce in Canada has been relatively consistently comprised of about 1/4 IMGs during the past 50 years (CIHI, 2010), the demographic profile of immigrant doctors has changed significantly. In the 1970s IMGs in Canada were predominantly coming from European, English-speaking countries, such as England or Ireland, but their numbers had fallen from 35% to just five percent of total practising IMGs in 2000, and currently physicians' workforce in Canada is much more ethnically diverse and source countries tend to be low to middle income (Bourgeault et al., 2010). This transition can be partially explained by the change in immigration policy, which placed more emphasis on skilled migration and lifted restriction on entrance of visible minorities groups into Canada<sup>1</sup>. It also reflects the changes introduced by professional regulatory bodies to facilitate professional integration of IMGs.

A similar trend in diversity of IMGs can be seen in Sweden where before 1990s most IMGs came from the Nordic countries, but after European Economic Area Agreement came into force in January 1994, The Physician directive<sup>2</sup> as a part of EEA agreement stipulated that any doctor trained within EU borders has the right to practise medicine in other EU-countries. Additional changes to immigration regulations in 2008<sup>3</sup> permitted immigrants from non-EU countries with a work offer to apply for a work permit. Today, most IMGs in Sweden are from European countries, but the change in policy may result in a higher proportion of practicing IMGs coming from developing countries on work visas or as political refugees.

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1 Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2002) revised the point system used to determine eligibility of an applicant to receive a status of permanent resident in Canada. In the past decade, China, Philippines, and India were three top source countries for immigrants to Canada (CIC, 2013a).

2 Council Directive 93/16/EEC of 5 April 1993 to facilitate the free movement of doctors and the mutual recognition of their diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualifications.

3 Information on the new rules is only in Swedish and can be found at: <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/9685/a/90346>.

Although IMGs both in Canada and Sweden constitute a vital part of the physicians' labour force, they report feelings of alienation and discrimination (Johnson et al., 2004; Neiterman and Bourgeault, 2015; Salmonsson, 2014). IMGs claim that social exclusion and discrimination are formally enforced by the system of credential verification and assessment of professional qualifications and is also practised informally in job interviews, professional training, and interpersonal communication (Bourgeault et al., 2010). The processes of obtaining a medical licence in Canada and Sweden have at least one thing in common – they are very long, complicated bureaucratic processes. In addition to the assessment of education credentials, IMGs need to pass several professional and language proficiency examinations and find residency training in their field. Due to limited number of available residencies, many IMGs are unable to secure the residency training and thus cannot complete all the requirements for professional licensure (Bourgeault et al., 2010). This further exacerbates the feeling of unfairness and social exclusion among IMGs (Neiterman and Bourgeault, 2012). It can be argued, therefore, that IMGs in Canada and Sweden are both welcome and unwelcome. Their professional training becomes a route to belong to the Canadian/Swedish nation. Yet, over the course of professional integration, and also once in practice, their credentials and skills are scrutinised and undervalued (Bourgeault et al., 2010). Immigrant health care professionals are often underemployed and segregated into less lucrative positions within the health sector or outside of it entirely (Boyd and Schellenberg, 2008). IMGs' cultural and ethnic identities are celebrated by contributing to the policy of multiculturalism in Canada and equality in Sweden, but at the same time they experience racism and discrimination in the workplace (Bourgeault et al., 2010).

In this paper, we examine how IMGs in Canada and Sweden construct their sense of *belonging*. Our analysis reveals how this *belonging* is intertwined with notions about *othering* processes in different health care contexts. Comparing the experiences of IMGs from two countries, we show how the experiences of being *othered* are influenced by immigration and professional integration policy processes.

## Methodology

This paper is based on a conceptually guided qualitative content analysis of 82 semi-structured interviews conducted with Canadian and Swedish IMGs. The interviews were conducted as part of two separate studies funded by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and by the Department of Sociology at Uppsala University. The Canadian project aimed to explore the experiences of internationally educated doctors, nurses and midwives who



arrived in Canada and included a sub-sample of 67 IMGs. The Swedish project was aimed to explore the experiences of 15 internationally educated medical graduates who worked in Sweden. The differences in sample sizes coincidentally mirror the differences in absolute numbers of IMGs in Canada and Sweden;<sup>4</sup> both reflect the saturation point of the specific research questions in both projects. Both projects examined, among other issues, the barriers and facilitators to professional integration.

Participants were recruited in their respective host countries via advertisements in professional and immigrant associations, local newspapers, and employing snowball sampling. Ethics clearance for the projects was obtained from McMaster University Research Ethics Board and Uppsala Regional Ethical Review Board (Regionala Etikprövningsnämnden, 2010-05-18). The interviews drew upon different interview guides but resulted in similar themes upon independent content analysis; in both cases, interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Semi-structured interview guides focused on IMGs' experiences of immigration and professional integration, barriers and facilitators for obtaining medical licence, and workplace relations.

Canadian IMGs were recruited from the provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. At the time of the interview (2007-2009), they were less than ten years in Canada and were either practising medicine or in the process of obtaining medical license. 35 IMGs in the Canadian sample were female (12 not practising medicine and five practising) and 32 IMGs were male, of which 23 were practising. These IMGs came from Africa (Algeria, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa), Asia and Pacific (China, Japan, Philippines), Eastern Europe (Bosnia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Serbia), Western Europe (Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom), Middle East (Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syria), South America (Colombia, Venezuela), and other countries. Most IMGs were married (54 out of 67) and had children (51 out of 67). The majority were skilled/economic immigrants ( $n=47$ ), 16 came to Canada through family unification programme or as spouses of skilled workers, and four were refugees.

Swedish IMGs were recruited in Stockholm county council or from the region of Västernorrland. A total of 15 interviews were conducted with doctors who came to

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4 There are approximately 27,500 doctors practising in Sweden (UEMO, 2013). The data on non-practising IMGs in Sweden is unavailable. In Canada, there are approximately 65,440 practising physicians (CIHI, 2012) and according to some sources, about 1200 IMGs who were not successful in obtaining professional licence (Kamloops, 2013).

Sweden between 2000-2010. The majority of Swedish IMGs came from the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria; n=9), two were from Hungary, and the rest arrived from Cuba, Chile, Somalia and Poland. The sample included four female and 11 male physicians. Ten IMGs were married and the rest were single. All IMGs were licensed to practise and six were undergoing specialty training. The age of participants ranged from 35 to 63 years. All except two had come to Sweden as refugees.

Whereas the Canadian interviews were conducted by three research assistants, the Swedish interviews were conducted and analysed by one individual. The data analysis was conducted by the authors of this paper in three phases. First, Canadian and Swedish datasets were analysed separately and the coding schemes were inductively derived from the data. This stage of analysis revealed general themes in both datasets, including motivation and process of migration, process of professional integration, barriers and facilitators for professional integration, and workplace/social relations. During phase II, both datasets were combined and analysed together, as one large dataset to identify any differences/similarities between the experiences of Canadian and Swedish IMGs. The theme of *othering* was identified during this stage of the analysis. This theme was present in participants' accounts of professional and personal integration, their communication with other Canadians/Swedes in the workplace and in everyday life. During phase III, the theme of *othering* was further developed and the similarities and differences in experiences of being *othered* between and within Canadian and Swedish datasets were identified and analysed. During this phase, we also analysed the relationship between ethnic and gender identity and how it related to the experiences of being *othered*. In what follows, we present our findings.

## Findings

Reflecting on the array of identities that an individual can possess Anthias (1998) suggests that it is prudent to see them as permanent layers that can be worn in a different order in various social contexts. Our analysis revealed that ethnicity, gender and professional status were neither fixed nor completely removable in self-presentation of IMGs. All three shaped the experiences of being *othered* and feeling of *belonging* for IMGs but the social context defined which one was used to construct legitimate claims for belonging. IMGs claimed their professional status employing three different strategies for establishing these claims. These strategies were not used exclusively. During the interviews IMGs often described their experiences of entering the local professional contexts using two or more of these strategies to cope with the experiences of being *othered*. The first strategy,

predominantly used by Canadian IMGs who did not yet receive professional recognition, was to emphasise similarities with locally trained doctors. Using this strategy, IMGs utilised their professional status as a master status and defined their sense of *belonging* to professional world via their training in medicine. The second strategy highlighted the sameness of IMGs vis-à-vis local professional group. Employing this strategy, IMGs both in Canada and Sweden used their professional status of an ‘international medical graduate’ in constructing sameness within their professional group and otherness from locally trained doctors. The third strategy marked the otherness of IMGs from both other international medical graduates and local physicians. Employing this strategy, IMGs saw their ethnic/gender identity as a master status, which defined their sense of *belonging* to the local professional community and Canadian/Swedish society. Below we summarise our findings alongside these three major themes.

#### *Medical doctor as a master status*

While the presumed universality of medical training creates the demand for immigrant physicians, medical knowledge and cultural competence of internationally trained doctors are scrutinised during the licensure process (Neiterman and Bourgeault, 2015). Foreign training is evaluated against the local education and practice standards and is often perceived by local physicians as less rigorous and thorough, which leads to formal and informal segregation of IMGs into less desirable positions in the field of medicine (Shuval, 1995, 1998). In this context, IMGs tend to claim their professional competence, seeking to prove that their skills and qualifications match those of locally trained physicians (Remennick and Shtarkshall, 1997).

Our Canadian interviewees, especially those who were still in re-training, often stressed the importance that medicine had for their sense of self. They described medicine as their ‘purpose’, being a doctor as being ‘who they are’, and inability to practise medicine as a feeling of being a ‘fish out of water’. During the interviews, they defined themselves as first and foremost *physicians*, signifying their professional identity as a focal point for their sense of self. Many IMGs highlighted their rich experience in medicine, their training and qualifications. Commiserating about his inability to receive a medical licence in Canada, one of the respondents, for instance, noted:

They don't have enough pathologists in Canada... [and] it's really pitiful because I have huge experience, real experience, unique experience. I am a very good forensic pathologist. World-level forensic pathologist... And now unfortunately my huge experience [is lost]. (not practising Canadian IMG from Eastern Europe)

Despite no longer working as a forensic pathologist this study participant continues to define himself as a doctor and cherish his experience of a pathologist. He did not lose his status of a physician – he still sees himself as a doctor – but he feels that the Canadian health care system lost his skills that are not utilised in the field where he is an expert. By not recognising his skills and professional experiences, he seems to feel like his professional experience is being devalued because it was not gained in Canada.

The inability to secure residency training or complete the long array of medical examinations to pass the licensure led many Canadian IMGs to find employment in other field, preferably health-related. What our respondents revealed was that even when they did not practise medicine, they still saw themselves as doctors and often were seen as doctors by others. The quote below from an IMG who is currently working as a nursing coordinator in a long-term care facility describes a typical situation in which immigrant physicians are recognised by people around them as doctors:

Sometimes they ask me: what do you think the patient has?... Sometimes they'll bring a nurse in for needles and, because they [patients] are old, they have tiny veins, they [nurses] cannot set IVs and the patient needs an IV... So, then they call me and... I cannot do it myself because it's not legal... but I go there and I look for a bigger vein and I tell them... (not practising Canadian IMG from Romania)

The majority of our Canadian respondents secured their permanent residency status as economic immigrants, or skilled workers. The immigration category of a skilled worker places particularly strong significance on the applicant's education, training, and occupation (Kapur and McHale, 2005). Because Canada experiences shortages of physicians in certain rural/remote communities, medical doctors have been listed among the occupations that are in demand; thus medical education and training are being given priority in the assessment of applicants for permanent residency (Bourgeault et al., 2010). Many of our respondents suggested that this creates an illusion that immigrant physicians will have no problem finding a job in Canada. Moreover, for many IMGs seeking to emigrate, Canada became a country of choice because of the perceived shortages of physicians. The status of a medical doctor became a path to *belonging* to the Canadian society – the skills and qualifications of physicians made it possible to receive Canadian permanent residency and the prospects of finding employment in medicine made Canada an attractive country of destination.

In the past few years, the Canadian society has been concerned with what has been termed a 'brain waste' problem – underemployment of highly skilled immigrants who are taking low-skill jobs due to an inability to find employment in their own field (Bourgeault, 2007). Physicians driving taxis or delivering

pizzas had become a symbol of underemployment of immigrant professionals whose qualifications are in demand in the labour market but who remain unlicensed (Bourgeault et al., 2010). Building on this image, many of our Canadian respondents claimed that their professional status should be recognised as valid in Canada. They constructed their sense of self around their professional status and their *belonging* to Canadian society was paved through the ability to practise medicine and to cope with being *othered*. Their foreign training, education, or ethnicity were overshadowed by the master status of a physician – they perceived themselves as doctors and believed that others should perceive them as doctors as well.

While the importance of professional identity for the physician's sense of self has been noted by scholars (Remennick and Shakhar, 2003), our findings demonstrate that immigration policy focus (labour vs. humanitarian focus) may further strengthen the importance of professional status for the sense of self. When an immigrant physician repatriates<sup>5</sup> to another country – as were Israeli Russian physicians studied by Remennick and Shakhar (2003) – or when the doctors are granted citizenship as refugees/family members – as were our Swedish doctors – the status of a doctor is not directly linked to the sense of *belonging* to the new nation. When, however, the status of a physician becomes a focal point for admission into a country – as was the case with the physicians who came to Canada as skilled workers – the very entrance into a country is determined by one's professional skills and qualifications. In this context, one's professional identity seems to become a master status and used as a claim for *belonging*. The denial of professional recognition, on the other hand, results in the perceived exclusion not only from the professional world, but also from the Canadian society. The same tendency was not evident in the interviews with Swedish doctors who came to Sweden as refugee or through a family unification programme and therefore might have been perceived as 'migrants' first and foremost whereas their professional identity became somewhat secondary in the light of the migration policy focus.

#### *IMG as a master status*

Our analysis revealed that when IMGs constructed their professional status, they often did so reflecting on their relationship with local physicians. IMGs rarely saw themselves as full members of local doctors' professional group. Scrutiny of

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5 Israel adopts the immigration policy of repatriation and accepts immigrants based on their ethnicity – all those who have Jewish ethnic origin are granted Israeli citizenship regardless of their employment status, age, or any other characteristic. The physicians in Remennick's sample are Jewish immigrants who came to Israel from Russia, thus they are referred to as 'Russians'.

medical qualifications during the process of obtaining the licence, requirement to practise under the supervision of locally trained physicians (a condition for receiving full license), and segregation into less lucrative fields contributed to the feeling that IMGs are not considered equal to locally trained physicians. Thus, the vast majority of our interviewees constructed their professional status relying on the perceived *differences* between immigrant doctors and the local professional group. IMGs' sense of sameness was formed around common professional identity shared among immigrant doctors, which also signified their otherness from locally trained physicians. One of the Swedish respondents recalled:

It is not easy to enter the group [of local doctors]. There is no feeling of belonging with them. There is nothing that unites us except for the fact that we are doctors... [And that] is not enough... there must be something additional that unifies us. Something we can become a team around. It is not medical, it is something else... Thanks to my boss we got a doctor from Eritrea to work for us and when he came we did not need anything... it just clicked... we are both doctors and we are both... refugees... or whatever you call it. We have similar backgrounds and affinity straight away. (Swedish IMG from Somalia)

In this narrative the sense of *belonging* is constructed as an opposite of being a physician and a Swede. According to this respondent, shared professional identity is not enough to claim the sense of sameness with local physicians. He identifies himself as 'the Other' and can only build the sense of shared experience with an immigrant physician from another country, the one that is also positioned as 'the Other'. This IMG is vocal about his non-Swedishness, which signifies him as a refugee. At the same time, he does not desire to share the identity of a Swedish doctor. Instead, he joins the professional diaspora of immigrant physicians, forming a sense of unity with another IMG at his workplace, who is also *othered* by virtue of his foreign credentials and training. Paradoxically, belonging to a professional diaspora also provides access to developing a sense of *belonging* to the local group of physicians. The community of other immigrant doctors becomes a group of reference in which the status of Canadian/Swedish physician could be fostered.

In the case of Canada, we have argued that exclusion from medical community facilitated the emergence of professional diaspora among Canadian IMGs (Neiterman and Bourgeault, 2012). While our respondents indeed felt excluded from the local professional community, they nevertheless did not necessarily develop a sense of professional inferiority. Rather, they saw IMGs as possessing more cultural and professional knowledge, more wisdom, and more skills:

We [IMGs] have more knowledge than these [Canadian-trained] doctors... We have more knowledge... we are clinical. We use more our clinical skills... (not practising Canadian IMG from Colombia)

Down there [home country] we don't have [technology]... If you are practising there, you make more use of your brain because when you don't have the facilities to make a diagnosis, your brain is the only place to rely upon. (practicing Canadian IMG from Nigeria)

For these respondents, the skills and abilities of IMGs are placing them *above* locally trained doctors. In both quotes, the respondents build the dichotomy between 'we' – IMGs – and 'they' – the doctors who were trained in Canada. The perceived 'deficiencies' of IMGs' training, such as inexperience with advanced medical technology, are constructed as advantages, something that sharpened the non-technical clinical skills of immigrant doctors. These respondents' sense of *belonging* was formed around their professional identity, that of a doctor, but at the same time, the identity of an IMG, shared among the participants, was also depicting their shared otherness from locally trained doctors.

The sense of distinctiveness of IMGs from locally trained doctors was reinforced in the context of interactions in the workplace. The local medical culture was seen as a derivative of cultural norms of the Canadian/Swedish society and the differences did not only signify professional barriers but also cultural barriers experienced by IMGs:

If you come from a vertical culture where the doctor decides everything, then you collide both culturally and professionally. Many nurses [in Sweden] are managers and decide a lot over how you work and under what conditions. You just have to accept this. I think it is positive, and when you get that insight, it is good to work in teams... but of course... it 'itches' when a nurse comes and says 'you should do this'... A bit hard. (Swedish IMG from Iraq)

Situated in the professional world of Swedish medical practice, this respondent interprets the professional role of the nurse as the notion of what it means to be 'Swedish'. The cultural norms of Sweden are manifested by the voice of the (female) nurse, telling the (male) doctor what to do. Similar issues were voiced by other Swedish and Canadian IMGs who were trained and worked in more hierarchical workplaces. Navigating through new terrain of interprofessional relations, the IMGs' positionality was negotiated together with gendered professional boundaries at work.

#### *Ethnicity and gender as a master status*

In addition to seeing the IMG status as one that unites all immigrant doctors, our respondents also distinguished themselves from the rest of IMGs, identifying how their particular ethnic and gender experiences uniquely impact their workplace relations. The diversity among IMGs was considerable, and although they shared the feeling of collective identity, country of education, ethnicity and gender also played a vital role in how they defined their

professional status. Some of the respondents, for instance, highlighted their education and training as indicative of their (higher) status within the group of immigrant doctors. Others were bitter that IMGs from countries where the educational standards reflect the curriculum of the host country receive preferential treatment in the process of professional integration. Thus, the country of training and education became a marker of one's otherness.

Even more pronounced among IMGs was the feeling that their ethnic and cultural identities mark their otherness from other members of the health care team. One of our Swedish IMGs recalled:

The other day, at my new workplace, I got a question from a female anaesthesiology nurse. It was about a young man... [who]... needed a KD-catheter... The nurse asked me, 'Should I do it or do you want to do it yourself?'... I said, 'Why do you ask me?'... She said, 'But he is a young man and I am a young woman'... And I said, 'But he is Swedish and you are born in Sweden, it will be no problem, you have no such prejudices'. If the patient had been from another country, then I would have considered it but he was Swedish. (Swedish IMG from Cuba)

In this account, the shared gender between the (male) patient and (male) physician becomes a reason for the (female) nurse's request to attend to the patient. Our respondent, however, highlights the shared Swedish background of the nurse and the patient to construct (ethnic) similarities that should overshadow (gender) differences between the patient and the nurse. Emphasising his status of 'the Other', he delineates the differences between Swedes and non-Swedes as more profound than gender differences among Swedes.

The ethnic identity was seen, simultaneously, as a marker of otherness and as a symbol of *belonging* to one's ethnic group. One of our Canadian respondents said:

I hope that I can help many people here because here there is a factory... and there are many people from Colombia. These people can't go to the doctor because they don't know the language... There are thousands of people that need my help. (not practising Canadian male IMG from Colombia)

By identifying a group of potential patients who supposedly share similar ethnic backgrounds and have similar language barriers, this doctor seems to see immigrants from Colombia as giving him a specific purpose to fulfil in the Canadian society. His medical training becomes defined as essential for helping fellow Canadians who are not fluent in English. This doctor's ethnic background – the one that *othered* him and makes it harder for him to enter medical profession – seems to be redefined as a path to *belonging* through his ability to offer medical services to the group of Colombian immigrants.



In the narratives of our respondents, the barriers to integration they experienced as a result of their ethnic identity intersected with other structures of inequality. As the literature on intersectionality suggests, hierarchies of inequalities operate simultaneously to shape the experiences of individuals (Hancock, 2007; Nash, 2008). Reflecting on their otherness, IMGs often stressed the interaction of gender and ethnic discrimination. The following quote from an interview with a female Canadian IMG from Lebanon illustrates this:

I am wearing a scarf. And there is a big reason for that... I had migraine [and] then I start[ed] covering my head... [It is also] a religious and cultural belief I always respected. It is part of my culture... but I mean they [Canadians] are thinking maybe we are radicals... We are just physicians... I have so much bad, bad experiences in Canada. [During the training] I wanted to ask something from my programme director, [Jewish last name]... And then I came to know that... he is a Jewish person. Maybe he is really nice with other candidates but for me he was not. So he gave me zero...

This respondent believes that others perceive her as a Muslim first, signified by wearing traditional Muslim attire for women. Her way of dressing unites her with the group of Middle Eastern immigrants who are often perceived as a cultural or security threat in a North American context. Hence, her attire is used to construct her as ‘the Other’, while she defines herself as first and foremost a physician, and not a Muslim. At the same time, she interprets her relationship with the programme director as stemming from him being a Jew (as opposed to his status as a doctor). This quote illuminates the intersecting positionalities of religion, gender, profession and appearance that were often present in the accounts of our respondents.

Similarly, gender is a central factor in identifying the positioning of our female participants:

It’s well-known... [that] if a new [immigrant] doctor makes a mistake, it becomes a big issue... My feeling is that one might relate everything to the fact that you come from somewhere else but maybe that is not the whole truth. In anaesthesiology we are as many women as men, for example, but it is well known that it is harder for women than for men... It is a bit strange that it is foremost female nurses that react badly or... discriminate [against] female doctors. (Swedish IMG from Syria)

This respondent talks about two factors that signify her as ‘the Other’ – her ethnic background and her gender. Her gender, however, can potentially become a route to *belonging* to the community of women in the workplace, marking her sameness with other female health professionals while demarcating her otherness from male anaesthesiologists. While she sees her gender as a route to *belonging*, she admits that for her colleagues her gender is intertwined with her

professional status and her ethnicity, and as such it further labels her as ‘the Other’.

What was also evident from the responses of our participants is that the marginal status of women in the medical profession built continuity in the expectations female IMGs had about their prospects of obtaining proper employment in the new country. Explaining her decision to switch from surgical specialty to geriatrics, a Swedish IMG from Chile noted:

It [geriatrics] is more relaxed... One colleague told me that when I started as a surgeon, ‘You will always have to show that you know more than everybody else because you are a girl and that is how it is’. It is the same thing here [in Sweden] because I have a friend who works as a surgeon and he says he feels bad for the girls as they always get the hardest jobs.

This IMG identifies gender as a common denominator between Swedish and non-Swedish women practising medicine. The necessity to ‘prove oneself’ in the workplace is something that unites *all* female physicians. Gender identity, therefore, seems to become a master status for female physicians as they have to negotiate their position at the workplace and the experiences of being *othered* stemming from gender and ethnic relations.

