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Double Issue

*Special Issue on **Organizing Transitional Space** • Guest Editors: **Monika Kostera & Jerzy Kociatkiewicz***

*Special Issue on **Aesthetics and Ethics** • Guest Editors: **Steven S. Taylor & Michael B. Elmes***

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The times, they are a-changin'. From this issue of Tamara onwards I am taking over the responsibilities of the editor-in-chief from David Boje.

Huh, it already sounds as mission impossible!

David has the caliber, international standing, and personal charisma, that are impossible to match, and there is no sense in trying. Fortunately enough, David remains as the founding editor and, hopefully, his advice, support, and influence will still help Tamara develop and grow. This means that I will be able to focus on the more mundane issues of journal management and its everyday running. I am grateful for this opportunity and consider it a great privilege.

So, what are the plans now for Tamara? Well, I certainly do not plan a revolution. As you have probably noticed in the previous issue already (the first one typeset by the new team) we have decided to give Tamara a bit of a new look and feel. Please, let us know what you think of it, by writing to @@@

Also, Tamara has a new website (check it out at tamarajournal.com), with a brand new electronic submission system – it should make the life of authors, reviewers and editors a bit easier and, hopefully, make the whole review process quicker and more convenient.

The plan for the coming year is to increase Tamara's recognition and making it a journal of the first choice for submissions for an even larger number of scholars. We also hope to reach out to wider CMS community and definitely extend a warm welcome to all prospective reviewers and authors – please, join us and help us keep Tamara an interesting project!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Associate Editors and other Editorial Board members, reviewers, authors, and readers, for their continued support. I do hope Tamara can still count and rely on you in its journey to become one of the leading critical organization inquiry academic journals. While I am a little bit reluctant to consider journal impact and value rankings as the objective measure of academic merit (for reasons often discussed both in critical management studies and mainstream publications), I am certain of one thing: Tamara should be a journal of high scholarly quality. Tamara wants to publish articles which are thoughtful, provocative, challenging the established notions and concepts, but always meeting the rigorous criteria of academic excellence.

Finally, I would like to welcome my colleagues from CROW (Center for Research on Organizations and Workplaces), affiliated to Kozminski University, Pawel Krzyworzeka and Kaja Prystupa, who agreed to join the editorial team in the roles of Assistant Editors. Without their strenuous efforts and hard work publishing Tamara would not be possible at all.

Dariusz Jemielniak, Editor-in-Chief

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Transitional Space

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Special Issue on Organizing Transitional Space
Editorial paper

Though I had lived by the shore all my life, I seemed never to have been near the sea till then. The smell of tar and salt was something new. I saw the most wonderful figure-heads, that had all been far over the ocean. I saw, besides, many old sailors, with rings in their ears, and whiskers curled in ringlets, and tarry pig-tails, and their swaggering, clumsy sea-walk; and if I had seen as many kings or archbishops I could not have been more delighted (Stevenson 1883/1994, p. 46)

The above passage describes the beauty and wonder of the port city of Bristol, as encountered for the first time by the protagonist of that most famous adventure novel, *Treasure Island*. Bristol of the novel bridges the ordered space of landlocked existence and the lawless and dangerous life of the sea. It witnesses the young hero's transformation from a timid boy into an eager adventurer. But it is also a transitional space in a wider context, linking the success story of British shipbuilding industry and the darker narrative of Atlantic slave trade.

Liminality is the state betwixt and between more stable states and realities. In anthropology authors such as Arnold von Gennep (1909/1960), Erving Goffman (1959), and Victor Turner (1974) have described liminality as a transitory stage in rituals, especially in rites of passage (Turner, 1969). It is conceived of as a state of blurred boundaries, a mode where the usual constraints of normality, common sense, and cultural definitions do not apply, where norms are relaxed and there is a particular openness to experimentation and the creation of a sense of community. During the liminal phase there develops a special bond between those who go through it together, known as *communitas* – based on humanity and disregarding of structures and hierarchies of the outside culture.

Liminality need not be regarded as a purely temporal feature. Marc Augé (1995) drew attention to the areas “*which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity*” (p. 78), abundant in our contemporary societies: airport lounges, routes of commuting, shopping centres. He calls them non-places, but their defining characteristic is precisely their transitionality: non-places lack sufficient connection with wider meanings in our lives to be considered significant, yet constitute a vital link between better delineated contexts. Seemingly insignificant and thus mostly hidden in plain sight, these empty spaces (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 1997) allow for, or even force the shifting of roles and identities necessitated by moving from one setting to another.

Indeed, we see transitional space as the physical archetype of liminality: the space waiting for liminality to happen, or else, just the undefined, indefinite space that allows for many interpretations and uses. It may also be a space reclaimed by the underdogs, or forgotten by management and reconstructed by the organization's participants as a cultural sanctuary or symbolic retreat.

This special issue of the *Tamara Journal of Critical Organization Inquiry* is dedicated to transitional space as a concept used in organization studies. It is a fairly new area of interest and so the articles presented in this issue are few, but all are interesting and innovative. The ways in which they use the concept of transitional space points, in our opinion, to several of its potentially valuable characteristics, sketching a framework for future use and development of a promising area of research.

Frederic Bill and Lena Olaison utilize the idea of transitional space to describe antiquarian bookshops as places bridging contexts of business activity and propagation of culture. Neither of these two discourses is obviously dominant, and thus the space of the bookshop must allow for constant transition and translation between contexts. The resulting liminal space forms the setting for a special instance of the gift-giving process, where commodities are transformed into gifts. The debt accruing from such exchanges is not directed towards the human participants of the process but to the book itself, allowing the sidestepping of the economic context of bookselling. Bill and Olaison use the idea of liminality and transitional space to make visible the framing of this process, which gives the interactions between the "buyer" and "seller" a meaning not obvious in the traditional interpretations utilizing the market or transaction metaphors.

Rina Arya presents the company awayday: a setting in which participants similarly struggle to distance themselves from the business context while simultaneously maintaining connections to the everyday functioning of the organization. The awayday is a potential transitional space, betwixt and between everyday and holiday, employee and management perspective. This kind of space allows for combinations of feelings and interactions with a great potential for exploration and reflection, such as a reconfiguration of identities and roles, as well as some carnivalesque features in the Bakhtinian (1941) sense, that is, consumption of the extraordinary to re-embrace order. The interplay between structure and irregularity opens up a potential for a re-thinking of identity and boundaries, embedded into social and cultural processes. The awayday can be thus seen as transitional space par excellence, offering the possibility, yet never a guarantee, of a change in context, a platform for collective innovation.

Agnieszka Postuła and Igor Postuła present a study following another change of context: a restructuring of a company set against the ongoing drive for privatization of the Polish economy. Restructuring of a Polish state-owned enterprise (SOE) is typically regarded as a legal and managerial process. The concept of transitional space, however, allows the foregrounding of collective sensemaking processes and the multipartite attempts to redefine the changing organization in the changing environment. Looking upon these processes from an anthropological point of view, and revealing their temporal and spatial context as a transitional space, sheds light on the motives of the participating stakeholders. The authors argue that it is the ambiguity and liminality of the transformation that allowed the organization to pull back from bankruptcy, and posit the crucial importance of liminal spaces for organizational renewal.

Finally, Wendelin Küpers article explores the liminal aspects of leader- and followership. Presenting work as a necessarily liminal activity, bridging disparate contexts and ambiguous relations, the author draws upon the phenomenological notion of embodiment to situate this liminality not just in the interpersonal relations, but also in the spatial settings of organizations. The latter are seen as non-places of incomplete identity, necessitating constant active involvement of all participants in the construction of ever dissipative organizational reality. Adopting the lens of liminality and regarding the structuring dynamics as taking place in a transitional space, enables the author also to bring to light the transformative power of the emotional dimensions of leader-follower interaction, without losing any of its ambivalence or ambiguity.

The articles in this special issue show an emerging, interesting area of research in organization studies. Transitional space can be understood as a spatial/ temporal context enabling embodiment of liminal ideas, roles and propositions. It is a space with considerable transformative and innovative potential, such as pointing to emotional resources, in their original, non-managed form, containing ambivalence and ambiguities. Its taking into consideration may also reveal some poorly understood aspects of interactions, such as re-presenting the buyer-antiquarian interaction as a gift giving process. It may serve as an alternative to several metaphors, such as: marketplace, social and legal structure, and other adapted to portraying dynamic organizational aspects, under transitional conditions, temporary or permanent. It may be used in the presentation, conceptualization, and dynamic analysis of phenomena ranging from existing interactions in organizations, to directions for future development. One of the most promising characteristics of the concept is that transitional space provides a source for change and renewal that is aligned with actual cultural dynamics (based on the phenomenon of liminality), springing from within the organization, and thus not being another managerialist, top-down controlled tool for forcing change upon the organization. It can, for example, be used to explore possibilities for creative change that are available to self-managing and anarchic organizations (such as those advocated by Shukaitis, 2009) . We are looking forward to a development of this exciting area of inquiry.

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Limits of the gift: Exploring interaction in Antiquarian Bookshops

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Keywords

Abstract

This article is based on an ongoing organisational ethnography of antiquarian bookshops. It argues that studying the exchange of antiquarian books offers new insight on the phenomena of gift-giving. First, the general tendency in the literature on gifts (i.e. Bourdieu and Derrida) is how gifts are commoditized, while in the antiquarian bookshop it makes more sense to consider how commodities are transformed into gifts. Second, the literature on gifts argues that actual gifts are either impossible or at least undecidable since they cause the receiver to be indebted to the giver, and a separation in time is necessary either to evaluate the gift or to make it possible. However, in the antiquarian bookshop this situation is different since such a debt is directed towards the book rather than the giver. The receiver is indeed indebted but the debt takes the form of a responsibility to care for the book. In analysing our material, we argue that every meeting between antiquarian and bookshop visitor results in liminal ceremonies that produce a space (what we, adopted from Lefebvre, call a representational space) for their interaction. Such analysis suggests that the interactions are taking place somewhere on a continuum of spaces stretching from commodity to gift. The role of the antiquarian thus stretches from seller to giver, the visitor, from buyer to receiver, and the bookshop, from shop to collection.