## Discussion

By drawing upon Hughes’ (1945) conceptualisation of status dilemma, we showed how IMGs balance the contradictions between their status of a doctor and their status of an immigrant, visible minority or woman. While the identity of a doctor is often perceived as a ‘master status’ (Remennick and Shakhar, 2003), the contribution of our paper lies in demonstrating that the intersecting identities of IMGs – ethnicity and gender – can at times overshadow professional identity. Drawing upon the theoretical conceptualisation of positionality, Anthias (1998) suggests that the array of social labels, such as gender or ethnicity, may be used by individuals to position themselves in the social context by choosing them as ‘layers’ that can be put ‘on the top’ or hidden among other layers. Although she recognises that the social context constrains the ability of individuals to choose among these layers, she does not depict how this actually occurs (Anthias, 1998). Combining Anthias’ (1998) framework with Hughes’ (1945) conceptualisation of the status dilemmas allowed us to examine how social interactions and the social context shape the performative dynamics of othering and belonging processes.

Three major insights can be derived from our study. First, we want to emphasise that the experiences of being *othered* are not static; they are fluid and dynamic.

The social context can enable the use of strategies by individuals to negotiate the experiences of being *othered*. The negotiation of othering seems to occur through social interactions and hence not only those individuals who are *othered*, but also people around them are actively engaged in negotiating *othering* and *belonging*. Second, while *othering* can be a marginalising experience, it is not a unidirectional process performed by the dominant group (Anthias, 1998; Gilroy, 1997). Our respondents were certainly affected by what they perceived to be discrimination and racism, which signified their otherness from the group of 'white'/local physicians. At the same time, they were actively engaged in constructing their own sense of otherness. This otherness was not perceived as always marking IMGs' marginality; it was also used to demonstrate their sense of superiority over local doctors and to establish *belonging* to the members of the in-group signified by being *othered*. Finally, we suggest that the focus on immigration policies (skilled labour vs. humanitarian) can shape the way in which individuals cope with *othering* processes. When the entrance into the country is granted due to humanitarian reasons, as is the case with the Swedish IMGs, the claims for professional recognition and social inclusion seem to become secondary. When, on the other hand, immigrants are granted permanent residency based on their education and qualifications, as is the case with the majority of the Canadian IMGs (and some other professionals in Canada), the demands for professional recognition and social inclusion can be more prominent. These differences in immigration policy focus could therefore shape the way in which *othering* processes are experienced by immigrants.

Due to the limitations of our data, we were unable to examine how the formation of the ethnically diverse professional group may impact the notion of otherness and *belonging* in relation to larger society. We believe that longitudinal studies may be more equipped to address this question. This can be a promising direction for future research.

## Conclusion

This paper examined the experiences of being *othered* and feelings of *belonging* among international medical graduates (IMGs) who strive for professional integration in Canada and Sweden. Building on the theoretical conceptualisation of *othering*, we explored how IMGs in Canada and Sweden negotiate their professional identity and how they cope with experiences of being *othered*. Our analysis revealed that IMGs establish their sense of *belonging* to the new society and to the local professional world of medicine by utilising their professional, ethnic and gender identities. The social context in which IMGs establish their

claims for professional recognition shapes the order in which they present their identities and establish the legitimacy of their claims.

Focusing on contextual differences between the experiences of professional recognition of Canadian and Swedish IMGs, we demonstrated that the context of immigration policies may shape the way IMGs cope with being *othered* in the new country. The impact of immigration policies on the experiences of being *othered* and feeling of *belonging* should be further explored in future research. We believe it will shed additional light on the complex processes of constructing otherness, sameness and belonging.

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# Emplaced and embodied mobility in organizations

Wendelin Küpers

## abstract

Following insights of phenomenology, this paper aims to contribute to a critical understanding of being emplaced and embodied in relation to mobility in organizations. From a relational perspective, being mobile is interpreted as a way of being bodily mediated thus relationally and performatively placed. Recognizing mobility as a dynamic, de-centred event in relation to embodiment, leads to the development of the concept and practice of ‘inter-place’ in organizations. Following from this, moving bodies at work and tele-presence in organizations are discussed as being situated between moving places and inter-placed movement. Finally, theoretical, methodological and political implications and some limitations are outlined. The conclusion offers some perspectives on alternative, more responsible and sustainable practices of embodied and emplaced mobility in organizational life-worlds.

## Introduction

As constitutive milieu and lived realities places and embodiment influence or inflect how organizational members engage, understand and move in their world. Likewise, mobilities are shaping how spacing and emplacement as well as bodily experiences are perceived, created and unfold in and through organizational life-worlds. How organizations and their members are situated in and move through spaces and places impacts all their embodied orienting, feeling, thinking, communicating, acting and relating in the material and social ecology of work (Gorawara-Bhat, 2000). Thus, interplaying places and (im-)mobilities – while becoming together and being inherently political (Bærenholdt and Granås, 2008; Pellegrino, 2011) – are dynamic formations of materio-social



relations (Massey, 1998: 154; 2005). As such they are interacting through bodily and net-worked mediation at particular locations within a globalized world. By linking a phenomenology of place, the body and embodiment to approaches and studies of mobility, this paper aims to contribute to a critical understanding of experiential dimensions of mobility and to reflect implications of what it means to be situated and to move in and beyond organizational life-worlds.

Based on a phenomenological approach of embodied mobility, a processual understanding of the inter-relationality of spaces, places and mobility is developed and the concepts of 'inter-place' and 'inter-placing' are presented. Such comprehension allows interpreting multiple embodied local-cultural realities of places and mobilities in organizations as relationally mediated, emerging events. To illustrate the arguments, moving bodies at work and tele-presence in organizations are discussed as being situated between moving places and as inter-placed movement. The final part discusses some theoretical, methodological and political implications. The conclusion offers some perspectives on alternative, more responsible and sustainable embodied and emplaced practices of mobilities.

### **Moving in and beyond organizational life-worlds**

Increasingly, life-worlds of organizations, economies and societies are characterised by complex, actual and imagined, movements of subjects, objects, capital, knowledge and power (Elliott and Urry, 2010; Urry, 2007; Jensen, 2011). People, who are moving to and from the office, across cities, projects, technologies, networks, organizations, industries, and countries, are thus living in a world of amplified mobilities and networked connectivities. This implies expanded and intensified possibilities for accessing and inhabiting multiple realities. For example, the proliferation of mobile technologies corresponds to a qualitative and quantitative increase in virtual, imaginary and corporeal mobilities (Büscher and Urry, 2009). Mobile technologies and networked connectivity affords a life in motion, making people to be constantly on the move in a global emplacement; they situate them simultaneously 'now here' and 'nowhere' (Friedland and Boden, 1994). These moves are part of 'lifestyle mobilities' that are characterised by an increasing fluidity between travel, leisure and migration (Cohen et al., 2015). New modes of moving and dwelling in various diverse yet intersecting mobilities emerge from this condition (Urry, 2001: 157).

These modes and movements are explored in an emerging turn to mobility in social science (Sheller and Urry, 2006). As a consequence of this turn, we need

to broaden the metaphorical repertoire and deepen a critical and political understanding of mobility. This includes contradictory and ambivalent ways in which mobilities are conceived, regulated and experienced in social and organizational life.

Economic regimes of mobility are prescriptively aiming to make embodied human beings more governable. This is done by organizing their responses (Foucault, 1979) and shaping their conducts in a desirable and predictable way (Jensen, 2011; Rose, 1999). For increasing the governability of the subjects in neo-liberal order (Read, 2009), conditioning regimes function as strategic programming of their mobility behaviour (Foucault, 1979). In these governing arrangements, humans are seen and treated as utility-driven animal. As auto-regulated or auto-correcting selves they are resources to be exploited or 'fostered, used, and optimized' (Dean, 1999: 20) while their moving bodies are 'normalised' and 'objectified'.

Accordingly, the meaning and usage of mobility in organizational life is always underpinned and directed by different *episteme*, i.e. an underlying system of rules for forming knowledge to achieve coherence and plausibility in the first place (O'Leary and Chia, 2007). How signs are noticed and extracted from lived experience of being mobile and how these cues are formed into a more coherent interpretation is always 'governed by the established rules of formation for a particular episteme' (*ibid.*: 395). Societies and organizations are increasingly governed by procedures of 'controlled circulation' (Weiskopf and Munro, 2012), thus a 'govern-mobility' (Bærenholdt, 2013), is structuring the possible field of mobile actions.

Governed mobile subjects are ascribed specific needs, wants and desires, they are assigned to particular social positions and are presumed to act in particular ways. Such imaginaries and production of imagined subjects with their bodies and affects foster categories of (im)mobile subjects as well as of (im)mobilities, in order to be controllable and manageable.

A more comprehensive understanding of mobilities needs to consider the role of non-discursive, corporeal and emotional dimensions in order to reflect how 'governed' mobile subjects experience or imagine mobilities and spatiality. The experience of being mobile and the relations to spaces are processed via the senses and co-model practices based on 'seduction and constraint through cultural and symbolic strategies' (Degen, 2008: 34). As Degen (2008) demonstrated, audio-scapes, smell-scapes, touch-scapes and so forth become sites for cultural tensions, for example serving as markers for interwoven significant cultural practices.

A recent study by Gustafson (2014) on experiences and consequences of frequent business travellers on their professional and personal lives shows that being mobile may be both stressful and stimulating. In an ambivalent way, experienced mobilities may be associated with physical and psychological strain, increased workloads and difficulties in balancing work and private life. But a mobile life may also provide enriching experiences, social and professional status, promoting a career and contributing to a cosmopolitan identity.

Facing the increased impact of mobilities calls for interrogating critically who and what is demobilized and remobilized across many different scales, and in what situations mobility or immobility might be desired options, coerced, or paradoxically interconnected (Adey, 2010). Fluxes of mobilities involve tensions, struggles and conflicts (Urry, 2007: 25), including dislocation and emptiness.

As Creswell (2010) notes in his study on the politics of mobility, mobility is not just a smooth movement, but also a process that is accompanied by friction, turbulence and power asymmetries. At the same time, being on-the-move can affect both the ability and inability to relate and connect to place. Movements among highly mobile elite workers in hasting mobile cycles for example can be experienced as 'stickiness' (Costas, 2013). Paradoxically, this entails a 'fixed instability' or 'rushing standstill' of disruptive moves in and between ephemeral non-places like airports. In such 'non-places' (Augé, 1995), mobility is experienced as impersonally flattened. Being entrapped in a compulsory logic of moving on and on may lead to the experience of alienation and loneliness in working life. Other negative impacts and 'costs' of mobilities may emerge due to pervasive, mobile and promiscuous commodification and energy production and consumption in a mobile high-carbon society (Elliott and Urry, 2010: 140). To further elaborate the experiential dimensions of embodied mobility, the following section presents a phenomenological approach.

## **Phenomenological approaches to embodied mobility**

Phenomenological approaches provide insights into what Elliott and Urry call the 'experiential texture' (2010: 67) of the lives of moving globals in relation to problems with and contradictions in their mobilities, confronting uncertainty, and disruptions that affect them bodily, while being emplaced. If 'humans are sensuous, corporeal, technologically extended and mobile beings' (Urry, 2007: 51), we need to consider the status of their body and the way they are placed. This allows developing a differentiated understanding of mobility that reveals how being mobile is bodily mediated as well as relationally and performatively placed (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 143).

Furthermore, recognizing mobility as a dynamic, de-centred event in relation to embodiment helps to understand the role of 'inter-place' with regard to increasingly mobile organizations and its mobilised members. This 'inter-place' or rather 'embodied inter-placing' refers to an action and condition in which the being or presence of places and of mobile subjects is extended and simultaneously connected to multiple places in real time. Accordingly, the next section outlines basic ideas of a phenomenology of space and embodied place and mobility. A phenomenological approach facilitates rehabilitating the often forgotten primordial and opening realm of directly felt and lived experiences and realities involved in being mobile in embodied places and performances.

### **Phenomenology of embodied space, place and performative mobilities**

Far from being merely a homogenous container that locates things, both space and place are constitutive media for things, processes and experiences to take place in depth (Stroeker, 1987) as well as for any mobility and a moving existence in and towards the world. Phenomenologically, members of organizations are situated and move through their placed everyday life-world that is imbued with meaning (Sandberg and Dall'Alba, 2009: 1357). It enables performing of activities and to make sense of the same.

In the placed hori-zones of organizational life-worlds, practices of its members and their place-based identification (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996) are made up of an array of concerns, tasks, tools, and milieus to dwell, move and inter-act. If 'place is integral to the very structure and possibility of experience' (Malpas, 1999: 32), then likewise, placed movements co-create experiential processes, including shared affects, emotions, cognitions, actions and identities. In a mobile age identities are increasingly hybridized and multiple, while seemingly less bound by the notion of a stable, unitary place, homeland or 'true' self (Sheller and Urry, 2003; Urry, 2003). However, these fragile mobility-identities – characterised as 'to-and-froing' between cultural, technological, and existential spaces and places (D'Mello and Sahay, 2007: 184) – are constructed within an embodied and emplaced nexus. This nexus refers to meaning-providing socio-historical, relational and temporal contexts and moorings that exist along a global-local continuum. Being infused with meaning (Frello, 2008; Greenblatt, 2009), emplaced mobility 'means different things, to different people, in differing social circumstances' (Adey, 2006: 83; Adey, 2013).

The following shows how phenomenology can help to understand the dynamics between unfixed space and situated place in relation to these 'to-and-froing'

mobilities. It explores them at multiple levels and reveals the tensions between a place-less logic and place-dependencies in organizations.

For developing this phenomenological understanding a contrast to functionalist and utilitarian orientations is enlightening. According to these orientations, organizational spaces have been seen as entities that are divided, controlled, imposed and which have hierarchical, productive, personalised, symbolic and social dimensions (Chanlat, 2006). Consequently, in managerial and organizational contexts space is treated mostly as environmental factor or resource, utilised for finding appropriate structures and fits for organizations or groups. Managers appear then as engineers, who are involved in the spacing and timing of structures and activities into a centripetal amalgam. For example, managers use language of boundaries or mapping to organise space and these inscriptions create specific spacing(s) and timings by clarifying and delimiting zones of action (Jones et al., 2004). With its centre-oriented dynamics, this kind of spacing and timing mediate a particular ordering that is supposed to be required or desired in organizing. This spatio-temporal organised order is invented to ensure handling everyday coordinative demands, planning and implementing strategies, undertaking projects etc. for running the business in a relatively friction-free manner. In other words, space-management aims for and functions as coordinating the proliferation and sharing of spacing(s) and timings to keep and optimize things and people going, both structurally and processually (Hoskin, 2004: 750).

For instance, so called 'integrated workplace design', like Cisco Systems® (2014), assess spatial effects in terms of measuring effectiveness as the increase in productivity and participant satisfaction, respectively efficiency by key metrics, such as space utilization or cost and portfolio optimization. Space and spacing as well as em- or displacements materialise power relations and are used as mechanism of control (Carr and Hancock, 2006; Jensen, 2011). They can also be instrumentalised for contesting strategies to resist regimes of domination and to reconstruct spaces (Taylor and Spicer, 2007) as part of social change in organizations (Hancock, 2006), thus mobility.

From a phenomenological perspective, spaces and places are not (only) socially and culturally constructed, but also and primarily experienced and consumed through embodied beings at the point of visitation as well as before and afterwards. It is the lived body, which institutes a primordial, pre-reflective access to the enviroing things as well as a never fully determinable orientational hold onto the world. The lived body is also a medium for moving in and through the world. The physical space that underlies embodied, subjective, that is 'lived-space' is not a geometrical space, nor is it a mere construction of subjects

(Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 253-54). Living spaces are means by which positions of subjects, things and tasks in organization become possible. As bodies of organizational members are organs of possible actions, they are a 'virtual' embodiment, whose phenomenal place is defined by its tasks and by its situation that wherever they have something to do (*ibid.*: 260).

While action-moving bodies gear into the world of organizing tasks, the lived spaces of organizations are orientating positions and movements of their members. This concerns for example movements towards left and right, up and down, near and far or moving and being at rest, while being environed at work in meaningful relations (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 270). Thus, bodies of organizational members and their world form a dynamic spatio-temporal connection that is always already oriented by the primacy of the embodied place in organizations. Giving the central role of locality as it arises through embodiment, Merleau-Ponty shows that places are themselves 'relationally' embodied. This is the case because embodiment refers to our lived being-in-the-world that is an active and reversible process, indicating the negotiation of everyday life in relation to the material and social world (Dale and Burrell, 2008: 215) and its mobilities.

As an emplaced being, the moving, knowing body is an agent, vehicle, articulation, and witness of being in place (Casey, 1993: 48).<sup>1</sup> Living bodies mediate and navigate people by a co-orientation within place and facilitating the co-creation of 'place-scapes' (*ibid.*: 25).<sup>2</sup> These placed 'scapes' can be interpreted as embodied 'move-scapes', respectively other interrelated fluid, flowing and amorphous 'scapes' (Appadurai, 1990), including 'techno-scapes' in the global cultural economy.

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<sup>1</sup> As Casey (1993: 313) summarizes succinctly: 'Places are not so much the direct objects of sight or thought or recollection as what we feel *with* and *round*, *under* and *above*, *before* and *behind* our lived bodies. They are the ad-verbial and pre-positional contents of our usually tacit corporeal awareness, at work as the pre-position of our bodily lives, underlying every determinate bodily action or position, every static posture of our corpus, every coagulation of living experience in thought or word, sensation or memory, image or gesture... To be a sentient bodily being at all is to be place-bound, bound to be in a place, bonded and bound therein.'

<sup>2</sup> In 'place-scapes' bodies and environments form 'congruent counterparts' (Casey 1993: 25, 103). The coupled body-world forms a dynamic spatio-temporal connection that is always perceived, mediated and oriented through an emplaced body. Emplacement refers to an immediate and concrete placement in which the interplay between a living body and place is situated (*ibid.*: 3-23). As Casey notes, 'bodies belong to places just as places belong to bodies...place is where the body is' (*ibid.*: 102-3). Emplaced being thus entails sensing, feeling, moving, orienting, thinking and acting through a mobile body which is co-constituted by the places and spaces within which it is practically engaged.

Importantly, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the lived 'body-subject' of place is more than and different from an 'object', but it is also less than a fully-fledged 'subject'. Rather, it refers to a 'third term' between the two, acting and being acted upon always is part of the fabric of social becoming (Crossley, 1996: 101) of embodied material realities, including those of mobilities. With this post-dualistic approach also a social body (Crossley, 2001) and a reflexive embodiment (Crossley, 2006) of places and movements within and through them becomes accessible (Malpas, 1999: 163).

### **Inter-relationality of spaces, places and mobility**

For developing a deeper understanding of the embodied intertwinement, both places and mobility need to be interpreted not merely as a reified positions or movements between two or more poles, but as ongoing emergencies of inter-relational processes. Already Lefebvre (1991) showed that space in its multiplicity is a social product, or a complex social construction that is based on values, the social production of meanings which affects perceptions and spatial practices of mobility activities. For him practices of per- and conceived space enact a spatial order in action, while discursive spaces of representation frame our understanding of what is possible and how senses and bodies are embedded in space. Spaces are not only socially (re-)produced, they are also made (un-)productive in social movements and practices.

For example, being confined to certain work settings, like furnishing or office designs, affects 'artifact-in-use', task-performances or interpersonal relations and movements of employees (Davis, 1984). Placed architectural arrangements, like group-offices are used to set the supposed proper equipped stage for the drama of everyday life (Brissett and Edgley, 1990). For instance, walls that determine divisions and subdivisions among parts of an organizational office, arranged as cubicles or shared work-spaces, define the construed social structure of and movements within the organization (Davis, 1984). Ambivalently, emplacing artifacts both stabilize and destabilize organizational action as they may ensure coordination, communication, and control, or also create disturbance and conflict that are impacting organizational knowing and learning (Svabo, 2009) and mobility. Accordingly, exploring the contradictory, conflictual, and ultimately political character of processes of production of space and phenomenal places can help to understand more critically possibilities and impossibilities of mobilities in organizations.

As embodied spaces and places are intermediating milieus for movements – where the material and cultural as well as individual, and collective worlds meet

and inter-play – they influence how multiple interwoven relations of mobility in organizations develop and unfold. It is in this ‘in-between’ of placed movements where ‘differences unfold: differences in-between inside-outside, formal-informal, old-new etc.’ (Clegg and Kornberger, 2006: 154), thus allowing for creative organizing (*ibid.*: 155). Moreover, as emerging events that make mobility (im-)possible, re-produced spaces and places themselves are dispersed and inherently indeterminate process, thus continually reconfiguring. Thus embodied places are not simple or static locations, but like mobilities, a multi-layered relational processuality (Casey, 1993: 65; Küpers, 2010, 2014).

Relational intelligibility shifts our attention from an understanding of space and place as a vessel and mobility as movement between points, to a dynamic becoming that transpires *between* situated people and their placed artefacts-in-use, environments and emerging mobilities. For example, a completely wireless environment and surveying software produces a specific relation between employees and technology that enables, but also controls their mobility at work. Depending on how employees relate to their work-place or other places in the organization, like walkways, floors they respond movingly differently. For instance, the distance between workplace and welfare-facilities, amenities or meeting rooms impacts movements in everyday-lives. Moreover, depending on ergonomic conditions and whether employees can choose the area most conducive to their work influences their moving. Furthermore, working alone, independently or from home makes employees to move differently, compared to working together among others in a large working environment.

Out of interconnections between placing and moving, emplacement and mobilities, embodied perceptions, feelings, cognitions, actions, socialities and meanings as well as artefacts, structures and functions of being mobile are created, performed, questioned, re-created, and re-negotiated. It is the inter-relationality of placing and moving as ongoing processes of becoming that serves as the source for embodied, emotional, social and aesthetic experiences, thus for creativity, innovation and added value. By recognizing the primacy of relational processes, they become ‘form-in-media’, in which places and mobilities are continuously formed and transformed. In contrast to essentialist or mechanistic approaches, the view of relationality encourages us to see and describe the ‘inter-connections’ and processes through which the world of placing and mobility are experienced in an ongoing state of (body-)becoming (Küpers, 2014) in rhythmic ‘relation-scapes’ (Manning, 2009).

This mesh of ‘inter-placing’ moves and moving places is distributed in dynamic sets of forms and relations within powerful historical, embodied, emotional, social and structural, but also political and aesthetic dimensions. All of these



forms, formations and transformations of place respectively moves interrelate and co-create each other within an 'inter-world' or 'inter-mundane space' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 248). The inclusion of embodied placing and moving through this inter-worldly immanence provides renewed possibilities for developing richer, more textured understandings of how we are part of a lived involvement within what Merleau-Ponty (1995) calls 'flesh' of the world<sup>3</sup>.

Accordingly, the way organizational members are situated and move along with their phenomena is mediated in enfleshed perceptual, orientational and actional relationships as well as individual and collective intentionalities<sup>4</sup>. Within these enfleshed dimensions and its multiple local-historical and cultural realities that is between what is 'already in place' and what can 'take place', mobilities of organizational practices, practitioners and leadership emerge.

The relational modes of enacting capabilities and possibilities create 'in-between spaces' (Bradbury and Lichtenstein, 2000) of inter-practicing that includes various interwoven, emerging processes and feedback-loops (Calori, 2002). Such mediated, embodied 'inter-practice' helps to reveal and interpret the relationship

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- 3 Merleau-Ponty's indirect and post-dualistic ontology of flesh refers to a chiasmic, incorporated intertwining and reversibility of pre-personal, personal, inter- and transpersonal dimensions. Importantly for Merleau-Ponty flesh, is neither matter or some substance nor mind, nor only a representational construct. Flesh is designated as an 'element' of being, in the sense of a general thing or incarnated principle, situated in the midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, functioning as the formative medium of the object and the subject (Merleau-Ponty, 1995). With the later Merleau-Ponty's indirect ontology of in-between and intertwining within this chiasmic flesh we can see that place and placing, particularly of human beings and their embedment, is only possible by being open to the flux of the open, ambiguous processes of which embodied, emotional and aesthetic spheres are an interplaying constituent. Within this rhythmic, sometimes chaotic endless flow of continuous becoming with others, place and implacing the fragile transitory and unpredictable human beings and their organizations are always on the brink of being lost in larger cycles and turbulences with no secure metaphysical foundations.
- 4 Following, a Merleau-Pontyian understanding, individual and collective beings in organizations not only conceive their existence, but live in and move through the same and enact it with their 'operative intentionalities'. This kind of embodied operative intending refers to a bodily, pre-reflexive, and concrete spatial motility and spontaneous organization of experience that precedes cognitive reasoning, but brings the world forth as perceptual, projection and actional fields. This corporeally constituted intentionality mediates the perceived things, shades, forms, and the futures we can grasp with our limbs and an e-motional feeling of being attuned of being are attuned to experiences or activities. It is this soma-significative motility that establishes pre-predicative interconnections with the world and the moving and moved lives (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: xxxii) in organizations, structuring its space and effectuating its agencies, via the embodied modality of responsiveness (Küpers, 2015b).

between being, feeling, knowing, doing, structuring and effectuating, while moving in and through actions in organization that can be exemplified by moving bodies at work.

### **Moving bodies at work**

Serving both, as actors and media, moving bodies at work in organizational practices (Wolkowitz, 2006: 183) are the 'conditio sine quo non' for all kinds of habitual actions, interactions and relational practices in organizing. These include bodily mediated mobilising sensual, psycho-physical and social capacities, presences and forms of processing knowledge or communication. 'Bodies-at-work' involve working bodies or bodily work that is movingly done and effected on or through other bodies and embodied contexts. Various forms of somatic or sensory work as well as affective, emotional and aesthetic labour and embodied performances are part of work-practices and its affective dramas that are staged and performed in everyday-life of organizing (Küpers, 2015b: 161).

In embodied and placed forms organizations and its members 'body-forth' moving working body-selves and performative processes. Ambivalently, both are perceptive, operative-intentional as well as responsive and indeterminate or emergent, but also ruled, controlled and constrained. For example, Longhurst (2001) showed how specific regulative body-regimes in organizations produce norms of impenetrability of bodily boundaries at work. Various forms of representation and moulding subjectification try to rationally tame and discipline the moving bodies-at-work, attempting to (re-)produce docile and adjustable bodies through post-disciplinary regimes of work (Weiskopf and Locker, 2006).

Furthermore, aesthetic and presentational labour is a an embodied practice that entails supplying, mobilising, developing and commodifying corporeal dispositions, capacities and attributes transformed into competencies. These are then aesthetically geared towards producing a 'style' in service encounters (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007: 107) that appeals to the senses of customers, visually or aurally.

Aesthetic or presentational workers can also use 'moving' micro-political strategies of embodiment that serve as resistance or co-optations. As Swan and Fox (2010) have shown, for enacting resisting moves occupational resources are used that involve forms of symbolism of gendered and racialized bodies and body-work as part of temporal, dynamic, intermingled processes in diversity-work in the public sector. In their description of the politics and ambivalence of diversity-work they show how micro-practices and its moves employ both

embodied and discursive resources as well as management technologies. These undermining practices imply that the embedding normative orders in embodied work are negotiable structures that are open for modification. As such they are varying or morphing with changes in worldly situations and its structuration within specific, altering margins and horizons. Accordingly, embodied working life – and moves within the same – are governed by somantic-aiesthetic dispositions, intentions and social norms. Importantly, these are dynamically related to moving-making desired states of bodily senses and feelings (Vannini et al., 2010: 337).

The power of material, embodied presence of actors in inter-practicing is shown in a case study on a meeting in a strategy context by Hodgkinson and Wright (2002). They show how much the physical presencing of positions and movement of key-actors in a meeting-room can influence the development of practices of strategizing. For example, they demonstrate how a leader skilfully manages not only her discourse at the workshop, but also how the lay-out of the chairs and her own bodily positioning *vis-à-vis* the whiteboard is used in order to ensure her episodic, arranged and performing moves. As the moving presencing flow of such practices is full of surprises, the supposed control may be an illusion. Corresponding to the flows of materially arranged places, possible performative movements of resistance to such practices, like ignoring, non-listening or distractive activities, may emerge. Likewise, such practicing can activate alternative mobile imaginaries and shapings of mobile sense-scapes ‘from below’ (Jensen, 2011: 268). In addition to placed and moving bodies at work, another illustration of how places and movement are connected can be seen in relation to tele-presence in organization.

### **Tele-presence – between moving places and inter-placed movement**

The following exemplifies the relation between place, body and movement with regard to tele-presences in organizations. New forms of distributed or dispersed work in relation to spaces and places, like remote working, e-Work, tele-work or telecommuting and varieties of cyber-space work (Felstead et al., 2005) challenge old spatial orders and surveying control. Compared to embodied face-to-face interaction tele-presences in technology-mediated cyberspaces render distinct qualities due to its distant, non-localised, displaced relationship. Nevertheless, while being situated in tele-presence, a sense of embodiment is predicated upon the sensorial body, which has a malleability of its experiential boundaries and thus affect and extent bodily corporeality transporting into the real-virtual environments.

The body mediates tele-presence and experiences in cyper-space, as embodied beings bring their everyday, real-world understandings and social experiences into virtual encounters. However, in tele-presences part of the sensorial architecture of the body remains in the physical world, while another is projected into the virtual one. Thus, cyberspace is not a disembodied reality; but rather it is a medium through which we experience a different kind of embodiment and transfigurations of body-boundaries to an extent that the virtual becomes an aspect of embodiment (Richardson and Harper, 2002). Body-centered interaction even may augment the experience of presence in a virtual reality environment (Slater and Usoh, 1994). As speed and intensity of technologically mediated modes have accelerated in recent years, technology not only transforms our ways of doing things, but also profoundly conditions our placed experiences and movements of ourselves and others in the world.

The impact of a new spatial-temporal conditions and new modes and forms of human interaction can be illustrated by investigating the status of place and movement in tele-communication and the role of perceived proximity. Mobile phone communication affects, besides the use of time, the role of place; as it distributes presence in simultaneous interactions. When people are on the phone, there is a sense in which they are in two places at one time (Rettie, 2005).

As Backhaus (1997) has shown the temporally immediate transcendence of space through the use of the telephone creates a bi-localized space of interaction, which causes specific changes in social praxis. Telephone connections do not only constitute a degrounding of place, disconnecting from lived body environment. Not sharing a primary environment with each other means also that the space-within-potential-reach will have qualitatively different meanings for those involved. The realm of telephoning and other tele-present spaces involve a modified we-relationship through which meaning-intentions are intersubjectively synthesized, yet from bi-local environmental standpoints. The intersubjective achievements concerning projects grounded within the immediacy of telephonic or tele-present 'place' creates an embodiment 'in there' (Geser, 2004), being in a temporal simultaneity, i.e. community of time, creating a third realm. In such realms we are able to engage in instantaneous synchronised contact with distant others being our 'consociate contemporaries' (Zhao, 2004) within an 'electronic proximity' (Dertouszos, 1998). It is the increasingly important 'perceived proximity' (Wilson et al., 2008) that explains also the paradox of 'far-but-close' in virtual work that is the state of 'being far' physically, while co-existing with a 'feeling close' (Küpers, 2010).

Placed in diverse countries, time zones and socio-cultural environments, organizational members who are involved in long distance working

relationships, will increasingly move not only in tele-phone-spaces, but also use conference calls, video-conferencing, blogging, intranet and further media to communicate. However, these distanced dis-placed relations in virtual settings, are also impeding their practice. This concerns for example their relation of mutual trust (Collinson, 2005) or sharing of implicit knowledge (Crampton, 2001; Zhao, 2007) losses of sensory and expressive communication and reduction in intimacy, like bonds, emotional involvement etc. (Mann et al., 2000). Furthermore, mobility gives rise to new forms of translocal selves and emotional relations 'via physical encounter and somatic internalization, in response to the power of images and narratives, and through the operation of memory and desire' (Conradson and McKay, 2007: 167).

Emotions interweave with perceived mobile sense-scapes and the experience of mobile spaces (Thrift, 2004), thereby producing a disposition towards certain mobile practices and mobile technologies (Sheller, 2004). This disposition relates to bodily kinaesthetic experience of movement as well as technologies and materialities of the world by and through which movement is made. Likewise, displacement through mobility may contribute to feelings of dis-ease and discomfort, disorientation and disconnection or loss through interrupting familiarity and continuity that spatial context and physical presence can supply (Fullilove, 1996). These experiences may render a yearning to return to former states or lead to an inability to form new attachments as they may not 'trust' emotional affiliations with new places. In turn, organization may mitigate to return to embodied and placed proximity and 'achieve relational proximity through translation, travel, shared routines, talk, common passions' (Amin and Cohendet, 2004: 99).

## Implications and limitations

The following sections outline first some theoretical and methodological implications. Subsequently some limitations, political implications and perspectives of a phenomenological approach to the study of mobility are discussed.

### *Theoretical and methodological implications and future research*

What are possibilities of re-placing and re-locating organizational and management research and its conventional focus and epistemological locations in relation to space and mobility? If a discipline organises an analytical space (Foucault, 1977: 143), a more multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary and meta-paradigmatic journey will be important for opening this space for alternative lines of investigation. In pursuing such a cross-disciplinary journey research can

break the largely univocal narrative and its approaches as well as open up to multiple and innovative knowledge and methodological ‘places’ and moves. This also implies approaching spaces, relational places and movements or mobilities from the perspective of the first-, second- and third-person. Developmental action-inquiry (Torbert et al., 2004) considers and meta-triangulates these perspectives in its singular and plural modes. These include the inquirer’s own changing practices, ways of thinking, and quality of attention (subjective first-person research on ‘my’-self) as well the interactions, norms, governance, and mission of the specific persons and groups with whom one is working or playing (inter-subjective second-person research on ‘our’ commun[ication]al process) and finally third-person dimensions, outside of the inquirer (objective third-person objects and practices). The goal of such an approach is to inquire into and transform personal and social experiences as well as structures related to place and mobility in a timely and transformative way. Thus, it covers and integrates the domains of subjective, aesthetic disciplines, intersubjective ethical and political interactions as well as objective, instrumental functions and results (Torbert and Taylor, 2008).

Methodologically, investigating spaces, inter-places and movements there requires a shifting from a way of knowing by ‘looking at’ to a way of knowing by being placed that is ‘in contact, or in touch with...the adoption of an involved rather than an external uninvolved standpoint’ (Shotter, 1993: 20). This also implies focussing on the relationally placed social environment and what it ‘allows’ or ‘permits’. Furthermore, instead of taking isolated observational approaches on given realities, future research may focus more on negotiated procedures and local embeddedness in everyday-life and locally constituted situations or circumstances (*ibid.*). Moving from one workplace to another as ‘workplace vagabonds’ (Garsten, 2008), employees are placed through temporary staffing agencies while struggle to identify themselves through what they do and where they do it.

In terms of contents, future research needs to investigate more adequately the dynamic embodied placing of these post-industrial mobile workers, who are situated and moving between closeness and distance, immediacy and tele-presences. In particular, research that explores moving practices that require employees to be able to oscillate between locating and dislocating, placement and displacement while shifting boundaries of meanings is called for. In addition to physical movement of objects involved in embodied mobility of people, also imaginative, virtual and communicative forms (Urry, 2007) are to be considered that are enabling or coercing them to live more ‘mobile lives’ (Elliott and Urry, 2010).

Additionally, it might be meaningful to investigate how ‘inter-placed’ movements give rise to affects, materialities, forces, and atmospheres (Merriman, 2012). Specifically, analysing the relationship between mobile experiences and affect as a field of pre-personal felt intensities that are processed in sensing bodies and find their socio-cultural expression in emotions (McCormack, 2008: 414) is promising.

A final suggestion for research concerns investigations on how inter-placed mobilities work as intermediaries and hybrid ‘inter-embodiments’. Especially promising are post-ANT researches (Gad and Bruun, 2009) on sociotechnical assemblages or human/material hybrids, supporting specific mobility regimes (Dodge and Kitchin, 2011). Here effects of intersecting mobilities on professional relations, commitments, attachments and (dis-)identifications, for example of service provider and consumers or other stakeholders may be studied empirically.

In terms of language, the affective dimension of alternative mobility patterns also calls for different forms of expression. Developing a political and poetically sensitive approach on bounded mobility requires going beyond both sedentary-petrifying and nomadic-liquidizing metaphors and metaphysics of fixity and flow (Creswell, 2006: 25). Accordingly, concepts and findings related to affective, bodily and emotional phenomena of mobility might better be expressed in poetic-narrative forms as embodied apprehensions of storied places (Brewer and Dourish, 2008) that are telling about events of mobile ‘inter-placing’. Moving through embodied inter-places recognizes that wayfaring, as storied travelling is lived along open(ing) lines that are part of an unfolding meshwork (Ingold, 2011: 69-70).

#### *Political implications for a critical approach to mobility*

A political economy of mobility reflects critically the relation between local and global ‘power-geometries’ (Massey, 1993) as well as on issues of in- and exclusions, inequalities and power asymmetries accompanying societal mobility in its multiplicity (Jensen, 2011). Accordingly, a critical approach to mobility inquires into how mobility has been formed, regulated, and distributed around different regions and areas. With this it investigates also how the formation, regulation, and distribution of mobility are shaped and patterned by existing social, political, and economic structures of the contemporary world. Correspondingly, a critical mobility research explores what understandings of practice and values underpin regulatory knowledge, and different ‘fictions’ that exist within new mobilities regimes (Witzgall et al., 2013). With regard to the role of normative arrangements that regulate or prescribe mobilities and differentially

distribute the possibilities and limitations of mobilities, attempts to control and restrict movement (Shamir, 2005; Turner, 2007) are to be considered. This includes how various forms of movement are made meaningful, and how the resulting ideologies of mobility circulate across the globe and become implicated in the production of mobile practices. This further implies also investigations on how the very processes that produce movement and global linkages also promote immobility, exclusion, and disconnection (Tsing, 2005).

As mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship (Skeggs, 2004: 49), exploring power relations and dynamics of practices of mobility is vital. Of particular relevance are investigations of their roles in creating effects of both movement and stasis, and uneven distribution of 'network capital' (Elliott and Urry, 2010) or different capacities for socio-spatial motility (Kaufmann et al., 2004: 750). It would be intriguing to explore how networks, forged in particular places and at great distances, may play a complementary functions in broad-based social movements, and their place-based and relational dynamics (Nicholls, 2009) as well as how they are linked to ethical askesis (Munro, 2014) serving to enact other forms of being placed and mobile.

Accordingly, what is called for is the development of novel forms and innovative practices that are positively disruptive to the dominant techno-economic base of institutions and cultures that generate hyper-mobility and simultaneously enact more emancipatory and sustainable institutions and forms of governance. It will be important to consider mobility patterns as a result of cultural practices and social norms, implicating people, technology, knowledge and emotions (Sheller and Urry, 2006). For example, the institutionalization of mobility through airline frequent flyer programs that reward high levels of aero-mobility (Gössling and Nilsson, 2010) with access to privilege and luxury (e.g., gold-card lounges) clearly serves industry interests in tourism as a marker of exclusivity and identity. In this way, institutional and social structures enculturate travellers into regimes of hyper-aeromobility, rewarding the consumption of distance and generating patterns of mobility, which become entrenched as path dependencies (Schwanen et al., 2011).

Countering these hyper-mobilising settings requires forms of powering-down practices associated with unsustainable transport behaviour (Randles and Mander, 2009). To get beyond a mere 'nudging' (Hall, 2013) these forms need to include sustained and structural change at various societal and organizational levels that engender more sustainable transport behaviour. Complementing psychological and social approaches also necessitates institutional and systemic approaches that are expanding governance for sustainable mobility (Higham et



al., 2013) and more environmentally and socially sustainable ways of placing, pacing and moving (Guthey et al., 2014).

However, considering that social norms permeating public discourses of 'mainstream' travel behaviour do not centre on rationality and responsibility, but rather the opposite, underpinning affective components, emotional attachment and symbolic values need to be explored more. As the potential to be mobile is a form of cultural capital (Williams, 2013), 'mobility capital' is arguably one of the strongest affective markers of power in contemporary societies and kinetic elites' (Cresswell, 2012: 651), while being at odds with aspirations towards decarbonising societies. For developing a 'politics of mobility' (*ibid.*), forms of mobilities can be investigated critically as embodied movements defined by its routes, velocities, rhythms and spatial scales, and as social constructs constituted by experiences, meanings, and competencies.

For identifying and analysing the extent and effects of different physical, symbolic and virtual mobilities are 'processed', material and immaterial networks need to be explored as they spread within and across national borders. Likewise, what is required is a political analysis of internal changes that organizations, institutions, the state and the society assume in order to regulate mobilities and their consequences.

#### *Limitations and the need for a processual and relational approach*

From a broader perspective, the very nature of global, technologically mediated capitalism and the increasing level of displacements and networked hypermobility will probably generate a greater need for specific embodied meeting places, and personal contacts (Thrift, 1996). In other words, the expectable rising production of and preoccupation with spaces and involvements in cyberspaces is likely to bring about longings for emplacement and slowing down. However, there are possible dangers involved in re-idealising embodied place and pace. One problem of re-embodied place and movement is falling into a kind of retro-romantic holism. Such orientation is longing for an idyllic pre-personal places and ways of life or pre-modern forms of moving. Narrowly restricted in scope or outlook, provincial, retrogressive, and nostalgic re-enchancements, revived pastoral myths and provincial attitudes revert into pre-modern parochial places and moves. Being subject to historical regression, the yearning for a simplified tribal life in closer proximity to and regressive moves cannot be an adequate response to the complexities in modern and postmodern worlds or generate critical options for other ways of organizing and living. Therefore, it will be important not to substantialise or essentialise space, place and the body or movement, respectively mobility as this would lead to an

abstraction of subtleties and dynamics involved. Instead of looking for metaphysical centres or positions as unified entities of embodied places and movements, a more suitable orientation would be to focus on processual relationalities involved (Küpers, 2014).

## Conclusion

This paper has tried to open up and move through an analytical space, taking a conceptual place and movements for exploring a different, more processual understanding of mobility. On our journey, we learned about a phenomenology of embodied dimensions and qualities of spacing, placing and moving in organizations. Following a relational understanding, place and mobility were interpreted as inter-place and relational movements, exemplified by moving bodies at work and tele-work in organization. Finally, some theoretical, methodological and political implications and limitations were discussed.

If places and mobilities are the very contexts for embodied participation with the phenomenal, ecological, social and cultural world, then what we know and do is also shaped by the kinds of places and moves which we are experiencing or are mediated by. Therefore, the quality of a reawakened attention given to embodied places and a mindful reengagement with them by a sensuous and body-conscious orientation and like-wise a focus on more mindful movements becomes possible and vital.

Considering the previously discussed politics of mobility and political life of embodied sensation (Panagia, 2009), reconfigurations of the share of the sensible (Rancière, 2004, 2010) will be important. As these constellations define the emplacement and mobilities reconfiguring them contest hierarchical and exclusionary distributions, while allowing imagining other forms of arrangements of movement and performative practices (Spicer et al., 2009: 545-554). This may include forms of de-touring in the spirit of an 'engaged *Gelassenheit*' and cultivating more place-responsive (Cameron et al., 2004) and responsible approaches towards embodied and sustainable mobility practices (Küpers, 2015a). Such orientation towards practices opens up for moments of interruption, musing, dwelling, pauses and stillness. Accordingly, embodied and emplaced patterns or temporalities of slowness (Karssiens et al., 2014), or slow motion in spacing organizations (Beyes and Steyaert, 2012) or waiting and 'active non-doing' can be seen as elements of a wider sensuous 'geo-bio-socio-graphy' of movement and dwelling with its flows of meaning (Jensen, 2012). This approach invites moving towards more musing and poetic relationships that mediate careful ways of more sustainable practices (Dumreicher and Kolb, 2008).

Consequently such practices discourage mindless organizing of mobility, easy consumption or exploitive orientations in hypermobile moves, while they encourage more embodied and mindful forms of relating (Jordan et al., 2009) in various organizational environments (Dane and Bradley, 2014) and beyond within communal, societal, and planetary spheres.

Like nomadic trajectories and a-centred rhizomatic orientations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 380), and wayfaring through territorial organization (Maréchal et al., 2013: 203), such alternative forms of mobility invite and distribute those involved into differently qualified movements of figures through their local configurations. These alternative moves are gesturing towards open inter-places that are co-creating heterogeneous assemblages composed of flows, intensities and becomings, rather than as structures or stable states.

Integrating socio-ethico-political dimensions and relations (Beasley and Bacchi, 2007) and a heedful attention to them prevents not only impoverishing human and non-human life and its 'materio-socio-cultural' and ecological realities. Rather, this kind of mindful orientation helps to overcome the concealing of the correspondence between ideology and politics in relation to body, place and mobility, and potentially that may lead to biological and cultural extinctions (Gruenewald, 2003).

Reconsidering places, bodies and movement respectively performative mobility as well as the in-between of them allows possibilities for different practices in organizations and management as well as in relation to stake-holders to emerge. Correspondingly, it is hoped that the ideas and discussions offered here have inspired some affective and discerning moves for further exploring emplaced and embodied mobilities in inter-places of organizational and other forms of life-worlds.

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# Who moves? Analyzing fashion show organizing through micro-interactions of bodily movement

Astrid Huopainen

## abstract

This paper inquires into the organizing of fashion shows through bodily movements. Specifically, it explores the ‘hands-on’ micro-level embodied practices thereof, and elaborates on the significance of fine-grained bodily movements through the spaces of the show, in order to reflect on what drives and controls such movements in this specific empirical setting. To do so we must first link bodily movements to the concept of embodiment, but despite obvious connections, these analogous theoretical spheres have not been sufficiently connected within the field of organization studies. This paper argues that we cannot understand the complexity of fashion show organizing without first critically reflecting on the relationship between embodiment and bodily movements. Empirically, this paper engages with a site where such relationships are intensified and discusses the relevance and even the return of classical theories of working bodies to contemporary organization studies. This paper thus illustrates how fashion show organizing can bring valuable perspectives to the study of embodiment, movement and experience to contemporary organization studies.

## Introduction

In this paper, I engage with a site of organizing shaped and defined by various forms and styles of movements: a fashion show. In particular, I wish to explore how bodily movements in this specific context are meticulously organized and controlled. Arguably, such bodily movements, seen as basic, expressive micro-

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level actions, are at the very heart of all organizing activities, as they enable us to conduct various activities and relate to others (Haddington et al., 2013), and there is simply no life without the subtlety of breathing and our fine-grained bodily movements (Coaten and Newman-Bluestein, 2013). By bodily movements I particularly mean situated embodied actions and ‘meaningful interactions and relations between various agents’ (Parviainen, 2011: 530) that intimately involve all our senses (e.g. Howes, 2006; Meriläinen et al., 2015), are experienced in social life, are fundamental to us and, in a wider sense, political. In line with Parviainen (2011), I further view bodily movements as central to our identity construction and the performing of the self in the world, but also always relational and to some extent ‘pre-choreographed’, controlled and constrained by various ideals, norms, embodied agents and agencies around us.

The field of organization studies is currently *moving away* from static, realist and reductive understandings of organizations as merely functional, singular or fixed entities ‘spatially bounded’ to certain *places* (e.g. Costas, 2013; O’ Doherty et al., 2013) towards understanding organizations as polysemic experiences (Rippin, 2013a) ‘all over’ and across times and spaces. The exploration of various forms of movements, imagined or ‘real’ of individual subjects, material objects, power, knowledge and capital (Costas, 2013), is gaining more and more interest and has shown it self capable of generating meaningful insights. Meanwhile bodily movements, fundamental to our agency and subjectivity, have apparently been treated as the automatically performed and rather taken-for-granted aspects of human life (e.g. Dale, 2000; Shilling, 2013). As such, their significance has been surprisingly overlooked within our field.

This paper intends to show how the fashion show, as a research site, can generate valuable perspectives to the study of embodiment and movement. As Coaten and Newman-Bluestein (2013: 677) remind us: ‘Since embodiment is the experience and awareness of the lived body, constantly in movement, there can be no discussion about embodiment without movement’. The field of organization studies has tended to marginalize this close and fundamental relationship, and consequently this paper argues that we must analytically first link bodily movements to the lived experiences of embodiment in order to further reflect on and understand ambiguous organizing occurring ‘on the move’. By doing so, I argue that we can gain deeper understanding not only of how gestures and fine-grained bodily movements shape activities of organizing, but also of how organizing creates and controls complex movement choreographies or how hierarchies of bodily movements over time and space are produced.