Introduction

One day a man walked into my shop, he was dressed in suit and tie. I immediately recognized him as one of my favourite customers, no big spender, but with a taste in fiction close to my own, and always with a kind word. In his early seventies - a retired physician - he was normally accompanied by his wife,

but today he was on his own, and I straight away noticed that something was wrong; the man didn't look well, far from it!

Normally a very discreet man, only discussing literature, he now started talking about his childhood. There was something desperate about the way he spoke, like he needed to share these memories, and was pressed for time. While I listened to his anecdotes, I realised that I would never see him again!

When he finished, he smiled - I think he felt a little embarrassed - then he nodded, and bid me farewell. When he left I noticed that he used a cane. Sure enough, two weeks later, this quiet man was dead - cancer of the lungs! His wife - now a widow - called me, and wanted me to go through his books, and I agreed.

This happened more than five years ago, but I can still remember that day, when I went through his books - many of them bought in my shop - a very sad day!

This short story was written by an antiquarian that we met while doing ethnography on antiquarian bookshops. We quickly found the conduct of their owners and visitors to defy the conventional logic of business. Interactions that would elsewhere be straightforward and businesslike here often failed to make sense. We wondered why and found an answer in the conception of antiquarian bookshops as sites of what van Gennep (1909/1960) called *rite de passage*, and more specifically transitional rites or liminal rites, as developed by Turner (1974). Our analysis suggests that the activities in such places are situated on a continuum from shop to collection. The role of the antiquarian thus stretches from seller to giver, the visitor, from buyer to receiver, and the book, from commodity to gift. For this transformation to happen, there must be a connection between the three (the book, the antiquarian and the visitor). This connection is created through ceremonies.

To see this, we must augment Turner's liminal ceremonies with Lefebvre's work on space (1974/1991). The notions of 'spatial practises' and 'representations of space' capture in a very general sense what takes place in the liminal ceremonies. Lefebvre would call the outcome of these liminal ceremonies 'representational space' and we use these three concepts together analyse the space of the antiquarian bookshop as something that is both lived and created.

From an anthropological perspective (e.g. Malinowski, 1920, Mauss, 1925 and later Levi-Strauss, 1958), gift-giving is a form of exchange that to some extent operates outside a regular product-monetary exchange. Bourdieu (1997) emphasises time as the crucial factor in perceiving a gift as a gift and argues that for something to be a gift the acts of giving and receiving must be forgotten. Derrida (1992) agrees in principle with this need for forgetting but explores further giving as a paradox. The acts of giving and receiving are fluid and since it is impossible to know whether the gift will be nullified by a return gift of equal or greater value at some future time. Gifts are therefore according to Derrida always necessarily undecidable. The undecidability and in-betweenness of gift-giving have since been explored by other researchers, but normally as a feature of historical or so-called primitive societies (e.g. Malinowski, 1920, Mauss, 1925 and later Levi-Strauss, 1958), rather than as an integral part of contemporary life. Due to this empirical orientation, those analyses focus on gift-giving and stress the possible commoditization of gifts as a means of including them into an economic model. We will on the other hand demonstrate that commodities can be morphed into gifts as well. That is, in the case of antiquarian bookshops, a commodity (a book) can be completely or partially transformed into a gift.

Our thesis in this paper is that it is the production of certain spaces that makes gift-giving possible (or impossible) in antiquarian bookshops, not a separation in time as argued by Bourdieu and Derrida in more traditional cases of gift-giving. Through this transformation, a responsibility (debt) is transferred to the receiver, but the responsibility is to the object rather than the giver. The undecidability and possibility of gift-giving are in this case collectively constructed in each encounter, rather than evaluated by the actions and intentions in retrospection. Thus, the antiquarian seeks an answer to the question of whether the customer will be capable and willing to care for the book while the customer seeks an answer to questions of what will be required for the antiquarian to relinquish control of the object.

Field account: The antiquarian bookshop

We started our fieldwork with observations complemented with interviews, a rather classical design for organisational ethnography (e.g. Kostera, 2007). Our experiences during the fieldwork made us widen the search for narratives, such as public stories (e.g. web pages), personal stories (interviews), and we also started to collect fictive stories – stories written by the antiquarians themselves – like the story introducing this paper. Based on the method of narrative collage (Kostera, 2005), we wrote the first sentence, and then we asked the antiquarians to finalize the story.

Following Czarniawska (2004), we believe that narratives represent not only events but also modes of knowledge. Thus, they are means not only of description and communication but also manifestations of the enactment of social life. The antiquarians have repeatedly emphasised the importance of spending time and being part of the everyday life “as an antiquarian bookshop has an atmosphere that can be felt”. In the spirit of that account, the antiquarian bookshop that the reader is about to spend some time in is a fictional one, made up as an amalgam of the antiquarian bookshops that are part of our ongoing organisational ethnography. All the described events have happened, and all the quotes are taken from interviews, web pages, newspaper articles, and other kind of texts that we have collected during the study. The section is written as if we were walking around in the antiquarian bookshop together. We will point out things that we find particularly interesting; we will observe interactions between the antiquarian and his visitors; read newspaper articles; we will tell you a few anecdotes from our study; and we will also to ask the antiquarian a few questions. It is our intention that some of these manifestations of an antiquarian bookshop will be experienced through the story.

Before we go into the antiquarian bookshop, we pause outside for a while in order to look at the books in the shop-window. It is our understanding, however, that experienced visitors don't bother to do this before they enter an antiquarian bookshop as they already know what they are looking for (and they certainly won't find it in the shop window), but we will start here nevertheless. At a first glance it seems unorganized does it not? You find a little bit of everything, without any particular order or hierarchy. But lean closer to the window, look at each volume – what do you see? Often, as is also the case here, you discover that the window is mirroring the present-day – these days often TV-shows. Look, there are books on gardening, climate change, home styling, and, of course, some Ian Flemming and a couple of (well known and fairly light) classics. As an antiquarian bookshop is, almost without exception, specialised in one or two fields, those might be represented as well. It's not really necessary though – collectors know very well which bookshop to go to, they are often part of networks and circulation lists of various kinds, and the antiquarians also recommend each other to their visitors.

Without further ado, let's go inside. Antiquarian bookshops usually have several sections that are separated from each other; most of them also have several small rooms. Even if the premise where the antiquarian bookshop is housed only offers one physical room, the place will be structured in such a way, making use of bookshelves and other material, that several spaces are created and, not the least, experienced. Some of the spaces are public, some private, and some are somewhere in-between. There will also be several hidden or secret spaces that not all visitors can get access to.

In our antiquarian bookshop, the outer room, located closest to the street and thus the entrance, is looked after diligently. From the door you see the counter straight ahead. Walking towards it, you have factual literature on display (i.e. what this antiquarian is specialised on) on your right side, and there's only one row of books there. On your left side, you find some fiction (i.e. books to read) and you can see several rows behind it. Before we walk up to the counter, however, and meet the antiquarian himself (yes, we have so far in this study only met male ones) – we will linger in this first room with its several sections somewhat more.

We turn left, passing alongside the window and walk to the last row of books. From here we can work our way, row by row, until we hit the counter again. Here we find philosophy and, to our surprise, when we turn into a new row, an impressive collection of children's literature. Don't move too fast! Take the time to read the small signs that can be found all over the shop, on the bookshelves, on the walls or any other free space. Here's one that is informing the visitors that mobile phones should kindly not be used; the next one is about the current movements in the “city-struggle”; and further down the aisle there are also a few intriguing newspaper articles regarding second-hand bookshops. Look at this one; it's a piece on how antiquarians describe themselves online. The web page is where the antiquarian communicates to other antiquarians and book collectors. Because, as said, the shop-window is meant for costumers that buy books to read, and not intended for book collectors looking for a certain item. This orientation actually shows in the text presented on the web pages of various antiquarian bookshops. They differ from the shop windows by stressing books as collector items as well as the professional skill of the antiquarians. The Ian Flemming books from the shop window are nowhere to be seen. Consider the following quotes:

It was a lovely shop! High ceiling and jammed with books all the way up to the gypsum stucco. The counter was covered of bundles of books, primarily recalled or limited editions, and in one side of the counter there were a place for cover paper and straps, i.e. pre-modern plastic bag.

Being involved with books is for us a profession as well as a hobby.

I would like to describe the Antiquarian bookshop as a typical Swedish antiquarian book shop; a well organized shop with a wide and varied range. There is a lot of Swedish topography, and the shelves with the finest selection are behind the counter. After pondering around among the shelves most of visitors

should be able to find something suitable. The prices are not that discouraging. The enthusiast can most likely find a bargain or two within their specific domain.

Let's move on to a better position in order to observe a few interactions between the antiquarian and his visitors, but don't miss the poster, on the bookshelf over there, closer to the counter, all the antiquarian bookshops of the town are listed there. And on the counter there you should find folders with addresses and special areas of the antiquarians in the network. If you can't find it, ask him, it's there somewhere, perhaps he has forgotten to refill it, that's all. But let's stay here, behind the shelf for a while, or perhaps, if you find that more appealing, move on to the section of books on history. You see, when we entered the shop two middle-aged men entered together with us, and they have been lingering in the first, or outer, room, just like us. One of them now asks the shop manager if he has a book by Strindberg that he has been looking for. He does, and the man buys it. A short while later, the other customer first walks towards the inner room then suddenly leaves the shop without talking to the antiquarian, who looks a bit annoyed.

Now an old man enters the shop. Let's have a look at the section with Swedish poetry while they talk. The antiquarian says "I brought the book for you" and leaves the shop through the main entrance. The man stands next to the counter desk, waiting, impatiently. The antiquarian returns with a large book in his hand but, even before the antiquarian has closed the door, the man says "no, it's not the one" with disappointment in his voice. They talk for almost 20 minutes about the book that the man is looking for. It turns out that when the man was young a journalist interviewed him, and the interview appears in the book – a book about the local town. He has never seen the final result and has now been looking for the book for 20 years. After long consultations, the antiquarian takes some notes and the man leaves.