However, major problems remain. How can we study the organizing of bodies in movement, not in the classic manner of Taylor or the Gilbreths but in more recent and contemporary ‘ad hoc’ organizations? How can we furthermore study bodies in movement if we lack the vocabulary to sufficiently capture lived, complex and dynamic movement interactions? Moreover, whose agency and bodily movements do we as researchers privilege and what does it take to understand the interactions and co-creation of movement? In the context of a fashion show, we easily think of the stylized movements of certain bodies yet forget about others. This paper discusses not only the organizing of the obviously controlled and scripted bodily movements of the fashion models, but intends to reflect on the quick movements and vivid bodily gestures of the anxious designer as well as the movements of the researcher in the field. Here, I believe it is of importance to critically discuss both what I see and experience as well as what I *don't* while moving around my empirical site. My overall intention throughout the paper is thus to be reflexive regarding my theoretical and empirical priorities, choices and limitations.

Finally, this paper is concerned with a particular fashion show where clothing collections are staged on decorated and moving bodies, paradoxically, without the help of additional money to spend on the show. This is surprising, as fashion shows are typically expensive if not extremely costly events for the designers organizing them (e.g. Mears, 2011; Taylor, 2013). Negotiating the tension between ‘high fashion’ and ‘low budget’ is arguably meaningful to *how* the bodily movements in my empirical context are constructed and performed. In addition, shedding light on this tension adds insight to the mundane, less glamorous and rather harsh premises of fashion.

The paper will proceed as follows. I begin with establishing my approach to organizing by discussing the overlooked relationship between embodiment and bodily movements. Following this, I open up my empirical site – the fashion show – as an illustrative example of an organization both controlling and producing specific bodily movements in a variety of ways. I then discuss the methodology of my study including a critical reflection on my encounters with bodily movements as well as the ethics of the research. Finally, I analyze the organizing of a particular fashion show and conclude the paper with some insights on how understanding the fundamental relationship between embodiment and bodily movements might contribute to further developing understandings of ambiguous organizing within the field of organization studies.

## Experiencing organizing as/through bodily movements

As previously stated, this paper is concerned with exploring the significance of bodily movements in organizing a fashion show. Despite certain more recent contributions on the constructed body in organization through movement, postures and dress (e.g. Hassard et al., 2000; Rafaeli et al., 1997; Trethewey, 1999; see also Biehl-Missal, 2014; Meriläinen et al., 2015) and the ever-growing interdisciplinary literature on bodies in motion at work (e.g. Hindmarch and Pilnick 2007; Patriotta and Spedale 2009; Wolkowitz, 2006), it has within the field of organization studies been challenging to find ways to study the organizing of bodily movements as well as our embodied experiences of inhabiting a moving body *moved by* various things. This lack of empirical studies might be attributed to the denial of the material and corporeal in organization studies (Hassard et al., 2000; Styhre, 2004) or the taken-for-granted ‘practical command of our bodies’ (Shilling, 2013: 217). Also, it appears as if bodily movements, touch and proximity has had to battle the dominant preoccupation of organization studies with brains, masculine thought and action (Rippin, 2013b) phenomena paradoxically enough often viewed as objective and neutral (Dale, 2000), ‘external to our bodies’ (Shilling, 2013: 217) or existing somehow outside us. However, historically present already in the early time-and-motion studies of for instance Taylor (1911) and the Gilbreths (1911) with their detailed documentation of movements and gestures in factory work, bodily movements have a complex and far-reaching relationship with organizing.

The many ways in which we move in organizations matter as our bodily movements organize actions (Raviola, 2012). Before discussing the organizing of bodily movements and organizing *as* movements in further detail, we need, however, to consider the theoretical relationship between embodiment and bodily movements. Studies of the body and embodiment within organization studies (e.g. Bell and King, 2010; Dale, 2000; Hassard et al., 2000) have arguably been rather preoccupied with exploring bodily appearance and bodily norms in organizational life, the body as a rather ‘immobile’ project, object or site of discipline, control and resistance, perhaps as a result of the wider turn to feminist and Foucauldian approaches in the social sciences. Meanwhile, the embodiment literature has been far less interested in the fluidity and complexity of our physical existence with surprisingly little written about our everyday embodied and kinesthetic experiences of movement. Despite an ever-growing literature on bodyspace (e.g. Riach and Wilson, 2014) and how people navigate space (e.g. Beyes and Steyart, 2011; Dale and Burrell, 2007) within organization studies, theorists of movement and politics have arguably often neglected the materiality of the *moving* body.

In my attempt to understand fashion show organizing ‘on the move’, I start from a perspective that emphasizes the relationship between embodiment and movement. There are, of course, multiple ways of engaging with forms of embodiment. Here, embodiment is understood as the experience of ‘possessing a body that moves and feels’ (Noland, 2009: 105) and captures lived, subjective experiences of inhabiting a body that is capable of engaging in various activities of organizing in motion. I view the body as both material and social, as ‘a culturally fabricated physicality in which matter and meaning are inextricably linked’ (Meriläinen et al., 2015: 6). As living and breathing human beings we always move in both voluntary and involuntary ways, thus our embodied experiences as *moving* subjects matter to us and to our environment. Embodiment fundamentally requires bodily movements and it is therefore surprising to notice how the literature on embodiment has often overlooked this fundamental dimension. Embodiment alone does not, however, explain the kind of ambiguity of organizing that interests me here, hence the notion of bodily movement appears relevant to explore further.

Bodily movements comprise the various ways we integrate and manage our actions through our bodies in our everyday life. Although this paper focuses on *bodily* movement interactions exclusively, I acknowledge the concept of movement in general to be complex, not neutral, contradictory and context-dependent, encompassing various philosophical questions that lie outside the realm of this paper. In a contemporary Western world where immobility is easily equated with ‘an unwillingness to be more productive’ (Corbett, 2013: 414), overemphasizing movement (whatever form one might think of) as a positive concern not only runs the risk of simplifying confusing and ‘complex relationality’ (O’ Doherty et al., 2013: 1430), but also of idealizing movement as a politico-moral imperative seemingly equal, beneficial and useful to all. This observation also relates to the performing of bodily movements, as bodies in organizations are always constructed through embodied agency, posture, dress, fine grained gestures, bodily techniques, the changing of position and continuous bodily movements that are never innocent or apolitical (see e.g. Biehl-Missal, 2014; Raviola, 2012). This leads us to the conclusion that bodily movements and interactions are always expressed in a dynamic, multilayered reality involving hierarchies, structures, prescribed conditions and the co-presence of various actors.

Bodily movements can arguably also be approached as an intimate, embodied experience. As human beings, we feel seemingly ‘free’ to form our bodily movements individually, yet we are always shaped, constrained and controlled by surrounding cultural, political, social and technical environments, norms and occupational cultures, other non-human and human agents in our proximity as

well as physical spaces, architectural solutions and the entire infrastructure around us (e.g. Dale and Burrell, 2007; Parviainen, 2011; Tschumi, 1994). By dynamically interacting with others through times and spaces, bodies perform both scripted and improvised movements that disrupt, affect and re-organize bodies in a variety of material and temporal ways (Raviola, 2012). Here, bodily movements are furthermore viewed as relational: we are always mobile and construct our bodily movements in relation to other agents. Various persons and things around us *move* us and make us move in specific and deliberate ways, whereas the movements of several agents meet in complex movement interactions (Haddington et al., 2013).

Furthermore, who is privileged to move in organizations? If bodily movements *construct* organizing actions, these movements can evidently be utterly uncomfortable, painful, gendered, difficult and stressful for those involved to construct and perform. For instance, 'restrained bodily movements' have typically defined female identity (Biehl-Missal, 2014: 14; see also Young, 1990), and classical ballet provides an illustrative example of a gendered practice presenting and reproducing such normatized movements. Influenced by Costas (2013), Corbett (2013) and Skeggs (2004), I approach bodily movements not as positive, harmless or frictionless micro-level actions outside complicated structures, institutions and power hierarchies. Instead, bodily movements relate to complicated questions around embodied agency, control, power and resistance. These forms of movements capture the very mundane yet dynamic movement-based interactions of organizing. Here, it is relevant to point out how dance theorists (e.g. Aalten, 2007; Klien and Walk, 2008; Wulff, 1998) have long explained 'organizing' as the choreographing and actual use of bodily movements, gestures, steps and patterns (see also Chandler, 2012; Slutskaya and De Cock, 2008 on the relevance of dance for organization studies).

How could organizing not be mobile or involve bodily movements and interactions? Organizing is something that engaged, mobile people have always done. Human bodies, 'defined by kinetic and dynamic relations' (Probyn, 2010: 77) are always present, active and vital for carrying out deliberate organizing actions by moving and acting across times and spaces. The situated activity of organizing involves multiple activities of ordering (e.g. Burrell, 2013) in which adorned human bodies are continuously on the move through both verbal and non-verbal *actions*, ever-changing body postures and bodily movements, gazes, gestures, practices of walk and talk (e.g. Haddington et al., 2013). The very term *organizing* implies action, hence it is by definition always occurring in motion not only in linear, systematic, logic and deliberate ways, but in ways that give inherently chaotic, confusing, contradictory and irrational impressions (e.g. Burrell, 2013; King and Vickery, 2013).



## Moving around – organizing a fashion show

A fashion show is in this paper understood as ‘a presentation of clothing on moving bodies in front of an audience’ (Skov et. al, 2009: 2) which is always polysemic (Rippin, 2013a) and shifting, constituted by a variety of expressions, non-verbal and verbal actions, movements, meanings and doings generated across different spaces, with powerful audiences, producers and multiple contextual conventions involved. If anything, fashion shows have been criticized for restricting bodily movements, sculpting bodies, promoting narrow ideals and health-hostile representations, as well as creating certain controlled bodily movements performed by ‘robotic’ dummies denied individual agency (e.g. Entwistle, 2002; Mears, 2008; Neumann, 2012; Rundquist, 2012).

The transgressive, elusive phenomenon of fashion has in itself an intimate and complex relationship with motion. Fashion, obsessed with novelty and change is a form of continuous, often extreme and fetishized movement as fashion continuously travels and goes on by. The global fashion industry incorporates a complex array of large-scale international movements, where clothing samples move between design studios and factories overseas, to move onto bodies during fittings and fashion shows of a surprising variety and finally, moving on the skin of the final consumers. Fabrics matter, as different fabrics with specific functions perform and behave differently on human bodies in motion. Esposito (2011: 607) refers to fashion’s paradox, a search for continuity within change as fashion’s stability of transition. Historically, speed, fashion, film and motion go together as archetypal forms of the rapid developments of modern societies (Evans, 2013). In the early fashion shows of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with mechanical bodies reproducing the machine-like aesthetics of modernism, ‘being modern’ conjured a permanent being in motion, Evans (2013) writes. Throughout history, pop cultural fashion shows have promoted motion. For those involved in the cyclic industry of fashion, movement, high pace and constant change is still a consuming normality as commodities need to move rapidly.

One might ask in what ways a fashion show might be seen as different from other forms of organizing? What is the connection between this specific form of organizing of bodily movements and other established forms of organizing? The organizing of fashion shows might be seen as a case of *ad hoc* organizing or event organizing, these being the established terms for the project-oriented and condensed nature of fashion show organizing. Furthermore, organizing as bricolage (e.g. Rhodes and Westwood, 2006), understood in the meaning of making do, taking whatever there is at hand to create something meaningful provides another perspective on fashion show organizing due to its improvisational characteristics and the need to act with the limited resources

available. This said, I will, in what follows discuss the methodology of this study including some ethical considerations inherent herein.

## **Methodological considerations**

In my research on fashion shows I have conducted what might be described as qualitative, explorative and open-minded ‘what-goes-on-in-here’-kind of ethnographically inspired multi-sited research. The empirical material for the present study consists of participant observations of the preparations of staging a fashion show. When it comes to engaging with forms of movements, mobility researchers tend to argue that the ‘researcher must move towards the subject or topic of research’ (D’Andrea et al., 2011: 153). My intention throughout this paper is to explore how bodily movements construct organizing, particularly by being mobile and reflexive in the field myself and by reflecting on the ethics of such research.

The empirical material presented in this paper is primarily based on my field notes. My material includes participative modes of fieldwork within the hidden backstage spaces of fashion as well as numerous informal conversations with performers engaged in organizing a fashion show, such as the designer, the designer’s assistants, dressers and models. The participant observation, 150 hours in total, is documented as field notes in my research diaries. In dealing with a complex, ambiguous and at times even paradoxical form of organization, I can only capture limited aspects of the organizing of bodily movements in my empirical context. Consequently, it is evident that my selectivity has a driving role in what I choose to present as meaningful throughout, which, in turn, relates to my way of constructing and representing reality. My analysis focuses on the behind-the-scenes dynamics and mobile aspects of organizing in the backstage of the show. In ethnographic research analysis and interpretation often become intertwined as they ‘take place throughout the research’ process (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008: 149). Aware of the difficulties of presenting ethnographic material, my analysis is based on a close reading of my raw field notes from which I have constructed fuller and more comprehensive narrative descriptions.

‘Doing research is a rich, complex and multi-level experience that mobilizes the whole person conducting this inquiry’, write Sergi and Hallin (2011: 192). I have followed the fashion label present in this paper from January 2013 until August 2014, during a significantly longer period of fieldwork than the work this paper is based upon. For the fashion show of September 2013 I agreed to take a position which turned out to be rather difficult for me to handle. Only a week before the show the designer asked me to be the event manager of the fashion show, as he

wanted me to bring in coordination and order to the somewhat messy, creative project. The designer offered me a practical exercise in organizing, perfectly suitable for a doctoral researcher in organization and management, he thought. I did not dare to say no to this request and felt obliged to take on the position, fearing I might otherwise lose access to my long-term research site. I also did not want to risk ruining my relationship with the designer.

In reality, research often involves elements of reciprocity. From a critical perspective, dumping a pretty significant workload on me at the last minute was perhaps a powerful way of getting the biggest use and the best performance out of me. In the process of organizing the show I was in effect a source of free labour, one capable of dealing with those necessary, dull or 'managerial' aspects of organizing that the designer did not bother to or have the time to engage with himself. I pondered how working for the designer would affect and possibly change my relationship to him, as well as influence my fieldwork and analysis. As a researcher, I had so far performed the role of a curious fashion novice helping out where I could and eager to learn all about fashion and the designer's work. As an insider, I was expected to know plenty of things myself and had to take on a more active role than before. I also knew I had to perform well under pressure and was later evaluated by the designer and his team. This dual role I performed had implications on how I acted in the field and was able to represent reality, and deserves to be discussed to account for the research process in transparent ways.

It is, of course, problematic to collect data in the ways I did and evidently I risked losing critical distance by becoming an insider. Although dealing with my position and the organization of the show where all bits were constantly moving was challenging, becoming intensely involved also meant being 'inside-the-situation', learning plenty by doing and perhaps experiencing things I might have missed solely as a researcher. Also, my experience gave me a different perspective to organizing compared to what I had previously experienced while conducting fieldwork. As such, the experience was valuable and interesting. I was always careful to let the people involved know I was collecting data and writing a piece on the process of organizing the show. The fashion show production was small and I could always present myself to everyone involved as both a researcher and a team member. I had met everyone except for the dressers and the make-up team before the day of the show. My role as a researcher was never met with suspicion, only occasional confusion. Overall, I was careful to be nice and friendly to everyone volunteering for the show, although I still had to perform as the 'manager', keeping track of all major activities before and after the show.

During a seven-day week I wrote approximately seventy e-mails, made numerous phone calls, created schedules and detailed timetables, took measurements of models, (un)dressed models at fittings, wrote to do-lists, transformed cheap runway shoes to look edgy, photographed looks, organized a stylebook, packed and carried things to the show venue and organized the backstage. I also worked as a backroom coordinator together with Oliver,<sup>1</sup> the right hand man of the designer. I timed the day of the show, kept track of all rehearsals and other activities and finally organized the model line-up and the calling of the show. I found myself running after models having coffee and cigarettes instead of heading to the dress rehearsals from hair- and make-up, sending off models out on the catwalk and helping out wherever I could. As the doors opened for the guests, I performed a front stage host showing guests to their seats and moved backstage only minutes before the show begun. After the show, I moved to the sales stand and was on duty until the closing of the Design Market event. What was distinctive about the work I performed in the field? Perhaps running around in the context of fashion does not differ or add much to the kind of work practices present in event management in general.

In what follows, I discuss the organizing of the backstage of the fashion show, emphasizing the significance of the bodily movements involved. Performed in an interesting tension between 'high fashion' yet low budget, I illustrate variations of bodily movements and bodies moving material things as crucial for understanding organizing within my empirical context.

### **Presenting RUNWAY SHOW SS14 + AW 13 COLLECTIONS – a low budget show**

In fashion, it takes a lot of effort to look effortless. Putting on a low budget fashion show that aims to look both effortless and exclusive demands a great deal of creativity in crafting illusionary lures from inexpensive materials. The fashion show was presented in conjunction with Design Market, a busy, two-day sales event organized at The Cable Factory,<sup>2</sup> a hub of the creative economy in Helsinki, Finland. The building hosts Helsinki Design Market, an event attracting thousands of visitors to its main halls elbowing for design bargains in the crowds. Sunday's fashion show is one out of three shows presented during the weekend. It is the only show showing the new work of a single fashion label, as the two other shows staged on Saturday are group fashion shows.

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1 Oliver is a pseudonym as are all names of persons that appear in the paper.

2 The Cable Factory building is rich in studios and exhibition halls, providing facilities and workspaces for various firms, artists, graphic designers, film professionals and freelancers operating in the creative field.

As for any fashion show, the show I studied intended to create buzz and interest around a fashion label. The show is called 'RUNWAY SHOW SS14 + AW 13 COLLECTIONS' on Facebook, which is the only place where the show exists before Sunday. The expression '100 % creativity' on the event image hints not only at the art of fashion to be showcased. If fashion shows usually demand considerable budgets, the expression also stands for the lack of a budget: 'It is 100 % creativity, it is no budget throughout', the designer repeatedly tells me when referring to the show. In uncertain economical times a designer running a small label with limited resources needs to carefully consider what to invest in. Lacking finances to spend on various additional features, 'low budget' is apparently the only way to do a show. As fashion is by its nature elusive and challenging to manage, a designer can only do his or her best to create and introduce something interesting and see how it is eventually accepted and welcomed (or not) by their audience.

The designer planned to show a total of 40 outfits or looks, consisting of several individual pieces, multiple layers creating different movements and effects, as well as accessories, belts and leather bags. A total of 40 outfits require 20 models and one outfit change backstage. A backstage of preferably 20 volunteering dressers is needed, complemented with a hair-and makeup team of twelve persons, a DJ, two in-house photographers, two doormen and preferably additional set-up crew. The designer expects 'some heavier people coming' to his show. By 'heavier' he means established and well-known fashion bloggers, photographers, journalists and designer colleagues. Since the show is presented on a Sunday, the Finnish fashion *crème de la crème*, the most influential buyers and fashion editors are not likely to join. Apparently, Sunday is a tricky show day and mobilizing the fashion elite is difficult. Representatives of traditional media such as magazine editors are apparently too comfortable in their daytime nine-to-five jobs to work during weekends: 'They are lazy. If it had been on a Thursday evening they'd all come. Now they are all at their summerhouses raking leaves', the designer points out with some irony, as if he'd still hope for everyone important to attend solely out of a passion for fashion. In marked difference to magazine editors, bloggers appear more active in attending fashion happenings regardless of time. Stereotypically, bloggers represent a younger generation of freelance workers that do not necessarily make a clear distinction between work and leisure. In what follows, I aim to illustrate the organizing of the backstage of the show, performed 'on the move' in between the designer's studio, the Design Market and the show venue.

## **Creating spaces that allow and restrict bodily movements – organizing the backstage of a fashion show**

By the hidden backstage of the fashion show I refer to the entire machinery necessary for executing a show and not just the physically limited structure behind the front stage allowing and constraining movements for those involved. Plenty of the preparation-work takes place in the designer's studio where garments are finished, stylebooks for the 'looks' are created and the outfits are put together. The designer and his assistants create living, moving three-dimensional forms by adding variations of fluidity, structure, form and texture through dress. The outfits carefully put together for the show intend to stimulate and communicate aesthetic and affective visions to the audience as the outfits move on the catwalk thanks to the movements of the models. How the garments are presented in motion is a highly important matter to the design crew. Comments in the studio like 'I think when its open this jacket is more interesting', 'we need more layers' or 'we need to put something a bit more rock and roll on top of that' reflect the importance of getting all the details right.

Helsinki Design Week does not support the fashion show economically beyond offering a venue, including chairs, front- and backstage facilities. The event organizer thus doesn't provide additional yet crucial show elements such as lights or sound. This comes to determine how the bodily movements in the field are performed. The organizing and realization of the vital elements of lights and sound is left to the designer, who needs to transform the overall frame to fully support what he intends to show onstage. 'We need to do some tricks on the runway', he says. To him, the show venue is far from satisfactory as it is. The designer appears annoyed about having to improvise and move heavy material things to transform his show facilities. As there is no budget for the show, the transformation involves taking down the studio lights and moving them to the show venue. This is when 'low budget' becomes an exhausting burden that requires far more physical bodily movement and organizing than would otherwise be the case. The bodies of the designer's team would certainly move less if they didn't have to mobilize all the heavy equipment themselves. It takes time, carrying, lifting and careful adjustments to finally get the lights pointed right at the venue.

In addition to the lights, four heavy garment bags, four metallic clothing racks, 24 pairs of runway shoes, 16 pairs of grey stockings, a steamer, snacks, 20 t-shirts for the backstage workers, a bag of essentials such as safety pins, breast tape, pencils, paper, stuffing for the runway shoes and a huge backdrop need to be moved from the studio to the car and from the car to the venue on Saturday. It takes several drives back-and-forth to efficiently move all these material things

from one place to another. The curtains of the venue are taken down as chairs and tables are moved around. Having attended hundreds of trade shows and sales events, the designer, an experienced practitioner of organizing, exhibits a great deal of proficiency in packing and setting up. The show involves physical activities of organizing 'on the move' taking place 'outside the confines of a specific workplace' (Costas, 2013: 1469). The mobilizing of the things illustrates the hard work behind the curtains of fashion, where everything is done only for the sake of impressing audiences and keeping up appearances for the rather brief 20 minutes that a show lasts. The designer emphasizes how his audiences have no idea about the consuming preparations his show requires.

Moreover, learning from others or attending the fashion shows held in the same venue on Saturday turned out to be the best way to prepare for the show. The designer summarizes his intentions: 'We take what is best from their show, improve what they did poorly and make an outstanding show'. On Saturday, I meet Tina, who is in charge of organizing the hair and make-up of the show for the first time. She is an experienced make-up artist and body painter in the freelance field who has worked with the designer since his first fashion show in 2003. We have arranged a meeting at the busy sales stand from which we first proceed to inspect the provisional hair- and make-up facilities and then move to the show venue to closely examine the first fashion show. Oliver and photographer Paul,<sup>3</sup> a young and humble man in his twenties, joins us.

The provisional make-up and hair spot is located on the second floor of The Cable Factory in a small glass box room with windows overlooking the halls, approximately 100 meters from the show venue. It is crowded and taken over by another team as we arrive. It is extremely hot inside and the air is thick with hairspray. 'I am glad that we have a different hairspray sponsor', Tina comments. 'Our smells better!'. Tina has gathered a team of students to do the hair and make-up of the show. However, students under supervision are always a risk: 'you can't trust their skill before you see it'. Also, less experienced students generally work slower than professionals. Tina pays careful attention to the physical working environment and asks all the practical questions. How many electricity outlets are there? How many hairdressers can simultaneously fit in the room? 'If there are no proper make-up chairs it will take even longer, as the make-up artists continuously have to bend over the model', she continues. The

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3 Paul works as a part-time nurse, part-time freelancer and dreams of doing fashion shoots for living. The designer met him in Copenhagen by coincidence only weeks earlier, as Paul happened to pass by the designer's stand at the fair. Paul is around during the entire weekend, helping out with adjusting the lights and the backdrop. He brings along his own photography equipment and has agreed to share his photographs with the designer.

physical space and the (lack of) proper chairs have a significant impact on how the bodily movements are performed and determine both the working pace and the end result of the hair- and make-up team. Working with strict and inflexible time limits within crowded, regulated spaces, the work is performed with little or no freedom of bodily movement. This illustrates well how the performance of bodily movement in the field is significantly constrained by the physical space and the materials available.

During the actual show, there is not enough time for the make-up artists to physically perform certain bodily movements, such as lifting their arms to change the eye make-up of the models from a spring/summer to an autumn/winter look. 'The models, 1.80 metres on average, are too tall for us in their heels and we cannot even reach their eyes in a hurry. We only have time to smudge off their lipstick and replace it with a nude base', Tina tells me. The artistic mood between the two collections must differ on the catwalk, yet there is no time to do any radical changes backstage. Again, mobile and mundane hands-on aspects of organizing illustrate the significance of bodily movements in this context. Next, we move across the crowds to see the one o' clock show. 'This is all terrible! You cannot see anything!', Tina complains next to me as the show is on. 'The music is too loud and the models walk too fast – there is actually no time to see! You only get two seconds of the outfits as they pass by', she continues. Apparently, the skill of moving in the right and appreciated ways is not easy to accomplish. 'Should the catwalk be the other way around?', Tina ponders. 'If the lights are like this tomorrow the models are going to look like faces with black holes in them', she adds. It is all very dramatic and apparently there is plenty to do in order to get it all right before the show on Sunday.

The backstage facilities are inspected for the first time right after Saturday's show. Quite surprisingly, there is no proper back room, the models have already disappeared and the space is almost empty as we enter. I recognize Mike, a male model also doing our show the following day. He describes the lack of a proper backstage as challenging and rather chaotic: 'We were in quite a hurry and some models almost didn't make it on time as they had to run down the stairs'. Having models leaping on stairs in high heels to enter the catwalk on time sounds inappropriate and dangerous. I am slightly anxious about what is still ahead in terms of actual, practical organizing.

Whereas the dressing of the models on Saturday took place in the staircases, restricting bodily movements significantly, the designer wanted a somewhat proper dressing area for his show. He wanted his team to create an easy to overlook backstage that fitted 40 people, allowing for certain bodily movements around the clothing racks. In the approximately twenty square meters that were



created in the previous evening, the slender fashionable bodies stand static and still before entering the catwalk. Their assigned dressers, moving briskly around them, can only occupy a limited amount of space each. Touch and bodily proximity characterizes the crowded, ad hoc backstage, with bodies working with skin touching the skin of each other. It becomes a site of material, human contact; still, I experienced it as a site of shared excitement and surprising amounts of care.

### Organizing the movements of bodies

I will now briefly discuss the organizing of bodily movements in my empirical setting, particularly those of the models of the show. Before the show, separate fittings are organized in the designer's studio or flagship store. These fittings also function as castings, where bodily movements are evaluated by a critical gaze that might even distract some models. Physical movements and the performance of walking determine the selection of the models of the show. More specifically, the practice of walking is recorded for the designer, who is not always physically present at a fitting, but can later gaze at and evaluate the movements of the models on his computer. The fittings are when the models themselves organize their bodily movements, complemented with verbal instructions from the designer or his assistant. At fittings some models manage to move in desired ways without further instructions, whereas others are carefully instructed.

A model performing a strut is not moving in a particularly 'free' manner. S/he has most likely practiced her/his walk in front of mirrors at home, by watching and imitating walking clips on YouTube and/or by attending several castings and shows to gain practical walking experience. Walking is therefore a learnt practice where incorporated skills are mobilised (Evans, 2013). For a runway model, performing an impressive and graceful runway walk is hugely important. What is regarded a strong walk is, however, often difficult to pin down (e.g. Mears, 2011), something which I became aware of in my empirical context as well. The posture, pace and tempo of movement has to be right and the turns need to be performed with ease. During fittings, the designer appreciates a relaxed yet good body posture, a soft and neutral facial expression and a straight and strong walk not swinging or using too much hip. If a model is dropped, which happens, it is probably due to the model's personal way of moving being judged as being 'too radical', 'ugly' or 'weak' by the designer. As such, the designer might judge a 'poor' walking performance as too difficult to correct verbally and as a valid reason to simply consider another model for his show.

The performed, highly gendered bodily movements of the models reveal possible flaws, such as insecurity, nervousness, a poor body posture, an angry or undesired facial expression, difficulties of moving gracefully in high heels, bodily parts such as hands that swing unintentionally or other things that the designer wishes to erase. However, as bodies always move both intentionally and unintentionally, a model can rarely ever fully control her moving body to reach the ideal walk, the nature of which is paradoxically enough never clearly articulated. If the bodily movements performed at fittings reveal possible flaws, the model's physique is surprisingly rarely seen as a problem. Clothes easily hide and cover undesirable shapes such as a 'wider' hip and are therefore used to manipulate a model's form and shape. Meanwhile, clothes with a narrow cut might restrict and regulate the performance of bodily movements, which also became evident during the fittings I observed.

As soon as the model is properly dressed at a fitting, s/he is requested to walk some 8-10 meters depending on the space, pose a couple of times, turn around and walk back. The desired walk is straight yet seemingly relaxed and performed in a resolute manner. The trivial procedure of walking back and forth and posing in-between is repeated several times under guidance and supervision. When the designer is away, design assistant Oliver instructs and corrects the moving models. Instructing a non-verbal moving activity is not particularly easy, as the bodies must be corrected verbally at the right moment in real time. 'Try to walk a bit slower and relax. Just relax. Walk slower, even slower, no hurry'. 'Keep your shoulders down and back, don't put your hand on your hip, keep your arms relaxed and down', Oliver directs. As models are asked to move under an explicitly critical gaze the situation is not particularly laid-back or relaxing for a model. 'When you pose, always put your weight on one hip', Oliver notices. 'Now you do like this [imitates the model] and instead of that, do like this [demonstrates the desired pose]', he proposes, using his own body for physical demonstration. 'Let's take it one more time still, try to walk a bit slower', Oliver demands. 'Still slower?', the somewhat surprised model asks. 'Yes', he promptly answers.

The episode above illustrates who has the power to judge and organize bodily movements. Moreover, the assistant uses both his body and verbal descriptions to instruct the model when it comes to performing the desired walk with the desired tempo. When the model has left a fitting, his or her walk or look in general is often discussed and subject to further critical commentary. Clearly, the designer is more pleased with the walk of some models than others. 'She walked amazingly!', he could say in an excited and satisfied voice when he was really pleased or even, 'She is a star!'. If not convinced, the designer expressed a

worried, 'I am quite concerned about her walk', further pondering what to do in order to correct the bodily movements before the show.

The designer choreographs the bodily movements of the show. Interestingly, he creates an *ad hoc* script for his models to follow on Sunday, only hours prior to the show, as there is only time for one proper rehearsal before the models are sent to hair and make-up. The models line up one by one before entering the catwalk. The short designer moves vividly, and gesticulates separate instructions to each model entering the catwalk. He needs to keep up with the pace of the tall, strutting model and runs next to each one of them delivering individual, verbal instructions. As the designer prefers the movements of certain bodies, he instructs his star models – the ones performing the most convincing, strong walk and gracious bodily movements – to stay longer on the catwalk. These stars, who are posing more frequently, also wear the most spectacular outfits, and their performances are saved for the end of the show. The models with the 'weaker' bodily movements are dressed in the simpler, less spectacular outfits. They also perform more simple and straightforward choreographies with less turns and stops, and they appear for a shorter time on the catwalk. As such, the organizing of the models illustrates a distinct hierarchy of moving bodies at the fashion show.

## Discussion and concluding remarks

My intention throughout this paper has been to explore how bodily movements are organized and controlled in the context of a fashion show. My point of departure has been my personal *experience* of organizing (Rippin, 2013a), and the manner in which a fashion show can be experienced as a way of thinking critically about organization, embodiment and bodily movements. In doing so, I have deliberately also moved away from safe and typical 'contemporary business school' research topics (O' Doherty et al., 2013: 1432), a field where the mobile physical body as well as the material are still surprisingly 'discounted and discredited' (Rippin, 2013b: 364). Although this paper has focused more on moving bodies than the logistics of material objects, a fashion show organization cannot discount or discredit aspects any forms of materiality in motion. Instead, all these dimensions are meticulously manipulated, controlled and celebrated in the staging of a show, both before and after the totality of physical body and material dress appear on the catwalk. Perhaps the point to emphasize here is that embodiment alone or bodily movements alone are not enough to analyze and explain the fashion show organization.

A fashion show provides an extreme yet interesting event for studying the organizing of bodily movements, one where bodies are organized to move in specific, often extremely controlled ways. Movements are theoretically and empirically complex and complicated, and as researchers 'we study and write about society not as an abstraction but as composed of actual bodies in proximity to other bodies' (Probyn, 2010: 76). This paper has attempted to capture embodied elements and experiences of organizing, in particular, and I have attempted to do so by creating a mobile text. Somewhat ironically, the end result turned out to be more linear than I would have preferred, at times positively immobile, demonstrating the difficulty and challenge of writing bodily movements in practice.

This paper shows the importance of paying attention to the various fine-grained, micro-level physical bodily movements present in organizing. What first might seem like insignificant micro-actions and interactions can significantly shape organizing, particularly when considered in conjunction with issues of space, as this both constrains and enables bodily movements. This was illustrated in particular through the hair- and make-up facilities of the show and the effort it takes to transform the models. Make-up artists and hairdressers self-organize to perform their work under challenging working conditions within crowded, restricting spaces. Of course, plenty has already been written on how space constrains and enables actions (e.g. Hernes, 2004; Kornberger and Clegg, 2004), but such analyses have often focused on the macro aspects of organizing and paid less attention to the embodied characteristics of organizing.

Further, this paper has attempted to illustrate how a fashion show is performed in the continuous negotiations between high fashion and low budget. This tension had a significant impact on how the bodily movements in the setting were organized and performed. In the previous section of this paper, I illustrated how bodily movements and bodies moving material things were absolutely crucial to the overall organizing of the show. To me, it was not surprising to find hard and dedicated work, the designer stressing, running and bossing people around, late nights, improvisation and continuous changes behind the scenes. This negotiation between the polished front stages and the 'dirty', manipulative backstage of fashion has been addressed before (e.g. Entwistle and Rocamora, 2006; Rocamora, 2009). But what was surprising to me was the realization of how the bodily movements of the organizers were driven by a continuous performing of the appearance of high fashion, while simultaneously working from the very unglamorous premises of low budget. Such a keeping up of appearances involved making cheap solutions 'on the move', such as moving heavy things around in preparing for the show. To his audiences, the designer offered affective stimuli and desperately tried to signal exclusivity and 'doing

well' despite continuously improvising and extensively moving both his own body and making other's bodies move around behind the curtains of the catwalk.

Creative project-based organizations in contemporary post-industrial economies are often assumed to be differently constrained than more 'traditional' organizations (see e.g. Styhre and Sundgren, 2005). However, the bodily movements in my empirical setting, especially those performed on the runway, tended to be strictly scripted and controlled, in a manner not that far removed from the organization of e.g. a factory worker's bodily movements. Interestingly, where we know plenty about 'working class' bodies serving capitalist interests (e.g. Slavishak, 2008; Zandy, 2004), we arguably know far less about the control of bodily movements in the creative economy, an economy often lauded for the freedom it supposedly provides (Rehn, 2009). This paper has attempted to outline the importance of studying the organizing of bodies in movement in the ad hoc-organizations of the postindustrial economy, an economy in which value creation increasingly depends upon bodily presentation, body motion and body work. Here, the paradoxically both classical and modern concept of *dress*, as a moving 'three-dimensional and lived media' (Bell and Davison, 2013: 168) regulating and restricting bodily movements, provides us with a fitting (sic) concept through which we can further develop ideas of bodily movements in modern organizations.

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## Mobility, migration, and its nexus to power

Oskar Christensson

### review of

Söderström, O., S. Randeria, D. Ruedin, G. D'Amato and F. Panese (eds.) (2013) *Critical mobilities*. London: Routledge. (PB, pp 234, € 44,50, ISBN 978-0415828161)

### Introduction

*Critical Mobilities* is a book edited by Ola Söderström, Shalini Randeria, Didier Ruedin, Gianni D'Amato and Francesco Panese. The editors and authors of the book are interested in a critical perspective on society, which they see as composed of mobile assemblages (including, e.g., different policies, urban forms, people, institutions, and technologies). They want to understand what these assemblages are made of, how they are maintained and what they imply for people and society in general. From this position the book 'focuses on diverse mobile entities considered (at least by some) as problematic' [vi]. By mobile entities the authors understand and refer to units of analysis as diverse as reproductive health technologies and medical mobilities in India, undocumented migrant laborers in the US and Europe, road interchanges and shopping malls in cities of the global South, and university branch campuses in the United Arab Emirates. In a broad sense the book analyzes the interplay of mobility and power in various forms and explores how this interplay shapes inequality, domination and constraint. Thereby the book addresses questions about how national identities are maintained and understood by different actors in a globalized world.

The editors describe their view on mobilities as being close to the 'mobile turn' in social sciences while they, at the same time, claim not to be 'firmly situated' [vii] in the new mobilities paradigm (e.g. Sheller and Urry, 2006). Instead, the book's authors draw upon diverse perspectives stemming from anthropology, cultural geography, migration and

urban studies. Among the fields addressed, migration studies receive the most attention [xii]. This is likely due to the editors' and the contributors' argument that the combination of mobilities studies and migration studies allows for a critical approach to mobility/ies. While not explained in detail, migration studies is thought to mainly 'de-romanticize' mobility by putting emphasis on forced forms of migration (Gill et al., 2011). Three central claims are made when presenting the book's perspective on mobilities research: a critique of a sedentary and a-mobile view of society and social science is considered crucial; a new epistemology and an ontology addressing how the 'process of movement constitutes the entities in circulation' are seen as important [ix]; and finally, new methods are considered necessary to deal with the fleeting, ephemeral, multiple, and sensory aspects of contemporary society (Büscher and Urry, 2009).

With regard to migration studies, the book argues that, traditionally, migration was understood as a static occurrence, referring to citizens leaving one nation state to immigrate to another nation state, to wit on a permanent basis (e.g. Park, 1928). The phenomenon of transnationalism has changed this understanding by questioning people's one-way and once and for all movement from one place to another. However, many authors of this edited collection claim that transnationalism still works within a nation-state framework relying on sending-receiving relationships between societies. They subsequently connect mobilities with migration studies as the former allow migration studies to break with the classical optic of fixity [xiv] and accept that movement, and not the belonging to a particular territory or nation-state, creates the relevant relationships that so-called receiving societies maintain with 'immigrants'. A critical mobilities perspective then re-thinks and explores the role of the nation-state in defining and controlling borders and classifying mobile people crossing borders (e.g. migrants, tourists, students, or business travelers) as wanted and unwanted. This book therewith takes up a central issue for critical mobilities and migration studies by questioning how the power of the nation-state is changing in an age of 'global economy', in particular for those who are located outside of the 'kinetic elite' (Cresswell, 2006).

The book is divided into three parts: part one is on mobility and place, part two is on global migration, and part three discusses medical mobilities in the geopolitical context of India. While part one and part three relate to critical mobilities, they do not explicitly discuss the notion of migration. At times, this leads to the impression that mobility and migration are identical phenomena. Hence the introduction's emphasis on migration does not come across equally in the three parts of the book. For me this results in a somewhat 'unbalanced' book with part two presenting its strongest part.

## **Mobility and place**

Chapter 1 [p. 1-28], written by Robinson, focuses on how policies of urban development in post-colonial cities (in this case Johannesburg) are 'arrived at'. In chapter 2 [p. 29-57], Söderström asks, on a related note, how physical structures (also called urban types and forms) of city mobility interact with local populations. He studies road interchanges in Burkina Faso and shopping malls in Vietnam to show how state and private actors

develop urban landscapes through built forms. These actors claim that urban forms have a proper and intended use, which requires ‘educating’ the population how to use such forms. But, as Söderström shows, built forms also provide people with new spaces to experiment with identities and learn how to be ‘modern’. Söderström writes in the tradition of complex ‘multiple modernities’ where the non-West is not merely a recipient of readymade Western ideas and moralities. The clash between the intended use of urban forms and people’s actual use thereof is a good illustration of this. Chapter 3 [p. 59-80], by Geddie and Panese, then looks into how political, geographical and individual mobilities interact and collide. This is exemplified through a Swiss university, establishing a branch campus in the United Arab Emirates.

## Migration and identity

Part two of the book focuses on transnational migration and addresses political aspects of migration in relation to different mobility entities: citizen and denizen (or non-citizen), the state, systems of security and surveillance, and information and communication technologies (ICT). Part two of the book sets the following scene: Today’s liberal democratic states want to retain their standard of living, keep citizens and ‘accepted’ migrants (e.g. tourists and skilled workers) safe and thus away from possible crime and terror attempts; they further want to maintain civil liberties, citizen freedom and the self-image of being open societies governed by law and transparency. This balancing act has, however, become increasingly difficult in a globalized world.

In chapter 4 [p. 81-100], Cresswell presents the nexus of citizens and mobility from a number of perspectives. The idea of the citizen is discussed with reference to categories such as space, time, and the city itself. Cresswell argues that from the polis of Greece to the modern city and the nation state the citizen is and was defined in relation to both the respective city and the time in which he or she live(d). According to the author, the modern city is less connected to the nation-state than it was in the past. Instead, it is connected to a global network of cosmopolitan cities where a group referred to as ‘kinetic elite’ finds belonging and citizenship. Related to this group is, however, the non-citizen – referred to as the *denizen* – who emerges and is created with the citizen as its other. Like the idea of the citizen changes over time and across space, the idea of the denizen shifts and is created differently, especially via the development of so-called urban spaces. As the flows in and out of a city change, its people change with it. Today, in the modern city, the citizen and the denizen are mobile subjects whereby it is only the citizen who has access to different mobilities. The denizen’s mobility is not immobility or the opposite of the citizen’s mobility; it is rather a different mobility characterized by less access, time, money and by more frictions at points of passage (Urry, 2007).

In chapter 5 [p. 101-123], De Genova writes about two mobility ideas of the ‘global North’ and discusses how they interpolate various individuals. The first understands mobility as a form of freedom and (almost) a right of individuals. The other idea refers to the increasing *securitization* of the world. Securitization is argued to be the result of an overall increase in mobility including that of people with homicidal tendencies such as

contingent terrorists, who have to be combated. However, De Genova reminds us that there are those people who fall in-between the two depicted mobility ideas; they are clearly not terrorists, yet they do not have the freedom to move the way people move who are 'desired' by the state and economy (e.g. citizens, tourists or skilled workers). Here De Genova speaks of undocumented migrants who are often treated like terrorists when being detained and summarily deported. In popular discourses these kind of (im)migrants are often called 'illegals'. However, De Genova goes on and argues that, at present, the economy cannot be sustained without the work being done by 'illegals'. The state thus tries to maintain an image that no longer corresponds to 'reality'. The phenomenon of migration suggests that some places – such as the US, the EU, or Australia – are better or preferred places to live compared to other places. Part of what is here seen as 'better' refers to the idea of an open society, which is what the US and EU want to be. At the same time, though, they wish to control the influx of people seeking a better place to live.

Lahav writes chapter 6 [p. 123-152], which addresses similar problematic relationships than chapter 5, but it does so from an explicit neo-institutional perspective. The terror attacks of 9/11 in the US, 2004 in Madrid and 2005 in London set in motion to what the author refers as the mobility 'trilemma' [124]. The chapter accounts for how this is done by exploring how states have reconciled rights, security, and economic perspectives of mobility. In short, Lahav argues that two forces have allowed the state reconciliation: One is the outsourcing of ideas and practices of security from the state to the private sector. This has led to the maintenance of an image of being a liberal state while or despite privatizing (national) security (see here also the discussion of the concept of securitization in chapter 5). The second force refers to how migration is framed as a threat to physical safety and security rather than, like in the past, a threat to economic interests and cultural values. According to Lahav this shift in public narrative has a cohesive rather than a divisive effect on internal politics. In other words, 'as immigration has shifted from a cultural to a physical threat, immigration issues have become increasingly salient (on the political agenda) but less politically (divisive)' [141].

Chapter 7 [p. 153- 175], written by Nedelcu, explores migration in the digital era from a cosmopolitan, trans-nationalist perspective (see also Beck, 2002). In effect, Nedelcu argues that ICTs (especially digital and satellite media, the internet and mobile phones) can make the borders of nations less relevant. Here migration is presented as a phenomenon that is widely accepted by the state, allowing migrants and their families to gain access to ICTs for communication purposes, among other things. In comparison to how migrants are discussed in the previous chapter by Lahav, Nedelcu portrays them as rather privileged people.

Traditionally, transnationals or people who spent time in two countries were seen as being torn between an 'old' and a 'new' nation state. Today, with the proliferation of ICTs, transnationals, however, seem to go beyond such distinctions. They in fact challenge such distinctions and therewith the political scope of the nation state and its homogenizing interests and endeavors. Thus, this chapter is not about migrants who are forced to move but about people working and living in one country yet maintaining, on

the basis of ICTs, relationships with friends and family members in other countries. On balance, similar to the other chapters ‘making up’ part two of the book, Nedelcu reflects upon current globalization tendencies and people’s diverse mobility practices by scrutinizing questions of capitalism, governance, resistance, identity, and their relation to mobility.

## Medical mobilities in the context of India

Following chapter 7 the book changes direction, in a somewhat abrupt manner. The two remaining chapters that form part three of the book are, hence, different from the previous ones. They focus on India and on medical mobilities, and it is thus a very specific geographic location and view of mobilities that comes to the fore. In part three the mobilities discussed are less about corporeal mobility, even though examples stem from medicine, health care, and thus center on the body. Instead, interest surrounds logistics of drugs, accessibility to medical procedures, and ideas of what constitutes good health for the individual as well as a nation. Further the relationship between social status and medical mobility and the role of public-private interests in the health market come into focus.

Chapter 8 [p. 177-212], written by Towghi and Randeria, directs attention to the mobility of reproductive health technologies (i.e., HPV-vaccines and contraceptives) and discusses how these come to India and are disseminated. In contrast to the previous chapters on migration, in this chapter people are considered more or less sedentary, whereas technology comes to them through new markets created by collaborations between the government, NGOs and pharmaceutical companies. The market-friendly regulations that these collaborative networks ‘enjoy’ are central to their existence – and the analysis of the chapter. Following the authors, we can at present observe both the content and conditions of medical mobilities flowing in and out of India. To further illustrate this: After having been tested in the bodies of women of the ‘global South’ drugs are, for instance, frequently shipped to the ‘North’. Likewise, personal health data is mined in the ‘global South’ and then sold to universities and companies in the ‘North’. The testing of drugs and the collection of medical data are possible by behavior deemed unethical and possibly illegal in ‘the North’. However, such behavior is not only allowed but appears standard practice in ‘the South’, widely promoted and sustained by the collaborations outlined above. The authors conclude with suggesting ‘that a reconfigured nexus of state-market relations increasingly shapes the governance of the poor in the global South’ [207] resulting, among other things, in the dissemination of new norms and regulations within healthcare and the control of population, more generally.

Chapter 9 [p. 213-234], finally, is written by Cohen and stands out, to me at least, as it seems less constrained as for the interpretation of what mobility is and can be. The chapter illustrates changes in the representation of medical clinics in Hindi films. Films here appear as an interesting medium allowing to reflect upon Indian society and its relationship to health, progress and movement, status and national identity. I appreciate the form and direction of this concluding chapter as it shows the potential of (critical)

mobilities studies to draw on fiction and imaginary forms of mobility (Urry, 2007). Therewith it also shows how representations of mobility in movies can challenge and problematize notions of social (im)mobilities seemingly prevalent in 'real life'.

## Concluding remarks

Ideas, practices and materials increasingly flow from the global 'North' to the 'South' and are, in the process, negotiated, evaluated and received by countries, citizens as well as companies. Bodies try to move 'North' – in the form of migrants, workers, or consumers – and encounter resistance depending on how desirable their particular body is to the respective state and economy. Questions arise, to the authors of this book at least, as to what the nation state is today and how it is maintained and augmented. Of particular interest to the authors of the book are thereby the states' changing relationships to private organizations and the market. Basically the authors argue that the state is certainly not *one* thing to everyone anymore, if it ever was – and this might be(come) a crucial challenge for those in power.