An elderly woman enters the shop; she goes straight to the counter with three books in her hand (they must be from the book boxes standing outside the shop). Listen! She tries to haggle over the price (three for the price of two, she says), but she has no luck - the antiquarian is adamant. She tries once more, gives up, decides to buy two books, and leaves the shop. A bit annoyed. And so is the antiquarian.

As she leaves, an old man enters, with two books in his hands. The antiquarian says to him: "just one of these is 5 SEK. The other one is 20 SEK, so perhaps you would prefer to choose another one". Without any more words he offers the man his chair, reaches after a pile of post cards that he keeps under the counter, and gives them to the old man who is now seated in the chair. The man sits down on the chair and starts to study the postcards very carefully.

Apart from the old man studying post cards, the shop is empty. This is our chance to ask a few questions. We have been here many times before, and he knows why we are here today. That's the reason why we have been able to sneak about here for so long without any interaction with him. He likes that we are here, observing. Through our observations we have gotten to know the story of the old man who is studying post cards over there. He comes in almost every day, he looks briefly at the books, often in the book boxes outside, and then he tries to buy one or two. His main interest is not books, however; he is a collector of post cards. Especially post cards with rail station houses from Sweden. In his hands right now he has a few newly arrived ones, but he probably won't find anything new today either. It gives him pleasure to go through them, and that's what this is mostly about anyway – spending some time in the bookshop. Since the antiquarian knows that he does not have a lot of money, he tries to help him a bit with what he buys. Most days the man just buys a book for the pleasure of carrying it home, and the antiquarian figures that in those cases it might as well be one from the book box, since they are just 5 SEK apiece.

Let's think about the book boxes and the woman who tried to haggle over the price. Prices are normally something to be negotiated, but not for the books in the boxes outside. The costumers like book boxes because of the sense of 'searching for lost treasures' as the antiquarian would say. In order to make the costumers take the step from the book box to the shelves, he tries to have something interesting there all the time. Mainly, however, he puts books there that do not really belong in an antiquarian bookshop or books that have been difficult to sell. This 'may-fly literature' often comes as part of the package when the antiquarian buys book collections from relatives to deceased persons. Those books wear him out and he takes a loss on them books regardless. He used to procure all the books he was offered but nowadays he is more selective, even if it saddens him to turn the hopeful relatives away when they bring the books of their loved ones. He often emphasises that an antiquarian has to be very cautious regarding the quality of the books he offers; there cannot be any tarnished or worn down books, every tome is selected carefully because of its general character and finish. This extends also to some degree into the content of the books. He often speaks of "love for the book", and we should let him explain what that is:

It is the passion and love..... it is.... You have to be... Okay, that he [points towards a shelf with modern literature] I don't like. But I think.... Well, love is perhaps not the right word. But look [he picks up a old volume from a shelf] I think this book is wonderful to hold in my hand. You have to love... I like to

hold this. Beautiful books like this you see [hands the book to us], it is from 1801, it is in Spanish. Perhaps love is not the right word. But I am fascinated by the books. It is the knowledge that the books keep. And the image you get when you read them. You can't get that from anything else. That is fascinating. You can tell me something, but that is not preserved. But in a book it is. You can open it again and again. If you tell me something I might forget it. But a book doesn't.

He turns and looks at the books that he keeps behind the counter, and continues:

Once, when I had invited my colleague [another antiquarian] to my house, he offered me a large amount of money for three of my bookshelves. It was enough money to buy a really nice car. He said 'you will have the money on your account on Monday morning'. But I just laughed at him. I mean, he was serious, he wanted that collection. But I said no. That is how much I love books: I love my books more than money.

During our conversation, a woman has entered the shop, and she walks up to the old man who is looking at the postcards. He has been here for over 20 minutes by now. "It's time to go" she says. The woman is a care taker; here to take the man home. The old man gives the antiquarian 5 SEK for the book he brought in from the bookshop and then he leaves together with the woman.

A man in working attire enters the bookshop as they leave. The antiquarian greets him quite loudly, they exchange some phrases about the every day life in a small town; an estate – rather spectacular I understand – has been sold, and another neighbour has started a renovation project which – according the two men – seems to be a bit out of their league. Then the man dodges in behind a shelf and we will not hear from him again for over an hour.

A man enters, perhaps 35 years old. He greets the antiquarian, quietly asks him something, then disappears into the inner room. Let's follow him there. You know, we have been here for almost an hour now, and he's the first one to go there.

In the inner room, the raw rows of shelves stretch from floor to ceiling and are considerably dustier than in the first room. Here we find specialised subjects, like this column – with Spanish linguistics, or look at the one to your left – with biology, gardening, plants generally and a few odd books on organisms. Or here, why not these old and yellowish books on book collection and book care taking. When we reach the deepest reaches of the shop, dusty old tomes, wrecked books and piles of yellowing whitepapers on homemade bookshelves from floor to roof surround us. It is silent – not even the man we followed in here reaches this far during his 30 minutes in here – the books are semi-ordered and give a rather haphazard impression, there are also some old catalogues and even some pieces of broken furniture. The innermost corner is separated from the rest of the room by a broom, an old and tarnished leather band and the remains of a broken reading chair. Despite this, the secluded space is clearly different, primarily through being considerably messier. Let's dwell here for a while, absorbing the atmosphere of tranquillity in this dusty room where no other clients will venture during our observation.

Now an old man enters – let's see what he wants. He asks, cautiously but with anticipation, for a bibliography on a local poet. "I look for NN. I have been at the NN-house and you have a street named NN-street. So if I am to find this book somewhere, I thought it had to be in this city." The antiquarian answers: "I know which book you mean but I do not have it." The old man counters, now with disappointment in his eyes: "You could only find it in second-hand bookshops?" and the manager answers: "Yes". The old man can do nothing but leave the shop as the antiquarian glares after him.

The man we followed to the inner room appears again. He goes straight to the counter with a book in his hand. Keyed up, holding the book in front of the antiquarian, he excitedly starts to talk about the book – the book was his favourite book as a child – and then leaves the book on the counter while asking for some other books. The antiquarian makes some notes, because he does not have them at the moment, but he will do his best to find them for him. The antiquarian asks where the man is from and what his profession is, and tells him that he is welcome back any time. The man leaves the shop without buying anything.

Now the man in working attire appears behind the shelves, his arms are jammed with books about aquariums – he tells the antiquarian that he is about to start one. The antiquarian says that he has some newly arrived books that should complement the man's book collection on gardening, but the man answers "not today", pays for the books on aquariums, leaves and then an elderly man with a plastic bag full of empty bottles enters the shop. He quickly moves around the shop and then exits, without interacting with anybody.

Before we leave, let's ask the antiquarian about why he became an antiquarian and about his relationship to books. "Wait", says the antiquarian, with his eyes on an older well-dressed man that has just entered the shop. "This is one of my favourite costumers," he whispers, "he is a genuine and knowledgeable book collector and he comes to the shop at least two times a week." The antiquarian returns a greeting, leaving his position behind the counter and starts to show the man some new books. Then he leaves him to his own searches and walks back to us:

Yes, I spent a lot of time in Paris in 67, 68 and 69, the important years there, and I had a strong interest in film and during that time literature on directors, film and such was very scarce. So it started with private collecting. And then I came into contact with some people who would meet and bartered books with each other. Suddenly one had doubles and the own book collection grow. Because I was a librarian, there was no Internet in those days, colleagues from other libraries asked me: could not you, who are an antiquarian, acquire a certain book. And thus one became more and more of a link and this caused the dilemma that since the buyer was a library, they required an invoice – creating a need to have a business. ... And then I really had to make a choice, what am I entering? One had heard a lot about bookkeeping and everything and that was not what I wanted to do. It was the books, I wanted to mediate books. It was not like if I experienced any wish to start a company. It was on the contrary very problematic, I am a man of the sixties and, I finished school in the sixties, you know, the border between the private and the public and as a librarian I belonged to the public then, the public sector and you know the businessmen, how lowly they stood. So it took me many, many years to get over that.

Apart from the books – to mediate books, as he puts it himself – the people receiving the books are important:

Then there are all the people that come to me. All different kinds of people that I meet. That is amazing. Sometimes in the car, in the morning, I ponder over ‘will someone come today’ and ‘what will happen today’. You never know who you will meet. In this business extraordinary things happens all the time. Just in one day. I have always liked to meet people. I think that is one of the great joys in life to be able to do that. To see each other to meet people. I would not be able to go on of it were not for all good relations I have.

This might seem a little bit weird, since we have seen that he does not always pay attention to every visitor, and some of them even seem to bother him with their presence. One gets the impression, in any case, that the seller/buyer relation is somewhat unique in this case, especially when the interaction is a positive one, since the transaction is held together by the common interest of the parties. It not so much about ‘finding’ customers as it is about finding solutions that will make possible the transfer that is actually wished for by both parties. As an example, the first time we were here, the antiquarian did several things to get to know us, or to test our interest in books. While the antiquarian was talking to a costumer, we found an interesting bookshelf, and we started to study the books a bit more carefully. Suddenly the antiquarian, who had apparently been following our movements said, “It’s going to be interesting to see what books you choose, there are a few books there I’m really found of.”

We selected a few books and brought them to him. He picked up one book, looked at us for a while and then he showed us a few books that he kept under the counter. He explained that he had brought these books from his home, they were for a costumer that collects books for his son, but if we wanted to, and if we would find any of the books interesting, we could choose some of them. He then went over them, one by one, pointed out the publication year, or something else that was particularly interesting for him, while he asked us questions about the author, about a few concepts in the books and the like. At the end of the day we had six books that we wanted to buy: three from his private collection, two non-fiction books from the bookshelves and a trilogy from a classic Finnish author. He looked a bit worried, picking up the books, one by one, talking for himself (or to the books), saying things like “what do we have here”; “what shall we do with this” and so forth, and then he looked at us and said a price that is less than half the price of what the books are altogether, and he said “what do you think, can we live with this”.