What keeps this edited volume together is the introductory chapter elaborating on the authors' interpretation and understanding of mobilities. The nexus of mobilities and migration studies – which was argued to enable a *critical* approach to mobilities – is however not equally emphasized throughout the different chapters. Critical mobility studies are, as stated in the introduction, about the interplay of mobility and power. Questions of inequality, domination and constraint are indeed raised throughout the book, but they are not necessarily discussed against the backdrop of migration studies, as the introduction tends to suggest. As mentioned previously, the chapters making up part two of the book most obviously draw inspiration from migration studies in their explorations of the mobility-power nexus. However, I am not sure if someone who is not familiar with the field will share this assessment. Yet there is no indication that the book is meant to be an introduction to the field of mobilities, or any other field the volume draws upon. But for which audience is this book then meant to be? Assuming that there are different ways to read the book I see two very general possibilities.

One way is to approach the book as a collection of rather loosely coupled texts; and this comes along with both strengths and weaknesses. While I find the conceptual, empirical and analytical breadth of the book compelling, the wide variety of empirical cases and contexts explored simultaneously makes the book difficult to grasp as a whole. Every chapter evokes other and new issues and concepts with which many readers are probably, at least in parts, unfamiliar. By tendency, the singular chapters thus assume that the readers have some prior conceptual knowledge of the respective fields and areas addressed. That said, the book also allows its readers to gain access to a variety of mobility-related concepts and empirical settings, thereby revealing the diversity of the field of critical mobilities studies. For scholars with a previous interest in and knowledge of mobilities and migration studies, looking for new and critical perspectives on mobility and mobility-related phenomena, the book appears to be of particular interest. For me, it has been eye-opening and an inspirational read. That the book is, besides, highly relevant

these days seems to be obvious recalling news covering stories of people who try to cross the Mediterranean to come to Europe on a non- or at the very least semi-‘legal’ path.

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## On the nomadic identity of migrating lifestyles

Matt Rodda

### review of

Rand, S. and Felty, H. (2013) *Life between borders: The nomadic life of curators and artists*. New York: apexart (PB, pp. 112, \$14.95, ISBN 978-1-933347-65-3).

In *Life between borders: The nomadic life of curators and artists* ten international art professionals address the effect of frequent travel and movement on their lives, perspectives and identities. Today, travelling the globe is projected as an essential part of how curators and artists are supposed to work. Words like nomad, migration, dislocation, deterritorialisation, and connectivity, among others, have appeared with increasing frequency and enthusiasm in descriptions of art practices over the last two decades. The art world's protagonists are defined as highly networked individuals for whom to travel, live in new places and engage with different cultures is part and parcel of a continuing search for meaningful encounters. *Life between borders* does not dispute this description. Where this volume stands out from other texts in the field of globalisation theory, though, is that it presents a subjective rather than objective approach. The underlying theme of the book concerns what effect a migrating life has on the formation of identity. Issues of relocation, belonging and the homogenisation of language and culture are also raised here. In fact, when the editors invited authors to contribute to this collection they asked them to be 'honest and personal about what they address' [10]. The diverse group of contributors that responded to this call certainly do that. Within the book's 112 pages the reader is confronted with life experiences and stories, the idiosyncrasies of travel, self reflection and concerns over cultural identity. Thanks to the honesty with which these authors



candidly handle the subject, the reader will find that *Life between borders* presents a balanced look at both the benefits and dangers of nomadism in the lives of its protagonists.

The book is published by apexart, a non-profit visual arts organization in Lower Manhattan that runs a contemporary art exhibition space, residency program, book publishing, and public programs. The editors, Steven Rand and Heather Felty, are both affiliated with the organisation. Steven Rand founded apexart in 1994 and Heather Felty has been affiliated with the organisation since 1999. The impetus behind publishing this intriguing publication comes from apexart's residency programme, which offers what they call Inbound Residencies (to NYC) and Outbound Residencies (to another international city). These residencies aim to create experiences of 'cultural immersion' [8] by placing participants in situations that take them outside of normal art world sensibilities. *Life between borders* compliments the aim of that residency programme by making explicit the norm that they seek to displace. As Felty's Introduction to the book states, the primary goal of the publication is to 'consider the formation of identity in what has become the norm of a nomadic, migrating lifestyle' [12]. But she is quick to point out that a distinction needs to be made between these terms, nomad and migrant. Drawing on a definition that is often cited on this subject from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988) in their seminal work *A Thousand Plateaus*, she differentiates between 'migrants' and 'nomads' based on the impetus for movement. The difference is founded on the relationship to the place that one occupies at any given time. Migrant people belong in a place but move as an exceptional activity, usually the result of some form of strife or upheaval. In contrast, the nomadic lifestyle is undertaken through movement and is characterized precisely by that movement. Of course a number of distinctions between the two terms have either become blurred or changed. For instance, art world nomads are no longer characterised as moving by ground, this is now the migrant life. Today's nomadic artist instead takes advantage of cheap air fares to travel freely between fairs, biennials and exhibitions, and not for survival but for networking and exposure. Indeed many of the contributors focus on this point of distinction, or lack thereof, as demonstrated by the first essay from Pascal Gielen.

In his essay 'Nomadeology: The aestheticisation of nomadic existence', Gielen makes a case for the study of nomadeology (with an 'e') as distinct from nomadology (a title of a chapter from *A thousand plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari). Nomadeology, he argues, focuses on how the term nomad and the concept of nomadology has become part of an ideology in the minds of art workers. This nomadeology deserves our attention and critique, we are told, because it presents a distinctively 'one-sided interpretation of nomadology' that is built up around the positive (romanticised) aspects of travel, mobility and

unattachment [19]. The resultant positive aura of nomadism, and its aestheticisation, is seen to serve the dominant interests of today's neo-liberal hegemony with all of its post-Fordist working conditions. In contrast to this ideology, the concept of nomadeology asks how artists can form a kind of interventionism or 'counter-hegemony' to the neoliberal ideal of nomad [23]. Furthermore, the author asks if artistic strategies like those of the Situationist International – identified with the libertarian Marxist movements, whose subversive political pranks took art onto the streets to liberate everyday life from advanced capitalism – can be applied to a nomadic position and, if they can, how politically effective such strategies might be. While some examples from the visual arts are presented to illustrate what this counter-hegemony might look like (Francis Alÿs and Markus Miessen), the conclusion remains rather sceptical. Gielen posits that nomadic individuals, such as freelancers, artists, curators, consultants and other free agents operate from an inherently problematic stance because of their 'highly individual position' [25]. The argument is that these individuals are too weak to develop 'sufficient strength to accumulate any appreciable political influence' [25]. In his opinion, if nomadism is to succeed as an artistic strategy in a political sense it needs to be 'communist': which is to say stateless, and in this particular case a form of statelessness that arises 'precisely because it is nomadic' [28].

'Real encounters', an essay by Lamia Joreige, also draws on Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the terms nomad and migrant. However she argues that today's artist better fits the ideal of the migrant than the nomad. In her opinion the migrant acts as a kind of tourist who can be categorised as one who visits a location for only practical reasons. The migrant is also 'easily categorised' and 'poses no problem of recognition upon arrival or departure' [32]. In contrast, the nomad is a rootless individual in a state of vital displacement who breaks down mechanisms of recognition. The nomadic artist is more like the migrant, then, because they are easily recognised and identifiable when they visit a new culture or place. This change is apparently a bad thing, because it means artists have lost the ability to be ignorant, to miss-use language, linguistic conventions and norms. The central proposition of the essay, then, is that homogenisation of the global community, caused by increased mobility, reduces the chance for one to cause distortions in the preconceptions of others. This is a problem for the author because it is precisely these kinds of distortions that create what she calls 'real encounters'. A 'real encounter' is defined as taking place when a 'displacement of methods and practices is experienced by those who take part in the encounter', so long as the displacement is both created and actively pursued by both (or all) parties involved [37]. Joreige gives a number of examples to back this up, most notably drawing on personal experiences from a residency she did in London (with the Serpentine Gallery) where her practice

became ineffectual. Her most compelling argument, though, focuses on the language of art. Joreige proposes that the references artists use, what we may think of generally as 'art speak', relies on a generalisation of language. This generalisation produces 'a false faith that the specificity of cultures and of works can be transmitted adequately through a homogenised language' [35]. The presence of the artist (due to ease of mobility) in combination with a homogenised language therefore leads to a false feeling that 'a community has been birthed' (36). This sense of global community is problematic for Joreige because it 'covers over essential inequalities and misunderstandings' [36]. In short, it produces an 'illusory encounter' [37]. A real encounter, by contrast, would arise precisely from 'the impossibility of a common language'. Unfortunately the author is purposely vague on further pinning down what does and does not create 'real encounters'. However she does state that 'there is no direct relationship between today's itinerant lifestyles and the sort of encounter artists deeply value' [38]. Instead of championing nomadism, this essay finishes with an intriguing argument that places value on 'a kind of figure of artist that does not travel' [32]. Instead of holding up the nomadic artist as an ideal, she posits it is the artist who stays put that we should look to for generating real encounters.

Jimmie Durham's 'Building a nomadic library' presents a completely different type of text to the preceding two essays. In this contribution the author reflects on his reading habits and how literature has shaped his sense of identity. On the move for most of his life, Durham notes that the reading material that has been available to him has often been popular literature – because that is what is generally available from book stores at train stations and airports – or encountered by happenchance donations from people he met along the way. As a result his nomadic library also includes an eclectic mix of poetry, philosophy and reference books. In the pages of his essay, although this text more correctly fits in a category of subjective prose, we are therefore presented with a timeline of his life marked not by important places or people but by his intersection with reading. The manner by which Durham encounters literature can be summarised by the phrase 'she introduced me to...' [42]. This phrase highlights the importance he places on random encounters with other readers, and their generosity, as a catalyst for discovery. In this regard reading is seen as a social act. Moreover, Durham proposes that the community of readers is founded on equality. This is because one enters into an engagement with literature (or at least he did) from the position of an 'interested party' as opposed to for necessity (such as education). In many ways Durham's revelation, that his mobile life can be encapsulated in the library of what he has read (although he rarely keeps the books), can be seen as a microcosm of the kind of mobility and global community that *Life between borders* aims to address. Unstated questions arise as

we go through Durham's essay: how do we enter into relations with people as we travel, what is the minimum common link that brings people together, and what is it we retain from such exchanges? Durham writes 'I remember pretty well almost every novel I've ever read', but reflects that 'when I read for information I do not retain the knowledge' [39-40]. The same can be said of this essay. 'Building a nomadic library' is not something a scholar reads for information. Nevertheless it is a text that will stay with you. That is perhaps the point and, in its own way, why this essay is successful within the remit of the editor's vision to create a resource that resonates with its readers.

In 'The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone moving', Gitanjali Dang is concerned with the price artists pay for mobility. The nomadic character of art, she asserts, demands constant motion and an 'unremitting peripatetic extroversion from its players' [47]. Motion is closely linked here with being visible, which in turn is equated with being productive. The art industry's nomadic protagonists are therefore framed as 'the ultimate arbiter[s] of visibility', and the wider nomadic tendencies of contemporary art as an 'aggressive strain of capitalist globalism' that promotes neoliberal ideals [45]. This need for constant mobility is an issue for Dang because it 'deceives members of the fraternity into mistakenly believing that they can parry the inevitable flat line forever' [47]. Whereby movement is seen as an imperative for career development and success, while being still is associated with stagnation and death (of said career). Dang, drawing on the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's concept of contemporary (Agamben, 2009) argues that contemporary art is often not contemporary because the constant striving for mobility negates any time for introspection. In place of contemporaneity, she suggests that art has irony as its own 'slovenly contemporaneity' [47]. The relation Dang draws out between irony and mobility resonates with the previous comments by Joreige on the use of language by art nomads. Both irony and language contain a certain amount of 'insider's patois' [48]. Against this mainstream insider trend, Dang puts forward a number of projects and networks that propose a counter-idea of an 'aesthetic that is irony free and a nomadism that is less belligerent' [51]. To identify what this aesthetic may be she draws a distinction between visual art and what she calls 'the aesthetic project'. Visual art, she posits, relies heavily on visibility for survival and therefore instils a gap between the artist and the art. In comparison, the aesthetic project aims to keep this gap to a minimum. The difference being that the aesthetic project requires one to 'embody your aesthetic' and operate out of the 'sanctuary' of that position [51]. To bring this idea into reality Dang opened her own itinerant art lab called Khanabadosh in September 2012. The word 'Khanabadosh' refers to people who carry their homes with them, in a similar way to how turtles carry their homes on their backs. Again a parallel can be drawn here to Joreige's argument in favour of an artist that does not move as an

opposition to today's nomadic artist. Seen from a different perspective, Dang does not propose an artistic methodology of staying still, but rather foregrounds the benefits of an artist who moves with one's home. Mobility in this way is more contained and to some extent slowed down. Moreover, through a process of slowing down the author argues that a position of introspection is crucially able to return to artistic practice. The essay concludes by proposing that nomadism can remain contemporary, then, if it is performed 'in a less aggressive manner' and by way of a 'course correction': one where 'hunting and gathering' (mobility for the accrument of visibility) gets replaced by 'looking and finding' (introspection) [54].

Niels Van Tomme's 'The trouble with the migrant metaphor' is another text that questions the previously mentioned collapsing of the terms 'nomad' and 'migrant' into a single hybrid concept. The author's critique of blurring these terms in contemporary discourse, especially where art and artistic practice is concerned, focuses on a need to maintain the different positions of experience in each case (between artist nomads and displaced migrants). The difference, he posits, can be summarised by that between inclusion and exclusion respectively. The movement of migrants, the excluded, is marked by 'existential disruption' [56]. In contrast, the movement of artist nomads is characterised by a 'privilege of free choice'. This difference can also be spelled out as that between movement according to a 'life', and movement according to a 'lifestyle' [56]. In order to show examples of how art might manage to tread a better line between these definitions, and without blurring them, the author draws on two artworks: Damir Nikšić's *The immigrant song* (2008) and Claire Fontaine's *Foreigners everywhere* (since 2005). Nikšić's film shows the Bosnian artist repetitively singing a song about immigration – going back and forth between statements of wanting/choosing to be somewhere verses the opposing viewpoint of being allowed to be there – which brings into question radical expressions of exclusion. Fontaine's artwork, consisting of neon signs that read in various languages (except English) 'Foreigners everywhere', highlights a common point of social antagonism in migrant life. Drawing on these examples Van Tomme urges artists to forego establishing 'tenuous links' between art nomadism and the migrant paradigm and, instead, asks them to 'find novel ways of joining the fight against the injustices these people [migrants] inevitably face' [61]. Artists and curators, he asserts, are in a unique position to do exactly this. Sadly though, the text does not elaborate any further on what these 'novel ways of joining the fight' might look like.

Melissa Chia's essay, 'Reflections on curating Asian art', is formed into two parts. The first part begins like many texts in this book with a statement about the increased mobility of artists' lives. Specifically, the author focuses her

investigation on the greater sense of communication being felt across the art world and the new work dynamic this has brought about. Historically she traces this change as a movement away from previous imperatives to settle in traditional art centres (New York, London, Paris) to looking outside of these centres. This movement of de-centralisation (or perhaps one should say a pulling in of the outside) started in the 90s and is often viewed for its positive effect on creating interest in artists from South Africa, China and South Korea, among others. Looking back on this historical turn, Chia investigates what impact this change has actually had on global thinking, predominantly from the perspective of Asian contemporary art. She looks particularly into how the rise of large thematic pan-Asian art exhibitions in Europe and the United States has brought about a re-writing of art historical canon in the West. Along with this there has been a gradual move from interest in Asian art organised by nation-state to monographic exhibitions of specific artists. Indeed the author sees this last shift, from treating artists as a 'national representative' to 'an individual', as significant because it marks a move away from seeing artists as geo-political symbols [65]. While these trends are positive, the author asks if a real equalising of art history has actually taken place. Or, more sceptically, whether the dominance of what is canon in art history still remains firmly in the West. Frustratingly these questions are left up in the air as the author moves briskly on to her personal experiences as a curator in the early 90s in Asia. While Chia's insights are helpful for fleshing out the wider issues that she raised in the first section, they do not directly answer the question she had posed. Nevertheless her account of how the ability to speak English became an important factor in Asia, and her attack on international curators for parachuting into Asian cities to select artworks with little or no local knowledge or understanding, are interesting. Both of these points highlight dangerous disconnects between local and international. This also leads the author to appraise how curatorial imperatives need to be set on obtaining local information and spending time to get to know a culture. Remarkably a common theme is starting to develop at this stage in the book around an argument for slowing down mobility. Here, though, this fascinating standpoint is presented from a curatorial perspective and framed by the intention to avoid cultural misunderstandings.

Yannis Ziogas's 'Risk and danger: Six incidents of a nomadic process. The Paradigm of Visual march to Prespes' presents six accounts from the author's involvement in a project called *Visual march to Prespes*. The *Visual march to Prespes* is a nomadic residency that invites art students, artists and theoreticians to explore the landscape of Prespes on the northern border of Greece (an area greatly affected by the Greek Civil War, 1946-49). Ziogas tells us that by participating he aimed to initiate new relationships between himself and the environment he travelled through. What comes to the fore though, which

constitutes the central theme of his text, is the extent to which the new relationship he hoped to find was shaped by danger and risk. This essay stands apart from the other essays in the book because the relationships it questions are primarily drawn between the artist's body and the environment. While many of the other contributors focus on the issue of how nomadism shapes cultural, social and economic identity, Ziogas brings the issue of travel back to its traditional format of walking from point A to point B. He argues that the incidents we collect on our journeys shape one's nomadic character. To illustrate this point Ziogas reflects on six incidents from *Visual march to Prespes* that happened to him between 2007 and 2010. These include weather phenomena, dangerous wildlife, unexpected encounters, fatigue and pain, and the spectre of death. Through each incident Ziogas builds up a representation of how danger operates as a key influence on nomadic identity, arguing that it 'allows people to see their limitations' and highlights the personal trajectory of discovery as one 'either [tries] to move beyond them or accept them and stay in their current status' [71]. To conclude, the author argues that to be nomadic, especially in the physical sense of travelling across a landscape by foot, takes us outside of the norm. This is seen as an important catalyst for the production of new possibilities that help us to 'move beyond the profane and established' [77].

The essay 'Crossing cultures: Reflections on language' presents Mekbib Gameda's reflection on how crossing or coming across languages can be a transformational experience. The pages of the essay draw together different accounts of his experience learning different languages. The text follows a largely chronological order that progresses through Gameda's growing up, moving to different countries, learning or having trouble learning new languages, and adopting new cultures. Through these accounts he describes a process of 'forming different identities' and reflects on how these identities create 'a sense of connection and disconnection' [81]. For instance he notes how learning English was both a catalyst that opened up global connections, but at the same time distanced him from the local (Amharic is his mother tongue). The process of moving through languages here becomes a movement from the familiar to the uncertain. In a similar vein to the other essays here that deal with the role of language in nomadism (Joreige and Dang), Gameda presents language as a significant power in shaping our identities and way of perceiving of reality. It is certainly apparent that, for him, the exposure to multiple languages has created 'the global identity [he] was longing for' [86].

Mahita El Bacha Urieta also confesses to being a compulsive nomad. In the essay 'Rooted in disorientation' she presents an autobiographical account of her nomadic compulsion. When faced with a question about where she calls home, for instance, she responds that for her home is 'standing in my own shoes' [89].

Over the course of the essay she builds up a picture of what standing in her shoes means to her, and how her sense of identity is informed precisely by a sense of dislocation. Indeed what she calls her 'free-flowing existence in identity formation' is defined by a connection between identity and whatever language she was currently learning or living amongst at the time [90]. While reading this text one can see similarities between Urieta's reflections and the preceding comments by Gameda. What this author brings to the subject though is a treatment of the duplicity of nomadic identity expressed by a simultaneous sense of being 'confused, lost, schizophrenic, uprooted', while also being 'free, flexible, multi-cultural [and] always in flux' [90]. For the author the revelation of her life has been that she can be at peace with these duplicitous natures. The only true sense of home, she argues, is therefore the one we carry inside ourselves. This proposition resonates with Dang's comments on the importance of carrying one's home with you as a method for staying connected to one's identity, even when feeling disconnected in a new place. In contrast to Dang's idea of slowing down of the pace of travel, Urieta instead argues that we embrace our sense of nomadic up-rootedness. For her the migrating nature of nomadic identity defines a 'transnational identity', which is constantly compiled and added to as we move and add new reference points to its root [92-93]. This leads her to question whether it might be time to start looking beyond the art biennial and the 'bubble' created by such events. The problem with the format of the biennial, she suggests, is that it is stagnated in its globalisation. This is because biennials maintain a composed set of associations, language and culture for the 'art people' who habitually travel with them. By looking beyond the cultivated multiculturalism of art nomadism that surrounds biennials, the author returns to a question that was put forth by the editors of this book: to consider what actual possibility might there be for a 'truly multicultural society and a world without boundaries?' [100] The author's response is that we are already experiencing this society. The issue that remains, as she sees it, is not a definition of State boundaries but of the organisation of society that maintains racial, ethnic, social and economic divides. Moreover, Urieta locates the problem of organising society 'in our minds and in the way in which our minds function', suggesting that we are wired to 'cultural-centralism' [100]. While some discussion is given on ways in which this cultural centralism is constructed, for instance in how countries like Singapore and Vietnam package a specific sense of themselves (Singapore as a cosmopolitan melting pot with 'high quality standards', while Vietnam projects cultural archetypes in line with a touristic experience that is themed from its past trauma) no clear presentation is made on alternative formats for a true multiculturalism, except to place the task at the hands of individuals and one's being aware of the packaged multiculturalism surrounding us and the importance of looking beyond it and our own projections.



The final essay in this collection finishes with an optimistic turn. Sebastien Sanz de Santamaria's 'Global nomad lady' recalls how, although he didn't know it at as a child, he was born into a life of global nomadism. That revelation came to him when he attended a school talk about the subject. The essay presents the author's looking back to this seminal moment and the slow realisation over the course of his life just how accurate the term 'global nomad' describes him. He recounts difficulty settling down, frequent job changes and insecurity. However he also points out how knowing that these traits belonged to his identity made it easier to define where he was from, or rather, where he had been [106]. Although Santamaria seemingly focuses on negative aspects of being a global nomad, as opposed to positive aspects such as being multi-lingual, he frames these negative aspects and the 'curse to roam the lands' as a good thing [110]. The positive point he centres on is how being in an unknown place heightens ones senses. Framed as a kind of travel induced hyper-sensitivity, he argues that this state of mind is important for an artist because it 'feeds into one's creativity' [107]. In response to the issue of borders, he states that while they are most likely here to stay, the 'nomadic lifestyle somehow causes them to evaporate, or at least become less important' [109]. In fact he likens borders to road signs, in that they simply indicating a change of location rather than a barrier. Santamaria's optimism for nomadism could be criticised here for forgetting that not everyone (especially migrants) has the same experience and ease of travel as him. But viewed within the wider content of the book this optimism adds to the balance of what is, overall, a diverse selection of opinions.

*Life between borders* is a volume that celebrates its author's personal reflections. At times this emphasis on subjectivity proves frustrating, especially where insightful speculations and propositions are made and then not followed up as one would expect of a more academically structured text. It is therefore helpful to think this book in terms of Durham's essay 'Building a nomadic library'. *Life between borders* is not a collection of information in the form of facts, figures and academic referencing. It is a collection of reflection, prose, diary entries, experiences and honest opinions. For scholars of globalisation theory, *Life between borders* will be an essential volume in one's nomadic library not because it creates new theory, but because it leads theory from a position of life and practice. The editors state that they want the book to be treated as 'a resource to spark further investigation into this ever-evolving topic' [16]. This reader can certainly see a number of themes developed here that deserve further research. For instance the intriguing calls for a slowing down of mobility (Dang), or for nomads to stay at home (Joreige). Such propositions could, for instance, feed into workerist theory as a discourse on modes of refusal (Negri, 2005) against today's neoliberal working conditions. The book will also certainly resonate with other artists or curators. But its resonance is not limited to this demographic. While

many of the experiences are specific to each author, the issues, concerns and intonations have a wider applicability that will include the readership of *ephemera*. In reading *Life between borders* one encounters and comes to understand something new about the nomadic lives of workers in the arts. This knowledge, like the nomadic artists it derives from, is not confined by borders. This reader can foresee that the insights provided here will cross disciplinary subjects and fields of study, and offer new appraisals of nomadism that will impact how we view the organisation of our migrating lifestyles.

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## ‘Belonging’ as politicized projects and the broadening of intersectional analysis

Mikkel Mouritz Marfelt

### review of

Yuval-Davis, N. (2011) *The politics of belonging: Intersectional contestations*. London: Sage. (PB, pp. 264, £27.99, ISBN 9781412921305)

What does it mean to feel at home, to feel safe – to *belong*? As the intricacy of the question unfolds it seems no easy answers come right to mind. One approach to explore this further is by rephrasing the question, asking oneself: How is such a feeling of belonging constructed and politicized? In the book *The politics of belonging – intersectional contestations*, Nira Yuval-Davis sets out to expand a simplified dichotomous thinking of belonging or not belonging by asking how and where carriers of political projects of belonging are situated locally, globally and last but not least intersectionally. Indeed not an easy undertaking as intersectional analysis necessarily accompanies a need to address ‘the complexity that arises when the subject of analysis expands to include multiple dimensions of social life and categories of analysis’ (McCall, 2005). The preface situates the book in the context of the personal and professional life of author Yuval-Davis noting that it has been long under way, starting back in 1997 in the time of reverberation of her popular book *Gender and Nation* (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

### The chapters 1-5 in brief

Chapter 1, ‘Framing the questions’, intrigues the reader by asking a question that many journalist were bothered by in the aftermath of the 7/7 London bombings:

How is it possible that ‘British’ people were able to carry out such atrocities in Britain? Questions relating to recent historical events are raised throughout the book, and for readers with an interest in contemporary political issues Yuval-Davis keeps the reader attentive by addressing such issues from global and local perspectives. The focus on concrete political issues serves the purpose of contextualizing projects of belonging as politicized – a typical and indeed relevant context for such intersectional analyses. As much as the 7/7 bombing case and other questions intrigue, the importance lies perhaps even more in the way these questions are formulated. Why do journalists tend to couple the multidimensional identities of terrorist with questions of Britishness? It seems that actions of terror are often projected into a referential space, where some identity categories dominate over other categories of belonging – in this case Britishness. The issue of Britishness in the 7/7 bombing case, or more broadly nationality as a dominating identity category, is questioned, revealing the absurdities in much of the taken-for-grantedness accepted by many of us in everyday life.

In Chapter 2, ‘The citizenship question’, Yuval-Davis explores contemporary constructions of *citizenship* denoting various political projects of belonging. Yuval-Davis introduces the notions of active vs. activist citizenship; intimate citizenship; consumerism as citizenship; multicultural citizenship; and multilayered citizenship. The author points out issues related to politics of belonging highlighting some of the paradoxes of contemporary citizenship. According to her there is a distancing between citizens and their states along with a somewhat contradictory unprecedented penetration of state surveillance [78]. Along these two lines there is a third rise in activist citizenship protesting against the reconfiguration of the state and its associated diminishing of citizenship rights. More broadly the author reveals how dual and multiple citizenships ‘challenge the fundamental logics of a twentieth century politics of belonging, which were based on state citizenship’ [80].

As a stepping-stone to Chapter 3, ‘The national question’, citizenship is critically discussed in relation to nationality, showing the intersectional complexities of the *nation-state* and the westernized tendency to equate nation and state. Again, contemporary issues are discussed. For example the Roma people of EU, who do not have a nation-state of their own, have claimed the right to be called a nation in order to obtain collective rights in the EU and in the UN. This exposes the performative effects of a nation-without-state revealing how the politics of belonging are governed by macro-structural matters such as the EU and UN conventions. Less than half a year ago the UN vote on whether to give the state of Palestine ‘an observer status’ broke headlines around the world. Though the book predates this voting, the struggles of the Palestine people portray the ever-

present relevance of the discussion brought forward by Yuval-Davis. By way of comparison to the Roma case, the case of the UN voting highlights the different paths collective identity groups may take in order to gain international legitimacy. Whereas the Roma people struggle to obtain a 'nation-without-state' status the Palestine people struggle to obtain a 'non-member observer *state*' status. Though different in so many ways, the cases of the Roma and the Palestine people can both be viewed as political projects of belonging. The two cases reveal how contextual factors situate principal identity categories such as citizenship and nationality thereby creating unique settings for the way political projects of belonging are being dealt with. The author draws attention to three perspectives on globalization that respectively claim that globalization does not diminish the role of nationality as a hegemonic contemporary identity, globalization can be seen as opportunity providing for resurgence of nationalists movements while producing 'new nationalisms', or that globalization can be viewed as cultural processes of hybridization. Yuval-Davis points out how these different scholarly perspectives on globalization, though sometimes oppositional, are not diagnostic alternatives but rather complementary. In her view 'globalization has contributed to the growing separation of nationalism and the state, as well as made it both more necessary and difficult for the state to use nationalist "social cohesion" discourse as a major tool of its governmentality' [III]. According to the author however, one of the most important observations is the partial transformation of 'what nationality issues are' in the contemporary world, and she points to the fusion of nationalist issues with other identity politics issues. Interestingly, according to Yuval-Davis a symptom of such transformation might be the rise of particularly virulent kinds of autochthonic politics where states are weak.

Building on the cases presented in earlier chapters an overall argument is slowly materializing in Chapter 4, 'The religious question'. Yuval-Davis points out how a discourse of dialogue between civilizations or 'clash of civilization' assumes non-overlaps between civilizations and approaches 'civilization' as essential. This ignores the synthetic nature of all contemporary cultures as well as their own internal heterogeneity. Indeed there are parallels between this reasoning and the arguments presented concerning citizenship, and nationalism. Religious belongings are portrayed as important elements of nationalist, ethnic and other political projects. Furthermore, according to the author, marginalized and threatened people are increasingly using religion as a political project of belonging as an alternative way to gain autonomous empowerment. Yuval-Davis points out how religious movements, in times of growing instability and globalized neo-liberalism, then can benefit from empowerment and moral accountability as guidance for social and political action.

In Chapter 5, 'The cosmopolitan question', Yuval-Davis explores various facets of cosmopolitanism. In one of his writings a decade ago Ulrich Beck (2003) stated: 'To belong or not to belong – that is the cosmopolitan question' [145]. Yuval-Davis critically expands the meaning of the cosmopolitan question discussing the major debates around the notion of cosmopolitanism and current manifestations as a political project of belonging. Drawing on Appiah (2006) Yuval-Davis argues that the two cosmopolitan ideals, the universal one and the respect for legitimate difference, have inner conflicting tensions, and therefore cosmopolitanism should not be seen 'as the name of the solution but as the name of the challenge' [174]. She argues that the dichotomy of universalism / relativism is a false one. The emancipatory aim is to 'establish a universal which would be as inclusive as possible, at the same time knowing that this is a process, and not a goal, and that therefore, as Pollock et al. (2002: 1) claim, "specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an unc cosmopolitan thing to do"' [175]. The author believes that we cannot and should not construct a homogeneous or unified political order but instead engage in transversal dialogues. Translation, rather than a unitary language, should become a cosmopolitan political tool making political projects of belonging multilayered, shifting, contested and with porous boundaries.

### Positioning within intersectional research

Yuval-Davis deals less explicitly with the oppression of marginalized groups than do some strands of intersectional studies. Even though chapters 2-5 conclude with a positioning of current feminist debates around questions of citizenship, nationalism, religion, and cosmopolitanism only rarely do these discussions turn explicitly normative in relation to aspects of oppression and marginalization. This however is not a coincidence, as the author in Chapter 1 openly states her own agenda of offering an intersectionality approach applicable beyond the multiple marginalized members of society. Instead she strives to develop a theoretical (and I would add analytical) intersectional framework for studying identity classifications more broadly [8]. In her influential paper from 2005 Leslie McCall introduced the notions of intra-, inter- and anti-categorical perspectives to intersectional research (McCall, 2005). Yuval-Davis critically relate to these notions by arguing that the two approaches inter- and intra-categorical research, are not mutually exclusive. In fairness it should be noted that McCall believes the three approaches should conceptually be understood as a continuum (McCall, 2005: 1773), not necessarily excluding each other, and that 'some research crosses the boundaries of the continuum, belonging partly to one approach and partly to another' (*ibid.*: 1774). It seems that the ambition of Yuval-Davis is to not delve on the three different perspectives presented by McCall, but instead to extend the focus by emphasizing the analytical differentiation between different

facets of social analysis – specifically focusing on the socio-economic grids of power, people's identificatory and experiential perspectives, and their normative value systems. As such Yuval-Davis argues that there is 'no direct casual relationship between the situatedness of people's gaze and their cognitive, emotional and moral perspectives on life' [7].

The consequences of such an approach should not be underestimated. As intersectionality early on arose as a normative project of enabling the marginalized and oppressed, today intersectionality is gaining new grounds by addressing intersectional contestations of stratification more broadly (Nash, 2008). Some intersectional scholars might disagree on the appropriateness of such development, though this development doubtlessly will broaden our understanding of human classification. In my view, addressing intersectionality as a theoretical and analytical framework for studying identity classifications beyond the multiple marginalized members of society opens up new exciting avenues of understanding social stratification. The contribution of the book is thus much more far-reaching than the concrete cases and their relatedness to citizenship, nationality, religion and cosmopolitanism. As such chapters 2-5 can be seen as a welcomed input inspiring the development of alternative intersectional analyses. In the light of such mainstreaming of the concept of intersectionality the author joins the choir of intersectional researchers stating that intersectionality has become one of the most important contributions from feminism to date (see also McCall, 2005). Yuval-Davis manages to set the scene for a contemporary intersectional analysis by expanding its boundaries to encompass all members of society and thus to see intersectionality as a useful theoretical framework for analyzing social stratification.

### The chapters 6-7 in brief

Chapter 6, 'The caring question', focuses what can be seen as *the* feminist political project of belonging i.e. 'ethics of care' aimed at 'constructing an alternative model of social and political relationship to the neo-liberal discourse of self-interest' [45]. Here the author argues that a feminist political project of belonging should 'be based on transversal "rooting", "shifting", mutual respect and mutual trust' [199]. Most importantly however, political feminist projects should 'reflect upon the relations of power not only among participants in the political dialogue, but also between these participants and the global carriers of power who do not share their values, who need to be confronted, influenced and, when this is not possible, resisted' [199]. In the light of chapter 6 the book turns explicitly normative in the process becoming a timely 'third wave feministic' contribution to theorization beyond the singular, instead looking at politics of

belonging structured along multiple identity axes (e.g. Hutchinson and Mann, 2004).

Conclusively in chapter 7 Yuval-Davis lays forward her own political project of belonging, stating that such a project is multi-layered, by recognizing the importance of belonging and the politics of belonging without essentializing or prioritizing naturalized boundaries. In this view she advocates for a transversal, not cosmopolitan, project by transcending boundaries, recognizing situated gazes while rejecting identity politics. Moreover her project promotes universal human security as well as the tremendous importance of caring relationships, though recognizing the importance of taking into account the contextual power relations within these relationships. In presenting her personal political project of belonging – by promoting human security and ethics of care – one might ask: What is the correlation between making intersectionality applicable beyond marginalized societal members and promoting normative values of ethics of care and universal security? And furthermore: Do these two different agendas in parallel constitute a tension? While some readers might prefer an explicit discussion around these questions I find the deliberate omission liberating. As Yuval-Davis mentions her book is an interim account of contemporary political projects of belonging. In my view the book constitutes more than this, by providing an intersectional analysis which, through its implicit tensions, eloquently addresses some of the challenges that intersectionality as a concept faces in the process of creating new avenues to explore social stratification. In one view, my view, the book can be seen as a micro-emancipatory step toward rethinking the normative dimensions of intersectionality research in the process of mainstreaming the concept.

I have tried to contextualize the intersectional contribution offered by the book, positioning it in relation to contemporary intersectional research. The book spans many areas of interests but seems particularly relevant for people with a curiosity about concrete and contemporary political cases of belonging, as well as scholars with an interest in current debates within intersectional studies.

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# From mineral mining to data mining: Understanding the global commodity chain of internet communications

Chris Land

## review of

Fuchs, C. (2014) *Digital labour and Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge. (HB, pp.408, £95.00, ISBN 978-0-415-71615-4; PB, £26.99, ISBN 978-0-415-71616-1)

## Context

This is fairly hefty book by almost any measures. It weighs in at over 400 pages, retails for almost £100 (hardback) and undertakes to review and theorise the many and varied forms of labour that contribute to Internet based, digital media commodities. Empirically it ranges from the ‘work’ of Facebook users updating statuses and posting cat videos, to rare earth miners and smartphone production line workers, who create the material tools and technologies that allow us to access social network sites. Along the way we also encounter employees in Taylorised call centres, Indian software coders, Amazon’s warehouse packers, and the digital ‘labour aristocracy’ working for Google. For Fuchs, what unites all of these varied forms of labour is that they are a ‘part of a collective work force that is required for the existence, usage and application of digital media. What defines them is not a common type of occupation, but rather the industry they contribute to and in which capital exploits them’ [4]. This range of types of work, and the attempt to theorise them as a single form of ‘digital labour’, is the main contribution of the book as a whole.

The use of the terms 'labour' and 'Karl Marx' in the title of the book indicates the theoretical perspective from which Fuchs analyses, critiques, and evaluates these forms of work. A Professor of Social Media at the University of Westminster, Fuchs' main concern is with the blind spots of contemporary media and communications theory. Drawing on the pioneering work of Dallas Smythe who argued that communication was a 'blind spot' for Marxist theory (Smythe, 1977), Fuchs aims to address Vincent Mosco's more recent claim that it is now labour that is 'the blind spot of communication and Cultural Studies' (Mosco, 2011: 230, cited on [5]). This book is particularly interesting for those of us concerned with work and organization because in addressing the blind spots of communication theory and Marxism, it offers a contemporary, critical, Marxist analysis of the digital economy, analysing the forms of exploited labour that constitute it, and considering the possibilities for an unalienated form of digital *work*, rather than alienated, capitalist *labour*. The rest of this review will first outline the main structure and content of Fuchs' analysis then outline some areas where this might be developed. The main areas for further work that Fuchs' book raises are identified as: the theory of rent and the significance of this category for understanding exploitation in the circuits of production Fuchs describes; the possibilities for resistance and alternative forms of digital work and technologies; the theorisation of the interconnections between the varied forms of labour Fuchs identifies, and his lack of engagement with writing on Global Production Networks, Commodity Chains, and the New International Division of Labour. The final section also raises some questions of methodology and the evidence mobilised to support the main arguments of the book.

### Outline of the book's structure

The structure of the book is quite straightforward, at least at first glance. After the introduction (chapter 1), Part 1 focuses on Marx's labour theory of value in order to unpack the dynamics of exploitation and alienation in the capitalist labour process (chapter 2). After a short discussion of the fate of Marxist theory in Cultural Studies in chapter 3, this is then developed through Dallas Smythe's conception of the audience commodity in chapter 4. Here Fuchs restates the analysis he has developed elsewhere (e.g. Fuchs, 2012) suggesting that users of internet platforms like Google and Facebook are actually working for these companies, so that digital labour blurs boundaries between work and life, labour and play. This is really the main focus and contribution of the book, and certainly the most empirically and theoretically developed. Part 1 ends in chapter 5 with a review of the debate over the information society, asking whether digital technologies and the internet mean we are living in a radically new political economic formation, or whether nothing has changed because it is still all

capitalism. Fuchs suggests a dialectical resolution to this debate, in which capitalism remains the central political economic system, but is not unchanged and eternal. Rather, digital capitalism has sublated earlier modes of production, and their contradictions, into new synthesis, with new modes of production and new contradictions.

Part 2 consists of six ‘case studies’ that together map the global production networks of digitally mediated communication, and the relationship between the forms of labour that produce it. Chapter 6 starts with a description of the work of ICT-related mineral extraction, uncovering the relations of production characterising ‘rare earth’ and ‘conflict’ minerals like coltan, cassiterite, wolframite, tungsten and gold. These minerals are indispensable in the production of laptops, desktops, tablets and mobile phones, without which the Internet would not exist and digital labour could not be performed. This work is concentrated in war torn, impoverished countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), utilises basic technologies such as picks and shovels, and is often performed under conditions indistinguishable from slavery, with the products of labour expropriated from miners down the barrel of a gun.

Chapter 7 moves along the commodity chain, to consider the manufacturing of digital devices like smartphones and laptops, which are made using these minerals. The focus of this chapter is on Foxconn, which became a household name in 2010 due to widespread media coverage of the 17 attempted suicides by employees in China between January and August of that year [182]. The fact that most people had not heard of Foxconn before this coverage is telling. The Taiwanese company, also called Hon Hai Precision, had over 1 million employees, most in mainland China, where its largest factory, in Shenzhen, had some 420,000 employees in 2010. In 2012 it was the 156<sup>th</sup> largest company in the world and was responsible for assembling many of the well known digital technologies, including the iPhone, iPad, iMac and Kindle, as well as gaming consoles and other smartphones [186]. In this chapter Fuchs reviews the pay and conditions of Foxconn workers, who work an average 56 hours each week, for as little as 950 CNY (Chinese Yuan Renminbi) – equivalent to approximately £95 – per month. Drawing on a range of NGO and media reports, Fuchs not only portrays the conditions of work in this industry but also connects this to the wider political and economic structures of mainland China. For example, citing a Fair Labor Association (FLA) report on Foxconn from 2012, Fuchs notes that 72.2% of respondents were migrant workers. These are often displaced, landless peasants, who have seen their land appropriated by the government as part of an agricultural industrialisation process akin to the European enclosures of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The parallels with the European experience and China are telling. The earlier enclosures created a population of workers with no other

means to sustain themselves than paid labour in industrial centres like Manchester. Similarly, the landless peasants in mainland China have no real option but to head to the industrial centres to work for companies like Foxconn where they are in no position to bargain over pay and conditions. In part this powerlessness is due to relatively low levels of unionisation, but this is reinforced by governmental practices like the hukou registration system, which prevents rural migrants from properly settling in the urban centres, and denies them access to basic public goods and services [188] (cf. Ngai, 2005). This leaves these workers particularly vulnerable to exploitative and dangerous employment practices, whilst ensuring high profits for the designers and brand owners of the goods they produce, as well as Foxconn itself.

Chapter 8 moves attention from the production of digital hardware to software, focussing on the Indian software and IT services industry. Here Fuchs again draws attention to global inequalities in what he calls the International Division of Digital Labour (IDDL) and the role of outsourcing in the global commodity chain of digital labour. In 2012, for example, the Indian software industry accounted for 7.5% of India's GDP, but only 0.6% of the Indian workforce. Of that work, approximately 75% is for the export market [202]. Whilst wages in the software industry are relatively high for India, from the perspective of those outsourcing services to India the wages are less than 10% of what US coders would cost. Indian companies have access to a large, highly qualified, college educated and very cheap labour force that can speak English [204]. In effect, this cheap labour subsidises the profits of those companies outsourcing work to India, whilst little of the benefit remains in India, constituting a neo-colonial form of domination and reinforcing uneven global development.

Chapter 9 shifts the focus to those companies where labour remains in the global North and particularly the USA and Silicon Valley. Fuchs describes these workers as the 'Google labour aristocracy', drawing attention to the fact that wages in Internet Publishing in Santa Clara County are 5.6 times the US national average (\$269,258 compared to \$48,043 in 2011) [214-216]. These employees have relatively high autonomy in their work, are well paid, and receive many perks in their employment, including free food, sports facilities, and staff lectures ('tech talks'). They thus constitute a kind of digital labour aristocracy when compared with others within the IDDL, including manufacturing workers in Silicon Valley, who experience 'hyper exploitation' in 'toxic workplaces that are highly gendered and racially structured' [220]. Even within Silicon Valley, then, there is a significant divide between the Google elite and the predominantly female, immigrant workforce in manufacturing, who are employed on poorly paid, insecure contracts. The 'toxicity' in the workplace here is not metaphorical either, with a range of illnesses resulting from the presence of chemicals like

arsenic, asbestos, lead and toluene in these workplaces [220]. Health is also an issue for the Google aristocracy, however, and their high pay and operational autonomy comes at a price. In Fuchs' account these employees suffer high levels of stress and an impossible work-life balance, working up to 130 hours a week in a corporate culture characterised by 'a lot of competitive pressure to work long hours' [225; 228].

Where chapter 9 focuses on high-end 'knowledge workers' at Google, chapter 10 draws attention to the more routinized, interactive service work of the call centre, another key node in the IDDL. As anyone with a passing knowledge of writing on call centres from the last 20 years will know, this work is predominantly 'repetitive, highly monitored and stressful' [236]. Employees are subject to intensive surveillance through technologies like automated call distribution, call monitoring, and highly visible queued-calls lists. This puts intense pressure on workers to meet both quantitative targets like number of calls answered and average length of call, and qualitative targets such as customer satisfaction and adherence to script. Again, much of this work in English speaking countries is outsourced to India due to the English language skills and low wages there [238]. The cost for workers, many of them university educated, is regular night-shift work to fit in with the main service demand windows in the USA and UK [238]. Like the low paid manufacturing workers in Silicon Valley, this work is dominated by women, a point that Fuchs picks up on in terms of understanding call-centre work as 'housewifized' [239-241], drawing attention to its parallels with traditional forms of domestic labour in the patriarchal household, for example, the poor pay and precarious conditions, but also the affective, often sexualised, nature of many of the service interactions, which require a form of emotional or affective labour. That this work is poorly paid is partly explained by recourse to patriarchal ideologies of women as being naturally 'social, caring, affective, sexual, relational and communicative' [240].

Chapter 11 presents something of a break in the book, even though it is positioned as one of the six case studies comprising Part 2. Not only it is the longest of these six chapters, it is the one where Fuchs is most clearly on home territory. Here he returns, a little repetitively in places, to the analysis from chapter 4 of social media use as a form of digital labour. This argument is clearly at the heart of Fuchs' interest and receives a much stronger empirical and theoretical treatment than the preceding 5 chapters. As in chapter 4, the main example given here is Facebook, and the argument is that 'users' of Facebook, who pay nothing to access the website, are not actually consumers at all, but rather producers. The real consumers of the Facebook product are the advertisers, who account for almost 90% of Facebook's revenue stream (Beverungen et al., 2015). What is sold to these advertisers is the attention of an

audience of prospective ‘clicks’ or ‘eyeballs’, leading to direct sales or increased brand awareness. This ‘audience’, unlike the traditional mass media, is produced by other ‘users’ posting updates, sharing links, and commenting on each others’ pages, thereby generating the media content that keeps their ‘friends’ accessing the site. Each page loaded provides another opportunity for Facebook to present this audience with advertising. Chapter 11 develops this argument, first laid out in chapter 4, to argue that whilst Marxist analyses have addressed the communicational dimensions of work, they have ‘neglected the question if communication is work’ [248] and what this means in terms of alienation and exploitation. Fuchs argues that social media users are alienated in four ways: by being coerced into using Facebook because not doing so risks social isolation; from their own experiences, which become the property of Facebook; from their data, which is the property of Facebook; and from the monetary profit generated from their data [259-260].

Whilst this four-fold alienation is objective, it is subjectively obfuscated by an inverted commodity fetishism. For Marx, commodity fetishism was the process through which markets and prices concealed the social relationships between producer and consumer that made such exchanges possible. Whilst the price renders a social relationship as if it were a mere relationship between things (money and other commodities), Fuchs’ inverted commodity fetishism makes a relationship between things appear to be a relationship between people. Although posting and liking on Facebook appears to be an autonomous reproduction of social relationships between users, this appearance conceals a class relationship. What you are really producing is a marketable commodity: yourself and your friends as an audience and source of market data that can be sold to advertisers.