This is enough for today, let’s leave the antiquarian to his business. The man who the antiquarian has a lot of respect for, wants his attention. He has found a book of fairy tales. A first edition. He pays for and then, after exchanging some more pleasantries, he leaves the shop. So do we.

The liminal space of the gift

The literature on the concept of gift is extensive. It stretches from some of the seminal works of anthropology e.g. Malinowski (1920), Mauss (1925), Levi-Strauss (1958); over sociologists like Bourdieu; to philosophers like Derrida.

Inspired by observations on traditional loans of livestock by Kabyl peasants, where the lender felt an obligation to the borrower because the later cared for the animal during the loan, Bourdieu (2005) argues that the basis of our economic model is in essence an ahistorical vision of singular exchanges. Continuing to explore this responsibility, as West (1996) points out, a bond was created between the giver and the receiver: “although the recipient becomes responsible for his own obligations, there is no corresponding loss of responsibility on the part of the giver. If anything, the giver becomes still more implicated in the predicament of the receiver” (West, 1996, p. 11), indicated a collective responsibility for the object, incomprehensible from a

purely economic point of view. Bourdieu (2000) investigated gift-giving as a part of a more general social system, which facilitated the accumulation of symbolic rather than financial capital, and the creation of long-term resilient relationships.

Such relationships were already a feature of the Kula-system that Malinowski (1920) described based on his observations during fieldwork in the Trobriand Archipelago. This system of interlinked ceremonial exchanges “based primarily upon the circulation of two articles of high value, but of no real use” (Malinowski, 1920, p. 97) co-existed with a parallel system of barter that in turn was based on the social relations formed by the Kula-system.

Based on Malinowski’s findings, Mauss (1925) and Lévi-Strauss (1958) turned the gift into a part of a structural model by analysing notions of circular exchanges. For Mauss (1925) gifts could only be understood by treating together the object given and the social relations regulating giving, receiving and repaying while Lévi-Strauss (1958) by treating expectations of counter-gifts as a general dimension of communication expanded the scope of such reciprocal structural models. In order to distinguish the gift from such calculable exchange models of the economy, Bourdieu added irregularity into the system. He introduced the perspective of time in gift-giving. As Ssorin-Chaikov (2006, p. 362) puts it, what is important is “the time when it is neither too early nor too late to reciprocate”. That is, the period of time between the gift and counter-gift makes it possible to deny the self-interest, and perceive the gift as free, i.e. a gift, where no reciprocity is expected.

Derrida (1992) does not accept such temporal asymmetry and instead emphasises the debt a gift creates, which, according to Derrida, lingers until it is negated by a counter gift: “Even though all the anthropologies, indeed the metaphysics of the gift have, *quite rightly and justifiably*, treated *together*, as a system, the gift and the debt, the gift and the cycle of restitution, the gift and the loan, the gift and credit, the gift and the counter gift” (Derrida, 1992:13, italics as in original). To explore this further Derrida (1992) accepts this argument as a description of a position within a general structural system but develops the position by arguing that for a gift to really be a gift, it needs to never be reimbursed. Something given within the framework of gifts and counter gifts would therefore be poisonous, since it implies the unspoken expectation of reimbursement at a future point in time. This expectation is unspoken, however, and this is what causes the undecidability. It has therefore been argued that “Derrida positions responsibility not in the space of certitude that one has done the right thing or known which path to take, but instead responsibility involves undecidability” (Jones, 2007, p. 526).

Common for these scholars are that they tend to understand gifts by incorporating them into a commercial framework, where something is exchanged for something else or by challenging the very separation of the social economy from the financial economy.

The literature on Gifts is, of course, widely known and studied in thinking organisation in areas of anthropology, sociology and business administration. While for example Derrida’s discussion on gift and responsibility has been used to problematise for example business ethics (Jones, 2003), others have tried to explain what they call ‘gift economies’ e.g. a system of free bicycles (Nelson, Rademacher, & Paek, 2007); or to explain the importance of personal networks and exchange (Sjöstrand, 2008); or to discuss ‘free’ and ‘open, in e.g. ‘high tech gift economies’ (Shumarova and Swatman, 2007) or software sharing communities online (Rehn, 2004); or to environmental studies, such as exchange models for sustainability (Coates and Leahy, 2006); or to academic production (as altruistic) (Rehn, 2004 and Martínez-Alemána, 2007). Most of them are applying the notion of gift economy metaphorically, as pointed out by Rehn (2004). Such studies propose gift economy as being an alternative to market economy, or they make use gift economy to account for uneconomical or irrational elements in the market. If at all, the temporality is discussed in terms of a separation between gift and counter-gift, and the objects given and received are seldom objects or even something that is owned by any individual. Rehn (2004) touches on responsibility to the result rather than the developers in software development and discusses virtuality and interaction. Although it is not his focus and therefore not something elaborated on, Rehn (2004) observes a spatial conceptualisation adopted from Baudrillard.

In the case of antiquarian bookshops we have observed a commodity that seemingly is completely or partially transformed into a gift. As in Bourdieu’s and Derrida’s analysis, this is not always clearly the case; the situation is ambiguous. It is not, however, due to a separation in time, but rather due what we understand as the liminal space of the gift; it stretches from commodity to gift, and the responsibility that the object evokes.

Van Gennep’s (1909) introduced liminality in his work on the structure and classification of social ceremonies, *rites de passage*. To a great extent this classification concerned life-altering situations such as birth, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, funerals. But Van Gennep also tried to understand and classify more everyday situations, where interaction could not be explained by “purely economical or intellectual” means (Van Gennep, 1909, p. 1). He thus differs between the profane (economical and/or intellectual) and the sacred (symbolic and/or cultural). Three rites constituted a *rites de passage* consisting of the preliminary rite of separation, the liminal rite of transition and the postliminal rite of incorporation. Further, for Van Gennep, a “passage from one social position to another is identified with a *territorial passage*” (Van Gennep, p. 192, italics as in original), in semi-civilized tribes this often meant literary a boarder or certain place.

Liminality as a conception of its own has since then been adopted in many ways, not the least by Turner (1974), who defines liminality as “the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions” (Turner, 1974, p. 237). In Turner’s early work this meant the analysis of temporal rituals or ceremonies, where the rituals are unspecific and with uncertain outcomes, and in his later work to analyse groups of people, communities, such as hippies and monastery life (Turner 1974).

We use liminality to analyse the spatial dimension of the gift, stretching from commodity to gift. Further, the transformations taking place during the liminal ceremonies are considered as collective phenomena in which the visitor, the antiquarian and the book(s) create an understanding of their meeting. Thus we need a conceptual apparatus that can serve as analytical tool for the construction and outcome of this liminality.

Since Lefebvre (1974/1991) introduced his ideas regarding the importance of social space, separating social space and the physical world is becoming increasingly popular. Social space is not neutral; rather it is shaped from power relations and social strife, which is trying to bend it. Space is thus used in the model as a concept encompassing more than the physical world. Rather space is something that is simultaneously socially produced and socially productive: “Through the adaptation of the physical world, the social and cultural worlds have also come into being. ... The spaces and places around us construct us as we construct them” (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 1). There are sets of perceptions that guide our understanding of and interaction with our surroundings.

Although Hernes (2004) introduced Lefebvre to organization studies years ago, we have chosen to adopt Lefebvre directly. We describe processes of formation using Lefebvre’s conceptual apparatus of Spatial Practises, Representation of Space and Representational Space, while Hernes model encompasses notions of physical, social and mental space and therefore goes somewhat beyond the scope of this article.

The first two concepts, Spatial Practises and Representation of Space, are involved in deciding the outcome of the transformation, as the spatial practises regards the participant’s mode of competence regarding how to handle the interaction (the perceived) and representation of space regards the participant’s mode of conceptualising their interaction (the conceived). The Representational Space is the concept used to describe the pattern of interaction in which visitor and antiquarian ends up after and during the transformation (the lived), as the representational space is the mode of directly living space through the symbols and images connected to such space.

Interaction in antiquarian bookshops: model and its analysis

The empirical difficulties to pinpoint and separate gifts and commodities have been described by among others Bourdieu and Derrida, and that has been our starting point for the analysis. However, in our case, we have a reversed situation. We have a business practice that cannot be understood from conventional business logic. That is, we are trying to understand seller-buyer relationships, rather than giver-receiver relationships, where a commodity seemingly can be transformed into a gift. In sum, in each instance of interaction, the exchange of antiquarian books can be understood antiquarian bookshop can be perceived as anything between a shop (where seller offers commodities to a buyer) and a collection (where a giver offers a gift to a receiver).

We have created the model below to illustrate how our concepts are interlinked and to describe the continuum along which the interaction in the antiquarian bookshop takes place. Using examples of transformations resulting in four different representational spaces, we will below offer empirical illustrations of the model.

In the first case a visitor picks up three books in the book box outside the antiquarian bookshop and enters the shop with them in order to haggle over the price of the books. This spatial practise implies representing the space of the antiquarian bookstore as a place for bargaining over cheap books and suits badly with what the antiquarian would prefer it to be. Thus, in the trisection of the cheap books, the antiquarian and the haggling visitor the outcome of the liminal ceremony becomes an interaction between buyer and seller focused on the books as commodities. The representational space caused by this transformation is one with minimal understanding and interaction between antiquarian and visitor.

Thus, what kind of relationship you get with the antiquarian depends to a large extent on which books you express interest in. This interest can be expressed by a visitor by using spatial practises like for instance talking to the antiquarian about books, moving through the antiquarian bookshop in specific way or sometimes even by simply touching the books. In a simplified sense, you express through spatial practises and the demonstrated representation of the space of the bookshop whether you for instance consider yourself moving through a shop or among a collection.

When an elderly man enters the bookshop somewhat later and buys a similar cheap book from the book box, without haggling, and sits down to study some postcards it amounts to a totally different encounter. The antiquarian knows the elderly man and believes that he becomes happy when buying books. Therefore, even though the antiquarian himself doesn't hold much respect for the cheap books, through his manifest joy of buying books the elderly man demonstrates a different spatial practise compared to the previous visitor. Furthermore, since the man is also a collector of postcards the antiquarian considers him to be

part of a different representation of the bookshop space. The elderly man is even prevented from buying a more expensive book by the antiquarian who in this way offers a kind of gift in ensuring that the man, as a receiver, saves his money for possible collector items.

The book boxes are there for the costumers to touch, and to start searching for a book worth buying – but really, they are there to get people to search for real treasures among the shelves. Therefore, to the antiquarian there is a fundamental difference between the haggling visitor and the elderly man. On the surface, they acted in the same way; they were searching for treasures in the book box, found something they liked, and entered the shop. However, the woman just wanted to buy the books – and she had no further interest in the antiquarian or the antiquarian bookshop. The man on the other hand, could go through the book box without eliciting anger from the owner, since he cared for the books; it was the best part of the day for the old man (the owner imagined) and this gave them a special relation. Also, he was a real collector of something, real treasures, which is really the reason he is there – his passion for post cards (especially of railroad station houses).

The liminal ceremony results in very different transformations and thus in very different representational spaces. The elderly man passed through a threshold in the system that makes him something more than a mere bargain hunter; he's after real treasures, treasures that includes the antiquarian as guide, companion or owner/holder of these treasures.

It is like the case of the man we followed into the inner room. He entered the bookshop and almost immediately disappeared into the inner rooms. We were intrigued by this and cautiously moved in the same direction to check on his movements and actions. As we did this, another visitor entered the bookshop and walked up to the counter to inquire about a certain book on a poet. The antiquarian answers negatively and gives no further information. Then the first visitor returns with a book and talks with the antiquarian about it for a while before he asks about another book. In this case the antiquarian takes some notes and apparently seems intent on keeping a lookout for this title. Again, the second visitor was there to buy a certain commodity and in the interaction with the antiquarian this ceremony resulted in a transformation, opening a representational space oriented towards buying and selling. The first visitor on the other hand behaves as a collector, meandering around the collection. Thus, when the spatial practises of the visitor are confronted with the antiquarian's understanding of how space is represented a representational space very different from the previous one is brought about by the meeting.

We believe that these examples demonstrate how the perceived special features of the book are guiding the interaction or ceremonies taking place in the antiquarian bookshop. Much like the objects exchanged in the Kula system described by Malinowski (1920), the books are considered valuable despite not being intended for any real use. Furthermore, when considering the books only as useful objects (for reading) it seems as if the bookshop visitor actually depreciates their value in

Representational Space

BOOKSHOP

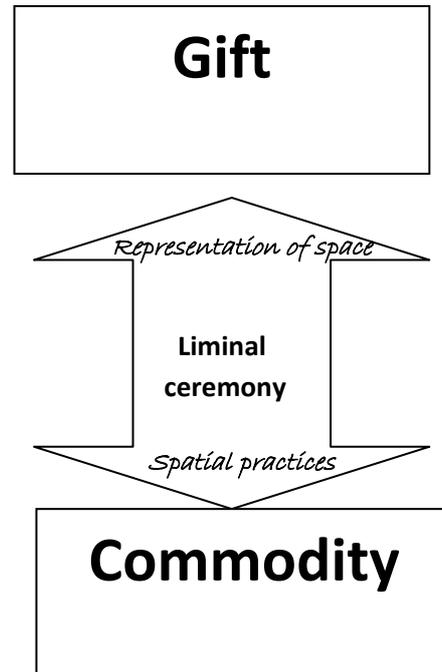


Figure 1: Liminal space of the gift

the eyes of the antiquarian. It is only when visitor and antiquarian consider each other as parts of the same system of book collectors that their interaction becomes aimed at something more than a mere transaction. The visitor below who on a certain occasion refuses to buy some books on gardening further illustrates this.

In the third case, a visitor that apparently knows the antiquarian enters the shop and they exchange gossip for a while. He then disappears among the bookshelves and upon his return to the desk he brings with him a number of books on aquariums. At this point the antiquarian offers to show him some new books on gardening that might develop his collection but the man blankly refuses to see them. Thus, in this case the man was normally a collector of books and the antiquarian treats him as such. He has been thinking about this collector and not only assembled a number of books that ought to be interesting for him but also kept them hidden beneath the counter. In this way demonstrating the spatial practise and representation of space that was connected to a representational space where they were both collectors, simultaneously giving and receiving in their exchange. In this case however, this liminal ceremony breaks down as the visitor is there looking to buy commodities (books on aquarium). The transformation therefore blurs and breaks down as the collector on this specific day experience only the shop.

The fourth example is from our own experience. Upon approaching the counter, having wandered around in the antiquarian bookshop for a while and in some cases even being asked by the antiquarian to pick out some books, it sometimes happens that the antiquarian decides to show some books that were actually put away for other customers. When we buy these and/or some other books, the antiquarian then starts haggling with himself, reducing the price with as much as 50 %. In the meeting between the antiquarian's and our own representations of space as well as spatial practises, a transformation positioning our interaction somewhere between the collector type and the shop type of interaction takes place. In a way it could be argued that the antiquarian actually gives away half of the books at hand. However, as the following analysis will demonstrate, the situation is a bit more complicated than that.

The exchange of antiquarian books: responsibility and debt

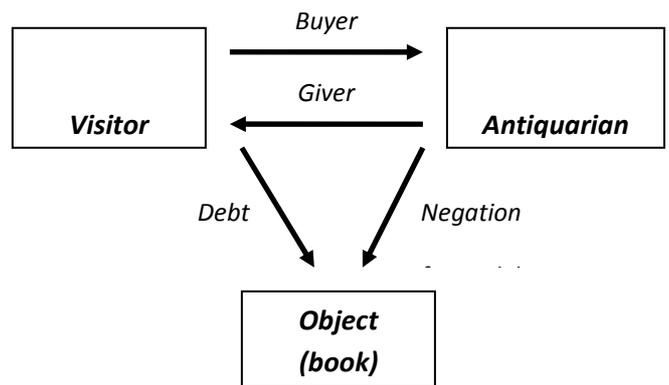
In antiquarian bookshops, it seems, the exchange can be considered as partially or potentially a give/receive situation as well as a buy/sell situation, with the consequence that we have a situation where commodities sometimes can morph into something that can be understood as gifts. In this section, drawing upon our conceptual understanding on gifts together with our experiences in the antiquarian bookshops, we argue that the exchange of antiquarian books might contain an added dimension compared to our general understanding of gifts.

It could be argued, as Derrida (1992) does, that gifts contain a poisonous dimension since they imply a temporary asymmetry that places the receiver in debt. In the case of antiquarian books the representational space resulting from the exchange is however affected by the existence of the book as a distinct third element. There are situations when the customer must qualify himself to be allowed to buy and receive a certain book, since buying it is not enough. In such a situation, there is of course an exchange of money for object but antiquarians tend to offer very generous terms of payment if need be. Regardless, the customer (the receiver) receives the object and would thereby be exposed to its poisonous nature since she is supposedly indebted to the antiquarian (the giver). Even if this might to some extent be the case, the special dimension in this case is that the debt is transferred from the giver to the object. Upon having proved oneself worthy and receiving the book, the debt that the receiver in a gift situation ought to feel towards the giver is moved to the book. The receiver in this case accepts an obligation and expectation to take care of the object, which has been succeeded by the previous holder.

In the logic and terminology of Mauss (1925) it can be argued that the three obligations of a gift, to give, to receive and to repay are realigned since the obligations to give and receive are played out between giver and receiver while the obligation to repay are in this case transferred to the object.

In the model below we have illustrated this situation in which a gift is received and how this gift causes the debt owned to the object by the holder to be moved to the receiver. Thus the receiver's debt to the giver is at least to some extent negated by the transference of the debt owed to the object by the giver. We have tried to show this situation in the model below, which describe how the visitor, the book and the antiquarian interact in a liminal ceremony that gives rise to a giver/receiver situation.

Figure 2: The exchange of antiquarian books: responsibility and debt



The negation of the own debt of the antiquarian refers to the circumstance that he accepted a debt (responsibility) for the object (book) when he received it. In the Kula trade described by Malinowski (1920), there is a requirement for the receiver to care for the symbolic object but also to subsequently move it along to someone else. There is a difference in the case of antiquarian books, since the receiver is more or less supposed to have lifelong possession of and responsibility for the book. This is apparent in the antiquarian's story ending with him reclaiming the objects (books) once succeeded to the other collector and thereby reversing the flow in the sense that he was buying and simultaneously recouping again the debt in the form of the responsibility for them. The chain of collection is broken and the books retraced to the previous owner and thus in one sense all the previous successions were for naught. Further, our experiences where the antiquarians start haggling with themselves further illustrate this. The antiquarian feels confident that we will care for the books, even the ones put away under the counter, and is therefore willing to sell them. He reduces the price, however, since the exchange is not only between buyer and seller but also one between giver and receiver. We receive the books but we are also indebted in return. Not to the antiquarian as Bourdieu or Derrida would suggest but rather to the object itself. In receiving the book(s) we also accept the responsibility for them. We get a discount but also a lingering debt to the object that we received.

Conclusion

The short story that introduced our paper is written by an antiquarian. We asked him to write a story (fictional or real) informed by everyday life in an antiquarian bookshop. When we gave him the starting line he immediately questioned the use of the word shop: "This is an antiquarian bookshop", he said, "more than just a shop".