In chapter 11 Fuchs further develops these ideas through a version of autonomist, or post-Operaismo Marxism, using concepts like the ‘social worker’ (Negri) and ‘social factory’ (Tronti) to challenge the orthodox, or classical Marxist position that ‘productive work can be exploited only if it passes through the circuits of wage-exploitation’ (Fleming, 2014: 103). For Fuchs it is always unpaid labour that produces surplus value, even in paid employment, where the part of the working day producing a surplus is unpaid. This argument enables him to account for exploitation in a wide range of unpaid forms of work, echoing now well-established debates over domestic and reproductive labour in feminist Marxism (e.g. Dalla-Costa and James, 1976; Fortunati, 1995; Weeks, 2011). Unlike Negri, who suggests that the increasing importance of such unpaid work renders Marx’s labour theory of value (LTV) irrelevant, Fuchs instead develops a consistent and concerted defence of the LTV, which he argues will hold for as long as capitalism exists, even if labour is unpaid and outside the formal employment relationship.

## Unpaid labour, exploitation and the emerging rentier economy

I had some conceptual concerns with this discussion of unpaid labour. In one sense Fuchs is correct and provides quotes from Marx to back up his claims about unpaid labour being the source of value, but he also performs a theoretical sleight of hand. For example, he explains that the ‘specific characteristic of capitalism is that labour-power becomes a commodity that...is compelled to work a certain share of the day without payment’ [31]. This misrepresents Marx main point about exploitation and waged labour. In chapter 19 of *Capital*, volume 1, for example, Marx is quite explicit that under capitalism there can be no such thing as productive unpaid labour per se. This is because what a labourer exchanges with an employer is their *labour power*: the potential to work.

That which comes directly face to face with the possessor of money on the market, is in fact not labour, but the labourer. What the latter sells is his labour-power. As soon as his labour actually begins, it has already ceased to belong to him; it can therefore no longer be sold by him. Labour is the substance, and the immanent measure of value, but has itself no value. (Marx, 1976: 677)

In the model of equivalent exchange that Marx uses throughout his analysis of capitalist exploitation, a worker is paid the value of their labour power, which can be calculated as the cost of reproducing that labour power for another day. Fuchs recognises this, and develops it using the ideas of Harry Cleaver to note that the actual price of labour power is the result of political struggle, for example on page 54 where he makes some excellent points concerning the importance of unpaid reproductive labour in a capitalist economy. Reproductive labour creates labour power itself and therefore creates value indirectly, by pushing down the value of labour power. In employment, however, all time is paid, and is paid at the value of labour power. This is precisely the secret of industrial capitalist value production, and takes place in the famous ‘hidden abode of production’ (cf Böhm and Land, 2012; Frazer, 2014). Labour is not ‘unpaid’ but rather political struggle determine the price, and length and intensity of exploitation, of labour power in the production process. To say that there is not an equivalence between the value produced by labour and its remuneration is not the same as saying that unpaid labour is the source of all surplus value. Rather, the difference between the value of labour power and the value it can produce is the secret of industrial capitalist value production.

This is conceptually significant as it provides the basis for Fuchs’ subsequent claims that exploitation in digital labour can be understood in the same terms whether it takes place in the formal employment relationship or not, as surplus labour is equated with unpaid labour: a conceptual elision. This also allows Fuchs to prematurely dismiss some of the more interesting ideas that have been



put forward to explain the differences between exploitation and value extraction in unpaid labour (like Facebook prosumption) and more conventional employment. Fuchs entirely dismisses the idea that the exploitation of the digital labour of social media users might be understood through the analytical lens of 'rent' for example [128-129]. Here Fuchs' main concern appears to be with dismissing those of his critics, like Caraway (2011) and Pasquinelli (2009), that use this concept, rather than taking seriously the potential in their arguments. In some respects, however, we can usefully understand the value extraction processes of digital labour in terms of rent. Marx's own analysis of rent was developed in volume 3 of *Capital*, a work that remained incomplete and was edited from his notebooks for publication by Engels, but which contains traces of relevant theory. Marx distinguishes, for example, between simple ground rent and improvements incorporated into land as '*la terre capital*' (Marx, 1981: 756). The former is effectively a tax that entitles the legal landowner to a proportion of the surplus value produced on the land. As farmers strive to improve the land through irrigation or soil improvements that will render it more productive, the more its value as a means of production is augmented. Like any value, this is the result of the labour that has been incorporated into the land as a factor of production: it is dead labour, the same as any other capital. As these improvements are inseparable from the land itself, they effectively become the property of the landowner, who can profit from them by increasing rents, to reflect the improved value of the land, or by selling it:

...this is one of the reasons why the landowner seeks to shorten the term of the lease to a minimum, as capitalist production develops - the improvements made to the land fall to the landowner as his property, as an inseparable accident of the substance, the land. When the new lease contract is concluded, the landowner adds interest on the capital incorporated into the earth to the ground-rent proper, whether he leases the land again to the farmer who made the improvements or to another farmer. His rent thus swells; or, if he plans to sell the land... its value has now risen. (Marx, 1981: 757)

If we want to understand the expropriation of value from forms of unpaid labour like Facebook, then an updated, but still Marxist, conception of rent seems to fit very well. The challenge for Google plus, and for the more radical social networks sites that Fuchs reviews in chapter 12, in trying to compete with Facebook for users is that Facebook has effectively enclosed the social network of the Internet. By achieving a critical mass of users, anyone wanting to communicate digitally with friends, needs to use Facebook. Except for a few specialist users, alternative SNSs like Diaspora [303] are caught in a trap: they are unattractive because they have only a few users, this puts off prospective users, so numbers stay small. They are relatively unproductive digital territories, in terms of social networking and communication. In contrast, Facebook is much more productive of

communicative use value, allowing users to potentially communicate with millions of people. Crucially, this also makes it more economically valuable, as advertisers get access to an enormous amount of user-generated data, and can reach a large number of even very narrowly targeted users. This increased economic productivity is the result of the dead, unpaid labour of Facebook's users, but it is captured through enclosure by digital protocols and IPR. Facebook functions like a landlord insofar as their 'labour' makes the site more productive, and they can charge advertisers a rent to access this digital territory. The more productive the site is (of clicks, eyeballs, or targeted data), the more they can charge for it, just like a landlord. In this sense, Fuchs is entirely correct that this is the direct exploitation of unpaid labour, but that is quite far from Marx's analysis of the exploitation of workers through the distinction between labour power and labour that he develops in *Capital Volume 1*.

This is not the only point where Fuchs seems more concerned with dismissing his critics, rather than developing their analyses to support his own. For example, when discussing marketing and branding, he refers to 'consumers' ideological belief in the superiority of a certain commodity [which] allows companies to achieve excess profit, a profit higher than that yielded for similar use-values' [115]. Here Fuchs resorts to a simplistic idea of ideology as obfuscation, neglecting the now substantial literature in marketing on prosumption, an idea he embraces elsewhere in the book. This would have allowed Fuchs to recognise that much of the symbolic work associated with consumption in contemporary consumer behaviour literature can also be understood as a form of productive, unpaid labour (Arvidsson, 2005; Böhm and Land, 2012). Unfortunately his evident hostility to Arvidsson [130-131], who has criticised his analysis of digital labour, means that he does not engage in dialogue with those elements of Arvidsson's analysis that would support his arguments, and even broaden their significance in understanding contemporary processes of value production and valorisation. In this respect, Peter Fleming's recent book *Resisting Work* offers a similar, but wider ranging, analysis of the significance of unpaid labour in late capitalist economic formations, using many of the same theoretical resources (Fleming, 2014).

A comparison with Fleming is also instructive for a better understanding of the possibilities for overcoming the exploitative processes around unpaid labour. Whilst Fuchs remains wedded to a dialectical understanding of capitalism and its relationship to resistance, Fleming follows autonomist writers like Harry Cleaver and Mario Tronti in insisting upon their 'inversion of the class perspective' (Cleaver, 1992) that places resistance and class-composition at the forefront of their analysis. Fuchs, in contrast, keeps his main focus on capitalist organization, thereby ceding the territory of innovation and change to capitalism and the

corporation. The result is a rather pessimistic perspective that emphasizes recuperation and alienation over the active potentialities of social creativity that a relatively autonomous social and communicative form of the general intellect puts to work. This also means that his analysis of resistance remains overly oppositional, rather than constitutive.

### **Resistance: Alternatives beyond digital labour?**

It is the final and twelfth chapter in which Fuchs considers the possibilities for resistance to digital labour. Whilst some of the discussion here is around 'working class technologies' that are structured around use values and owned and controlled by workers, the main focus is on whether Occupy can be understood a working class social movement with the revolutionary potential to overcome digital capitalism. Whilst I would have welcomed a serious discussion at this point in the book of possible alternatives to digital capitalism, the discussion in this chapter really gets bogged down in how Occupy used social media to organize opposition to capitalism. Following a quite inconsistent discussion of class (after considering a range of definitions of class early in the chapter, on page 319 'middle class' is statistically defined as 'people who have a median income'), the chapter develops a dialectical account of protest/revolution and social media use, rejecting technological determinist accounts of Occupy as well as social determinist accounts and those that just throw them both together. This position is then elaborated through an empirical description of how Occupy used various social media, in often-contradictory ways. This is, in itself, quite interesting and will be of some value to those who are interested in social movement organisation, but it offers little real development of what alternatives to capitalist digital media might look like, or how they might be developed, not least because the analysis focuses on the organization of protest, rather than more constitutive alternative economic forms.

### **Evaluating the evidence presented and theoretical framework**

Having overviewed the main arguments of the book, there are two main points that need to be made in relation to the evidence and analysis. Whilst the book is most valuable in overviewing the terrain of the IDDL and extending discussions beyond digital prosumption on Facebook, the latter remains the main focus. This pushes the other forms of digital labour into the background. It is also noteworthy that these other forms receive the least empirical treatment. There is no reason why, for example, in the chapter on call centres Fuchs does not engage with the many labour process analyses of call centre work, or the many studies of

software workers that have been conducted in organisation studies and the sociology of work. Instead evidence is mostly taken from NGOs, campaign organisations and websites. This leads to problems with the persuasiveness of the evidence supporting Fuchs' analysis. To give just two examples, Fuchs makes quite a lot of the 17 attempted suicides at Foxconn between January and August 2010. Given that the company had over 900,000 employees in China in 2010, and assuming that the rate remained the same for the rest of the year, this gives an annualised suicide rate of 23/900,000, or almost 2.6 per 100,000, actually lower than the official suicide rate in China of 6.9 per 100,000 (2012 WHO figures). Most subtle, but perhaps more telling, is the data used in analysing work and overwork at Google. Here Fuchs uses anonymous, on-line reviews of jobs, without considering the possible selection biases that such a data source might use. Indeed, throughout the book there is almost no use made of primary research on the realities of work, which really undermines the credibility and depth of the analysis.

There are also some theoretical shortcomings in the book. I have already mentioned the lack of a serious discussion of rents, but given that the book is concerned with mapping the International Division of Digital Labour, it is notable that no reference is made to other academic analyses of the International Division of Labour, for example the extensive literature on commodity chains or David Levy's (2008) exemplary work on Global Production Networks, which would significantly strengthen Fuchs' analysis here. In Levy's work, for example, much is made of the various institutions that regulate, and produce discourses on, the global division of labour, drawing upon Gramsci's idea of hegemony. This would be an invaluable addition to Fuchs' analysis, as it would further explain how the IDDL is institutionalized and reproduced (a question that is left unanswered in the book). More importantly, it could help to indicate where possible fault lines might lie within these networks.

Despite these complaints, there is much to recommend this book, not least the scale of its ambition and purview. Although much of the book focuses on prosumption, Facebook, and the Internet, the overall argument points to the many and varied forms of labour that enable these activities. If I have complained that SNS users receive a more rigorous treatment than labourers further up the Internet commodity chain, the book is invaluable in drawing attention to them, and providing the outline of a political-economic framework within which this form of collective worker can be better understood and analysed both theoretically, and for its political possibilities of class recomposition. As such, and although the book is written and framed as a contribution to communication and media studies, it has value for anyone with an interest in work, organization, international business or political economy. Several of the chapters will be

useful, stand alone resources for teaching across these areas, and the arguments concerning Facebook and digital prosumption will be useful for researchers wanting to better understand the dynamics of value production and exploitation on digital media. Finally the discussion of Occupy is important in its own right and will be useful to anyone with an interest in the role of communications and social media in the new social movements. It is an excellent corrective to the more popular discourses of technological determinism surrounding protest in the media today. Finally, the overall framework has great promise theoretically and conceptually and indicates areas where attention should be focussed both empirically and theoretically to investigate further the global production network of digital communications. In this sense the book as a whole maps out a fertile research project for Marxist studies of work and organization, as well as media and communication studies.

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## *'An injury to all'*

Thomas Swann

### review of

Ahlquist, J.S. and M. Levi (2013) *In the interest of others: Organizations and social activism*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press. (PB, pp.315, £19.95, ISBN 9780691158570)

'An Injury to One is an Injury to All'. This slogan of the Industrial Workers of the World has come to represent the claim that trade union activities should extend beyond the interests of the unions' members and to a broader 'community of fate', as John S. Alquist and Margaret Levi call it. Indeed, rather than looking at organisations in general, their book focuses on trade unions, US and Australian transport trade unions in particular. It examines the factors that allowed certain unions to act outwith their narrow remit of looking after their members' best economic interests and instead, or rather as well as (and this is an important point in Ahlquist and Levi's argument), operate with a view to broader ideas of social justice. That is, union members are motivated to view farmers in the global south, for example, as a group they, as dockworkers or truckers in the US, can and should act in the interest of. As the authors state on the first page of their book, '(w)e ask why some organizations move beyond the particular and particularized grievances that are the *raison d'être* of the organization and engage in political actions, especially those that have little or nothing to do with members' reasons for belonging' [1].

The great strength of this book comes from the rigorous and patient analysis of empirical data carried out by Ahlquist and Levi, scholars in political science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Ahlquist) and the University of Washington

and the University of Sydney (Levi). It is an extremely well-written and well-structured account which takes the reader through the authors' underlying positions, hypotheses and empirical analysis in such a way that readers like myself, who have little or no prior understanding of behavioural economics or trade union studies, can for the most part follow with relative ease. I should point out that as a one-time member of the most recent incarnation of the Industrial Workers of the World, mentioned above, I do have a political interest in trade unionism, just not an academic one. My interest in political and activist organisation more generally is the specific lens through which I read this book, and while I found much of the more economic or game theoretical analysis impossible to understand given my lack of grounding in these fields (the second chapter, for example, includes a hefty amount of equations that I am afraid I am unable to appreciate), I do not doubt the value of it within the framework the authors have chosen to work in. As I am in no position to challenge that framework and their use of specific quantitative or economic tools (I am sure a rehashing of the most basic philosophical arguments against quantifying decision making would appear as hopelessly naïve, although that is not to say that others more versed in philosophy of science and sociological methodology would not have legitimate arguments against the approach Ahlquist and Levi take), I instead want to focus here on the conclusions the authors draw in terms of a model of organisations acting, as they say, in the interest of others.

The unions studied in the book are divided across two categories: business unions and social movement unions. The former are defined as 'those whose commitments are to the welfare of members exclusively', with the latter being 'those committed to the social welfare of members and the larger society' [10]. Ahlquist and Levi consider two unions in each category: the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the International Longshore Union, in the first, and the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) (now merged with the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA)), in the second. Of the four considered, only the last, the WWF/MUA is, as the name would suggest, Australian, the other three being US unions. The contrast between the business and social movement unions is stark. In the business unions examined, not only is their focus narrow and deals only with their own members' welfare but the leaders award themselves high salaries (in some cases they were the highest paid union officials in the country) and working hand in hand with politicians, lobby groups and, in the case of the infamous Jimmy Hoffa, the mafia. It is the social movement unions, however, that are the real focus of the book. Their leaders are generally less well-paid and their extra-union affiliations are not with the political mainstream or the mob but with left-wing parties like the Communist Party. The social movement unions



discussed share stronger commitments to democratic accountability within the union as well as political activism outwith.

One of the key notions Ahlquist and Levi deploy in their analysis is 'communities of fate' and they define it early on in their study: '(t)he community of fate', they write, 'identifies those the organizational members perceive as engaged in similar struggles for similar goals. Organizational members view their welfare as bound up with that of the community' [2]. Crucially, this extension of the community from those within the organisation, i.e. those paying membership dues to the trade union, to those in similar social and economic situations, i.e. the working class – although the authors do not use this term as such, involves not only a feeling of interconnectedness between people on different sides of the planet but also shapes 'common beliefs about what action is possible for the organization and its members' [*ibid.*]. In other words, the very idea of the community of fate is bound up with the idea of being able to act as that community: it is not simply saying 'we are one' but 'we are moving as one', an idea not dissimilar to that of the Multitude in Hardt and Negri (2004). This is important in so far as it shifts the focus of the discourse of the community of fate, for its members, from a passive idea of being all subject to the same forces to a more activist understanding of resisting together. Resisting, in this case, as the authors show, means resisting the actions of employers and governments.

This definition is built around the feelings of community among members of the trade unions. Indeed, the communities under discussion are, the reader is left to believe, imaginary in the sense that the authors do not discuss whether there was or is direct contact with or actions of reciprocation on the part of the other members of the communities of fate; i.e. those the union members are acting in the interest of. The main thrust of the book, however, lies in explaining the actions of the leaders of the unions and not the actions or ideas of the members themselves. Whether unions act in the interest of others comes down to, the authors argue, whether the leadership can convince the membership to go along with their own political projects. They restate their thesis as such: 'sustained political mobilization requires an ideologically motivated founding leadership cohort who devises organizational rules that facilitate both industrial success and coordinated expectations about the leaders' political objectives' [6]. The political activism of union members is reduced in the book to 'contingent consent' with the leaders' political preferences.

This is not to say that the authors argue that the members of social movement unions do not share these preferences. They dedicate their sixth chapter to showing how and why union members develop specific political beliefs during their time in the union. But their approach does, I would suggest, privilege the

view that the organisation's goals and the leaders' goals are synonymous. While I can appreciate the empirical and perhaps theoretical difficulty in establishing the goals of an organisation irrespective of the views of the leaders (as is clear upon reading the book, pronouncements on behalf of the organisation almost always come from the leaders), the relationship between the two is certainly presented as largely uni-directional insofar as the organisation is depicted at times almost as a tool for leaders to advance specific political causes and not the other way round, with the leaders being considered spokespersons of organisations.

It may well be a feature of top-down organisations like trade unions and the historical records they keep that empirical work on events in the past precludes a research method that would include the perspective of the members. Much of the empirical analysis is based on documents held by unions or produced by leading members and includes debates and activities that took place throughout the twentieth century, so obviously ethnographic work would be impossible. The authors do draw on oral accounts from members of the unions discussed, but this focusses on preference formation and consent to leaders' demands; it fails to consider the power of members in shaping the organisational culture and goals of the union and the thesis that leaders are responding to members' demands and not the other way round. The authors touch on a number of examples where members carried out wildcat strikes (unofficial strikes not conducted in accordance with union policy) [98], otherwise opposed union leaders and got their way and came to the realization 'that they could act on their own behalf' and of the 'pleasure of agency' [169], but these are very much mentioned in passing and are not used to provide support for an alternative thesis: that union members engage politically on the basis of autonomy and are consciously aware of their power to do so. Ahlquist and Levi do point out that they 'are not arguing for "great men" or that the attributes of a few individuals are sufficient for explaining all our outcome of interest' [25], but while they may be at pains to avoid such an approach, their analysis does tend to lean toward this.

Another interesting discussion the research in the book brings up is the role of information and communication in the organisational structure of trade unions. Ahlquist and Levi write that in the case of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, for example, the leaders 'have always engaged in considerable communication with the rank and file, using newspapers and meetings for purposes of both information transmittal and stimulus to action' [136]. Communication plays, therefore, two roles within the organisation: firstly, it keeps members informed of what is happening and, secondly and as a result of the first, it stimulates them to political action. While the authors do not make this point explicitly it is clear from their research that communication has a key role in creating the possibilities for action. They do, for example, say that leadership

in social movement unions encourage worker education and 'labor schools' 'in order to improve the capacity of members to organize and act strategically in their own interests but also as a way to influence how members come to think about what they should and can do about the larger world in which they live' [137]. This deserves further discussion.

On the one hand, what the authors seem to be suggesting is that education and media are used to help form the preferences and beliefs of the members of the organisation. This is in line with their general argument that the members of the organisation largely follow the political plans of leaders who have provided for them materially. The leaders in this case provide the strategic worldview necessary for allowing the members to form the preferences desired of them. For example, Harry Bridges, the leader of the ILWU for some forty years, had a column in the union's newspaper in which he 'offered his perspectives on causes on which he felt the ILWU should act' [137]. This is supported in the sixth chapter based on accounts from members [e.g. 168].

On the other hand, the spread of information and the use of communication might also suggest a more autonomous account of political action within the unions, with member's being educated, and self-educated, with the effect of increasing their own ability to shape the union's political activism. While much of the research contained in the book may preclude support for such a thesis, as discussed above, there are hints in the accounts from members towards this. For example, for all their effort to show that communication and information come from the leadership, Ahlquist and Levi do include mention of self-education on the part of the workers and that '(m)uch of what they reported learning was communicated in [...] dense, close groups of co-workers' [176]. They quote one retired member of the Waterside Workers Federation as saying that '[working in the holds with other unionists] was like being at school everyday. School on the waterside' [*ibid.*].

This could well suggest a cybernetic account of the political action that took place: i.e. that the information provided not only by the leadership but by networks of members allowed for the formation of preferences and shaping of political actions in an autonomous way. Indeed, one could even suggest, in line with the work of Stafford Beer (e.g. 1974) on organisational cybernetics, that an organisation requires the autonomous participation of its members and that explanations that rely on a centralised and top-down account miss this crucial aspect in their analysis. Without a broader range of data than is included in the book it is impossible to provide sufficient evidence for this alternative thesis, but the mentions of autonomous political action and education and information

sharing do suggest that the alternative is at least worth considering in the case of the unions discussed.

An interesting avenue for research on contemporary union activism along the lines of the latter thesis would be to examine the role of social media in facilitating this type of autonomy on the part of union members. While Ahlquist and Levi do mention the use of YouTube by the Maritime Union of Australia's film unit in providing educational resources for members [138], this is still within a one-to-many model of communication and not the many-to-many model offered by social media (Swann, 2014). Recent examples of trade unions using social media include the Hotel Workers Rising union in the US which offers an iPhone app that allows customers to choose a hotel that employs union labour (see: [www.hotelworkersrising.org/hotelguide](http://www.hotelworkersrising.org/hotelguide)). A more many-to-many example is the Stop and Frisk iPhone and Android app from the New York Civil Liberties Union (not a trade union, granted) which allows witnesses of stop and frisk actions by the police to send details which will then be recorded by the NYCLU while also being transmitted to members of local communities to warn them that a stop and frisk action is taking place in the neighbourhood (see: [www.nyclu.org/app](http://www.nyclu.org/app)). A similar example is the Greek website and app that maps strikes and other union actions (see: [www.apergia.gr](http://www.apergia.gr)).

That Ahlquist and Levi do not engage with contemporary happenings around social media is of course not a problem given that their book aims at a historical study of social movement unions, but the focus on top-down leadership and communication structures and the assumption of rather unengaged followership on the part of union members is a shame. The several examples they touch on of autonomous action by union members suggest that an alternative to their thesis is realistic and should be studied. This is perhaps all the more pertinent given the shift that can be seen from a hierarchical model of political organisation to a more horizontal and networked form over the last few decades. Examining union activism from the perspective of autonomous, networked arrangements of politically active and engaged workers (again the notion of the Multitude is important here, as is the work of social movement theorists such as Maeckelbergh (2009) and Feigenbaum et al. (2013)) could perhaps provide a more important lesson for contemporary social movements in terms of preference forming and reinforcement, consistent and long-term commitment to political goals and successful education and communication strategies. Ahlquist and Levi's book is, however, clearly a very impressive piece of research and, while I cannot comment on this with a view to its intended field, contains a great deal of insights that are of key interest to those working on political organisation in general and social movements and activism more specifically.

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