Already this story demonstrates many of the findings we have presented in this article. There are motives for the actions of both visitors and antiquarians that transcend those of traditional roles of buyer and seller. This is not always the case however, but rather a very specific outcome when what we inspired by Lefebvre call the spatial practises and the representations of space coincide and allow for the creation of another space that encompasses both visitor and antiquarian. In this representational space, the lived experiences of the visitor, the antiquarian, and the book together form the foundation for a co-creation of common space. Instead of seller and customer, the participants becomes collectors and the exchange of books are complicated by an added dimension of gifts. In our analysis it is the construction of such space that makes giving and receiving possible, rather than a separation in time, that is crucial for Bourdieu's (2000) analysis of gift-giving.

The second part of our analysis suggests that this gift is not poisonous in the sense proposed by Derrida (1992) and to some extent Bourdieu (2005) in that the receiver is indebted to the giver. This is not to imply that no debt emanates from the gift. The receiver is still indebted but the debt is due to the object (book) rather than the giver (antiquarian). The debt is transformed to a responsibility to care for the book since it would not be given unless the giver believed the receiver capable of handling such a responsibility. It may even be that the giver is indebted in the same sense since the book was once succeeded to him and that the transition of the book is also a succession of debt and responsibility. Just like the antiquarian describes in his story, indeed a very sad day!

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Transitional Spaces: The Phenomenology of the Awayday

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Keywords

Abstract

In this paper I will investigate the phenomenon of the awayday and its potential as a transitional space as well as how it fits into management discourse. Transition is central to the awayday, often on a literal level (of being away from the office, for example). Furthermore I want to explore whether this shift from place or routine has any bearing on the feelings and experiences of the employees: does it represent a psychological transition? Does the irregularity of structure of the awayday provide a space for reflection? Does it alter the way the individual thinks about work or identity? I will discuss this apropos Turner's concept of the liminal. My empirical data led the research. I interviewed members from two organisations that had recently been on an awayday and used their viewpoints to shape my understanding of the effects of transition on issues of identity whilst theoretically couching the discussion of the awayday within the context of 'fun at work' and how the awayday provoked questions about identity (both singular and multiple) and boundaries.

In this paper I want to investigate the phenomenon of the awayday – what does it mean? How is it perceived and experienced by employees? And how does it fit into management discourse? I also want to investigate its potential as a transitional space. The *Encarta* online dictionary defines 'transition' as 'a process or period in which something undergoes a change and passes from one state, stage, form or activity to another'. Thus transition involves moving from state/stage/form/activity x to state/stage/form/activity y. On a literal level, the awayday often involves the temporary shift from environment x to environment y in terms of a change of location. Sometimes awaydays are held in the usual workplace but what is imperative is that, even though employees do not enjoy a change of location, they do not undergo a normal working day and are involved in activities or events that are a departure from the norm. I want to explore whether this shift from place or routine has any bearing on the feelings and experiences of the employees: does it represent a psychological transition? Does the irregularity of structure of the awayday provide a space for reflection? Does it alter the way the individual thinks about work or identity? The concept of the liminal or liminality which is rooted in anthropology has recently entered organisational studies (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 269) and is pertinent in theorising about the awayday. Liminality concerns a point of transition between two positions and is temporary rather than permanent. The awayday fits into this schematic understanding of the liminal but is also more integrally

linked to the ontological understanding of liminality that the anthropologist Victor Turner proposes, which I shall discuss in due course.

The precise starting point of the phenomenon of the awayday is difficult to ascertain. The phenomenon of the awayday was only made possible because of a range of factors that changed the perspective of work from being regarded in terms of the division of labour (in industrialisation), to the focus on the post-industrial and management perspective at the beginning of the twentieth century. In this latter perspective, work is regarded more from the standpoint of contributing to identity and well-being. The philosophy of management was that the individual was to be regarded holistically rather than merely in terms of their work output.

In the 1970s affluent companies started having days away from the office. These days would take the form of a trip away from the organisation, which was often courtesy of the employer. This pattern became more popular in the 1980s (especially in certain sectors such as investment banking and law) as the awayday was recognised in its potential for team-building. They were regarded as *ad hoc* gestures that were idiosyncratic to the organisation. Their wider occurrence was not investigated. It was only in the late 1990s that the term ‘awayday’ has been commonplace in management culture. The popularity of the awayday has resulted in many organisations in both the public and private sector deciding to host them at least on an annual basis. There are even companies that specialise in bespoke awaydays for other organisations. These include the London-based ‘Impact Factory’ who market themselves as providing team building skills which have the following objectives: “learn to work as a team; reassess your team’s goals and direction; communicate better as a team; and give your team a boost of energy” (www.impactfactory.com, n.d.). Another organisation, ‘TeamAwayday’ (based in Middlesex) markets itself in the following way: “we specialise in designing, resourcing and leading creative and practical awaydays” (www.teamawayday.co.uk, n.d.).

What became apparent very early on in my research was that much had been documented about the peculiarities of an awayday in an individual organisation but that there was very little literature about the awayday as a sociological or managerial phenomenon. The awayday can be viewed within the context of management literature on the role of fun in the organisation. The Special Issue of *Employee Relations* 31 (6) emphasises the importance of “giving a critical voice to the notion of ‘managed’ fun at work” and the recognition that “people are multidimensional and that it is appropriate to engage with the human side of organising” (Bolton & Houlihan, 2009: pp. 557, 558). Individual organisations have written about their strategies for the awayday but little has been articulated about the general sociological aspects of the phenomenon and about its potential for transformation. It may indeed be because organisations take a pragmatic view towards the awayday and believe that it has to be bespoke for the specific organisation in order to maximise the returns. The precise application of the phenomenon then varies from company to company. For some the awayday gives employees the opportunity to focus on a work-related task without the distraction of day-to-day routines. Rowe and Okell (2009) wanted to investigate a topical issue in their organisation and organised an awayday as a platform to put forward their ideas to other colleagues. The awayday then functioned as a brainstorming sessions where colleagues assessed the feasibility of the project. Hambleton (2006) viewed the awayday as a pragmatic strategy to help future planning and scenario-building where each awayday marked a different stage of planning (p. 114). Another perception of the awayday is of the opportunities it provides to have fun – to socialise, dress down and to enjoy treats courtesy of the employer.¹ According to an increasing number of organisations, fun at work “is essential for enhancing employee motivation and productivity, reducing stress, and increasing customer satisfaction” (Karl *et al.*, 2005, p. 1). Temkin (1994) suggests that fun creates “relationships of commitment” (p. 36). Meyer (1999) also identifies the relationship between ‘having fun’ and retaining staff and adds how “fun workplaces also tend to ... reduce the chances of employee burnout or high absenteeism” (p. 13). One of the objectives of this paper is to flesh out the awayday by examining it as a phenomenon that causes change. The nature and intensity of change shall be explored throughout the paper. In order to understand more about the awayday, and how the individuals concerned made sense of it, I decided to interview employees who had recently been on an awayday.

Methodology

I decided to conduct a comparative exercise between two different organisations: one in the private sector and the other in the public sector. Karl *et al.* (2005) makes a distinction between the variable role of fun in the private and public sector. The more altruistic aspects of public sector employment may lead one to believe that workers in this sector are less inclined to value ‘fun at work’ precisely “because they want to help others and so having fun at work is not going to be a top priority” (p. 3). A counter-argument is that “because they are undervalued in terms of what they do, then this is more of an argument to have the element of fun at work ... it is welcome release” (Karl *et al.*, 2005, p. 3).

Organisation A is a private legal firm in Manchester with twenty solicitors. Their awayday was held just after Easter in 2009 and consisted of a two-day retreat in the countryside in Yorkshire. In contrast organisation B is a high-street retail chain, also

based in Manchester. I interviewed 25 out of the 200 employees who went on the awayday, which was held in a hotel (with adjacent conference facilities) in June 2009. The crucial difference between the awaydays from both organisations was that for organisation A the awayday was a two day event, which started on a Friday and ended on Saturday evening. It was held in a hotel near Ilkey in Yorkshire, which contained scenic grounds. In contrast the awayday for organisation B was only a day event, also held on a Friday. The difference in time-scales was reflected in the responses: respondents from organisation A had more to say about their time away from the office, as “*it felt like a mini break*” echoed a number of other responses. The actual activities themselves were broadly similar (the only difference being that in organisation A the respondents went for a walk in the countryside). These included ice-breakers, team-building exercises as well as the opportunity to chat and socialise informally. The facilitators of the activities in both cases were external motivational speakers, who also provided keynote speeches.

I conducted two sets of interviews, both before the awayday (two months in both cases) and two to three weeks after the awayday. This is because I wanted to investigate peoples’ perceptions of the awayday, and then their perspectives following the events. I deliberately decided to wait for a lag of time after the awayday to allow the employees time to return to their normal working life as well as to reflect on their experiences during the awayday. During the first set of interviews I did not indicate what was going to be asked in the second set, and focused only on expectations, and what respondents wanted out of the awayday.

In total I interviewed 45 respondents (20 from organisation A, and 25 from organisation B) on two occasions in a private room that was away from their workplace. The interviews were transcribed and anonymised, with respondents from organisation A being referred to by a letter of the alphabet which corresponded to the order in which they were interviewed, from ‘A’ to ‘T’ and respondents from organisation B being referred to ‘1’ to ‘25’, according to the order in which they were interviewed. I ensured that both samples were representative of the whole cohort ensuring that there were respondents of both genders, different ages, and different levels of seniority. Another control measure was to ensure that all respondents had been working for their organisation for more than two years and that they had previously attended an awayday in 2008. These conditions were important because I wanted the respondents to have familiarity of their workplace, which two or more years duration would ensure, and I wanted them to have had experienced an awayday before so that the phenomenon was not novel to them in 2009.

The interviews were semi-structured. I told the respondents that I was interested in the awayday that they were about to embark on (in the first interview) and that they had experienced (in the second set of interviews). My primary goal was to collate respondents’ experiences of the awayday – to see what they felt about the awayday, how it made them feel about their role and identity at work and whether it presented other observations in general. I am taking identity to be a fluid concept which allows for change and development: it “is the product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable” (Jenkins, 1996, p. 5).

Another objective was to compare and contrast the responses in both sectors to see whether there was a qualitative difference in the perceptions held. I analysed the interview material by picking out ideas and phrases, which conveyed the individuals’ attitudes and feelings about work. And then cross-compared both sets of interviews from both organisations before examining the transitions from interview one to two, and both sets of the second interview to look at the impact of the awayday on the experiences of work that the respondents had.

Experiencing the awayday

The first observation is that there was a qualitative difference between the findings from interview one and two. In the first interview respondents from both organisations discussed their jobs and how they felt working for their organisation. Respondents from both organisations mentioned their workload, and how they felt under pressure to meet deadlines, as well as discussing what they perceived to be their roles within the organisation. Very little was said about their time outside of work, and if it was mentioned then it was discussed within terms of trying to balance the pressures of work and family life. I asked about their expectations of the awayday and many respondents told me that they had not given it a great deal of thought or that they thought that it would be used as a forum for management to both review the previous year and to make decisions about the year ahead. In contrast, the second interviews were more about the respondent’s perceptions of their role within the organisation and were focused on what they wanted to get out of work. In the second interview the respondents were, by and large, more assertive, reflective and creative (in the sense of being more expressive) in their statements about work. In the first interview many described their job in factual terms – ‘this is what I do, this is what I am paid for’. This did not occur in the second interview, where most respondents did not discuss the awayday with the view to imparting a series about facts about what went on in the awayday but were more keen to talk about the *personal* significance of the awayday – what the whole event had meant for them. Respondents were keen to explore their identities, the multiple and often conflicting roles that they occupy not simply in the workplace but in other settings as well, such as at home.

From the data of the second interviews it became apparent that the majority of respondents had found the awayday to be a positive experience. More than half the sample in both sets (15 out of 20 in Organisation A, and 14 out of 25 in Organisation B) found the awayday to be “*positive*” and “*energising*” (recurring terms used in the interviews) and that it brought about changes in their perceptions of their organisation and their role in it. Respondent 2 summarised the situation by commenting on how the social aspect of her awayday was the most enjoyable:

the day went really quickly as we were constantly in conversation...everyone was really curious to find out which area others worked in and what they were like. You get phone calls from people that you finally got to meet, and it was nice to put a name to a face”. Respondent E stated how: “I thought that the awayday was well needed—it has been a long and difficult year, and the recession had affected finances and general morale.

When I questioned her about the awayday after its occurrence her mood had lifted, and she was more animated and ebullient in her responses: “*It was great, I met some really nice people, and found out that J--- T---’s (who works in a different team) kids go to the same school as mine, and we decided to take it in turns to ferry our kids to school and back*”. Respondents 4 and 6 had similar experiences: respondent 4 met someone he went to school with on the awayday, previously having been unaware that the said individual also worked for the organisation. Respondent 6 discovered that a colleague in her department shared her passion for salsa dancing, and they agreed to go to the same class, thus opening up the possibility for social interaction.

Although the above two experiences were unconnected with work-related issues, these new contacts initiated through the awayday enabled respondents to bridge the gap between ‘work’ and ‘home’ and instigated new networks and possibilities for interaction. Without the awayday these individuals may have not forged these links, links which had the potential to alter their perceptions of work. In ‘Work/Family Border Theory: a New Theory of Work/Family’ Campbell Clark (2000) argues about the inevitable connectedness of work and family systems – as much as people try to keep these two zones or domains separate there is always emotional crossover. “People are border-crossers who make daily transitions between two worlds - who make daily transitions between two worlds – the world of work and the world of family” (p. 748). She adds, “word and family influence each other, and so employers, societies and individuals cannot ignore one sphere without potential peril to the other” (p. 749). The transitional nature of the awayday can be seen to loosen the boundaries between ‘work’ and ‘family life’ thus inculcating a more healthy balance to one’s overall life. And for respondent 3 it also provided a space outside ‘work’ and ‘family life’ and enabled her to define her identity in her own terms, instead of having it defined for her. She said,

it has been good to have been able to talk freely...I have been able to do that now, and was able to be myself at the awayday ... I like my job but you don’t get a chance to be yourself – I’m customer controller number ___ and this is how I think of myself in the day (and then after work I’m mum to ____). I spend so much of the day fire-fighting – either answering the phone and sorting people’s problems out, or having to deal with the backlog of emails – I suppose that’s life in retail but the day away gave me the chance to put my feet up and really talk to people...it gave me time.

A similar theme that emerged from the interview data was that the awayday gave employees the opportunity to extend and diversify their networks, which would benefit them on a professional level. This observation was more pronounced in organisation B, where a number of respondents commented on how existing problems they had at work seemed to be addressed, and sometimes resolved by the fortuitous encounters with other colleagues who were often not in their immediate team or department but who were in a position to help them professionally. Respondent 10 made the following confession,

I’ve been having a really hard time at work y’know. Part of my job involves the making up of food hampers for delivery, which is okay. After five or six hampers have been made they then get taken over to a driver who is meant to deliver them. The problems I’ve been having is not with me but with one of the drivers who gets the hampers and addresses mixed up. I then get angry customers on the phones complaining that the wrong hamper has been delivered to their relative – I try and explain that it’s not my fault. I’ve tried to speak to the driver but he just gives me dirty looks and then my boss starts thinking it’s me that is the problem... Well, anyway I met this chap at the awayday and he coordinates the drivers or something, he is involved with doing the central rota. He told me that he would try and arrange it so that I got to deal with different drivers. He gave me his extension and mobile number as well which was kind of him.

During the conversation I could see that respondent 10 seemed visibly relieved that he was able to sort this issue, which had preoccupied him for a prolonged period of time, and was making him anxious and frustrated that his competence may have been compromised because of the mistakes that were being made. He expressed his relief in at being able to solve this problem without having to formalise the complaint by referring it to his manager. The awayday enabled this to happen, and he felt empowered about being able to tackle the issue without the intervention of higher authority, and also at the discretion and goodwill of his new associate. Mariotti (1999) recognises the importance of building networks within an organisation claiming that “realising that people in a company are all part of a larger team – a larger “family” in a sense – is an important step” (p. 63). Applying this to the above case, respondent 10 was able to ‘build a network’ around the obstacle and that even though the ‘chap at the awayday’ wasn’t part of his inner network he was able to find a fellow employee who was still part of the organisation and whom he was able to count on.

A recurring idea in the responses was how the awayday gave respondents the opportunity to reflect on aspirations and goals at work. Respondent D told me how,

I never used to think about work beyond the project that I was currently working on. The two days away helped me think about what I wanted to achieve from working for ____ (organisation A)....like what I wanted to get out of it for myself. It wasn't so much about an individual project or task but about thinking outside the box, and reflecting...reflecting about work and what it means to me.

Respondent N defined the awayday in terms of a catch up. He conveyed his thoughts as follows:

there are always so many deadlines, and so much pressure to meet them that there is never anytime to take stock of things. Another factor has been constant change ... five years ago I was a para-legal then I became an assistant solicitor in personal injury and now I'm being asked to move into a different area of law. It can be so unsettling moving from one area to another but in this day and age I suppose its expected.

These ideas echoed many other responses about the need to keep up with change and face the demands of contemporary working-life. In the post-industrial age the demands that are placed on employees are immense, with employees having to attune themselves to organisational change, which Herriot (2001) identifies as becoming a “constant feature of business life” (p. 1).

Both awaydays included team-building exercises Respondent D posited a distinction between the team-building exercises and games which he was involved with on the awayday which were done with the objective of meeting and working alongside others, rather than to fulfil a specific target, and tasks at work which were often seen in terms of deadlines rather than the nature of the activity. Respondent D added, “at work you just get on with the task in hand but here, we were encouraged to think about why we were doing what we were being asked to”. Many of the respondents commented on the qualitatively different nature of these tasks/team-building exercises that were often more fulfilling and enjoyable than their work projects. Team-building invited them to think about self-knowledge whilst work concerned itself with getting the job done. I then asked respondent D how the awayday differed from a staff appraisal, to which he replied: “In a staff appraisal you are under pressure to show how you have met targets...also you have to account for your billing time...” In this exchange it seemed that the awayday offered Respondent D something that he was not able to find in his everyday work, nor in his annual evaluation. The awayday contributed to his staff development.

The evidence above suggests that the awayday enabled individuals to explore different aspects of their identity: the professional, psychological and emotional. According to Leary and Tangney (2003, p. 3) ‘identity’ refers to the capacity for self-reflection and the awareness of self. The awayday clearly provided the opportunity for individuals to reflect on their identities and their relation to others. In providing the forum for individuals to think about other aspects of their identity, the awayday closely adhered to the management work ethic brought about by the ‘human relations’ movement of the early twentieth century, which showed “interest in the realm of employee subjectivity – the thoughts, feelings, beliefs and desires that comprise our self-understanding or self-identity” (Whittle, 2005, p. 1301).

The awayday as a transitional space

From the data collected I came to the conclusion that the awayday had great potential for transformation, and that this had hitherto not been acknowledged and investigated. Many respondents claimed that they genuinely felt different, experienced feelings that they did not during their working lives, and that on returning to the workplace they felt more uplifted and fulfilled. When analysing the interview transcripts it became apparent that, whilst in prosaic terms the awayday was a physical and

transitional shift from the workplace to somewhere else, in symbolic terms it represented something else. Employees were able to escape from the constraints of being defined by a particular job role to express and experience selfhood from *outside* the boundaries of a specific role. This in turn gave them the opportunity to reflect. It was a liberating and empowering experience. The awayday gave many the opportunities to redefine their role/place in the organisation. And it represented a transitional space or threshold through which employees were able to be psychologically and spiritually revived.

The findings so far can be summarised as follows. During the awayday respondents from both organisations engaged in different activities, some more structured than others, which often had no relation to their work duties. The awayday is extraordinary: it represents a break from the mundane and provides the opportunity for change and transformation. The displacement from the normal means that respondents from across the organisation got the opportunity to meet or interact in ways that would not be feasible in their everyday work environment. They are also away from the defining (and sometimes restricting) aspects of the workplace, such as their role and purpose in the organisation and whom they are accountable to. The experience of newness that an awayday offers, by virtue of being located in an unfamiliar space outside of work and by the shake up of normality, resulted in an experience of newness from the daily toil, which many respondents enjoyed.

I want to now turn to the writings of the Victor Turner to explain the behaviour and the attitudes demonstrated in the above findings. It is Turner's notion of 'liminal' or 'liminality' that is pertinent here. Both terms are derived from the Latin 'limen', which means *threshold* and refers to the bottom part of a doorway, which must be crossed when entering a room. Liminality was first introduced as a concept in anthropology in Arnold van Gennep in *The Rites of Passage* (1960, first published in 1909). Here van Gennep describes rites of passages as having the following tripartite structure of: (1) separation, (2) liminal period, (3) re-assimilation/incorporation. In the second phase of liminality the initiate is stripped of his/her former status before a new status is bestowed in the third phase and the initiate is re-assimilated back into the community. The second phase is therefore an intermediary phase where status and identity is ambiguous. Some fifty years after van Gennep's analyses Turner picks up on the concept of the liminal as this transitional state. He notes that "the subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, 'invisible'" (Turner, 1967, p. 95). In other words, the status of individuals in the liminal state is both socially and structurally ambiguous. This is indeed the case in the awayday - the conventional hierarchies and patterns that hold in the workplace are suspended. There may have had a period of transition where people still assumed the roles they had at work but this soon passed into a more egalitarian environment. Respondent 5 was excited when retelling what happened to him during the team-building exercises that occurred during the awayday:

I found myself in a team with my line-manager and two senior executives – that was scary but they were nice and friendly and in this setting everyone was as important as the next person. In fact, in one of the tasks we were given which was to describe your favourite hero/heroine from a book or film and then discuss how this person was similar and different to you, I lead on it and presented our findings to the whole room...That felt good". At another point in the conversation he added, "it was revealing being able to find out about personal, (but not too personal stuff) about others because it brought out the human side (rather than the work side) in people.

The interaction that respondent 5 outlined can be described with recourse to a further ideas of liminality that Turner discusses, "as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations or ideas and relations may arise" (Turner, 1967, p. 97). This "phase of transition is situated in sacred time and space, as opposed to the profane times and places of the first and third phases" (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 271). The relatively unstructured nature of the transitional or liminal state means that there is more opportunity and potential for new ideas and relationships that would not normally have been formed during everyday working life to be formed. "People are betwixt and between ... positions" (Turner, 1969, p. 95) and this gives greater potential for striking up new relationships. Being away from the regular workplace meant moving away from the physical and psychological constraints of working life, which included the non-personalised but hierarchical environment of the office space, the structure of the organisation, and even the uniform (which was prescribed for the members in organisation B) or dress code, which once again often defined peoples' roles or identities. Being temporarily pulled out of that environment, (where people are often defined by their job title, and conceived of in instrumental terms) and being relocated in an environment where you are referred to only by your name (and not by your job title) and are able to style yourself was liberating. This process of stripping down or away echoes Turner's belief that "liminal individuals have nothing" (Turner, 1967, p. 98) but rather than being disabling this is liberating, there

is “no status, insigna ... nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows” (1967, p. 98). Elsewhere he states that liminality is characterized by the “blurring and merging of distinctions. Persons who find themselves in a liminal phase are ‘temporarily undefined, beyond the normative social structure’ (Turner, 1982, p. 27). Ironically this state of stripping down, when the individual is not defined in terms of their job or status but in terms of their individuality is the most empowering gesture. In the removal of hierarchies and power relationships we experience the undifferentiation of community. Turner (1969) adds that there is not complete egalitarianism because the “ritual elders” still hold power (p. 96). Equally, within the case of the awayday it would be a falsification to deny that management holds sway (and some of the problems with this notion are discussed later).

In the transition from the instrumental conventions and constraints of working life to the fluidity of the transitional space offered in the everyday, the potential for *communitas* is a distinct possibility, where people have shared goals and values and people are not viewed instrumentally but holistically. Herriot (2001) describes communality or communal sharing by the following characteristics. It “ignores individual differences and divides resources according to need. There is a strong sense of belonging to the group, and people derive their identity from their group membership ... a high value is placed upon relationships, altruism, generosity and concern for others” (p. 120). A couple of respondents D and J spoke of the need for community. Respondent D stated how: “*work used to be more community-centred, where everyone was like a family and had their role*”. When I questioned at what stage in his working life he was referring to he added, “*...when I first started out in the early 1980s ... maybe it’s because there were only seven of us, and we were building the firm from scratch – it felt like a group thing then Over the years things have changed and people wanted to look after their own patch ... the sense of community and sharing has gone*”. Respondent J told me how she felt that a greater sense of community is desirable in the workplace.

These days people spend so long at work and so in many ways you see work colleagues more than you do your family and friends ... It would be good to be able to have some of the trust that you can feel with people at home into the workplace. People separate work and life because at work you are constantly having to watch your back, and look out for yourself. It’s a shame that this happens and it probably does because you don’t get time to really get to know people at work, misunderstandings can often be sorted out with more communication but there often isn’t time.

The emphasis of awaydays on communication and team-building could offer a bridge between the spheres of work and home life, and provide a sense of solidarity.

Turner posits ‘society’ as being in opposition to ‘community’. Community is more democratic whilst society is structured and hierarchical. In a liminal phase society dissolves into community, and after the passing of the transitory stage society reigns once again. This trajectory can be mapped onto the relationship between work and the awayday. Relations in the workplace are hierarchical. The awayday presents an inversion of this (though not a complete one as indicated) and after the awayday the hierarchy is restored. I interviewed respondents shortly after their awaydays because I wanted to know whether they were going to use or bring some of their experiences on the awayday into their everyday working life. Many respondents had made contact with employees that they met on the awayday and some respondents seemed keen to make a change for what they regarded was the better. Respondent P told me that, “*I’m the youngest solicitor here and sometimes feel out of my depth ... but at the awayday I feel that I came out of my shell more and it’s changed the way I feel around colleagues, I mean I go for lunch with them now and don’t feel like I have to run off*”. It would have been interesting to follow up some of the leads six months later to see whether changes had been kept. In other words it would have been worth exploring whether the awayday was, as the phenomenon suggests, something that is merely transitory, or does/could it have longer lasting effects?

The awayday as a management strategy

Although the majority of respondents viewed the awayday in a positive way, in terms of giving respondents the opportunity to reflect, enjoy themselves and to make new contacts and revive old ones, there was also a core of respondents who did not view the awayday in such favourable terms. These respondents tended to see the awayday less from the perspective of the employee and more from the benefit of the organisation. And they felt that the fact that the awayday is instigated and organised by management and actually organised by external clients suggested that it was under tight control. In the first set of interviews when questioned about their expectations of the awayday six respondents noted how they were not told what was going to happen in the awayday and were not given a choice as to the location or the activities that they would undertake whilst on the awayday. Respondent L asked his manager for future details during his lunch hour but was told, “*it’s in hand...you just have to*

turn up and you'll see then". When I pursued this idea with the respondent and suggested that it may have been a kindly gesture that management didn't want employees to worry about the details and wanted to treat them he chipped in saying, *"that's fine if your ten years old but I wanted to know what to expect"*. He viewed the lack of information as a paternalistic gesture. No employees received an itinerary in advance and were issued it with it on the day. The only information that they were given in advance was the date and location.

Four respondents (out of both cohorts) felt that the awayday was a well-earned break or rest but that it had no further benefits other than being a change of scene and a break away from the normal routine. They also felt that it also becomes an expectation for employees. Respondent 15 remarked on how she had already been to three awaydays in consecutive years and how, *"it is something that feels routine now, like having an end of year review"*. Respondent R acknowledged that she felt that *"Partners in law firms feel under pressure to organise awaydays because it's the done thing. If they don't bother, then there's a sense that they are being tight-fisted, and it's not seen as a good thing with external clients ... That's why they make a fuss with Christmas dos as well"*. I pursued this comment by questioning whether she felt that there were similarities between the awayday and the office/Christmas party. The response was that whilst the latter is entirely focused on having a good time and celebrating the end of the year, the former is more structured and focused on team-building and developing social and other skills. It is interesting that even though respondent R did not speak of any discernible benefits of the awayday on her outlook, she was able to recognise the potential that it held for others. The other three respondents claimed that whilst they engaged fully in the activities of the awayday it was a perfunctory exercise, which was done with the intention of placated management. Respondent G remarked how, *"management have a tendency to dress things up to make it look as if they are helping you out but actually it's just a way of them exercising their power...I mean they give you nice good and really splash out because they want you to toe the line, and feel grateful..."* The striking aspect about all of these respondents was that that they were amongst the most senior (in years and experience) members in their organisation. This finding prompted me to investigate whether the reverse was true. I found that the most positive responses about the awayday were given by the more junior (but not necessarily the younger) members of both groups. For those who had relatively less power within the organisation being able to create a dialogue with a more senior member of staff was something that they might have not been comfortable doing during the hours of work itself. The autonomy and greater structural flexibility offered during the awayday gave these individuals opportunities that would have normally been unavailable to them. Thus the awayday offered the potential for mobilisation and transformation; it gave people a platform to express their ideas in a non-hierarchical setting, and was confidence-building.

The more circumspect attitudes articulated above demonstrate a Janus face of the awayday. On one side it can be seen to demonstrate the importance of personal fulfilment in work. On the other hand it can be viewed tentatively as a management strategy which regulates employees. It is another example of surveillance at work and there is a critical dynamic in terms of power and control. Tomlinson (2005) explores the pernicious aspects of a particular awayday, and reported how the employees' perception of the awayday was unremittingly negative: they felt as if they were being "forced" into a consortium suggests that the organisation of the awayday, rather than involving 'open communications', contained instead elements of the 'managed communication process' that tends to reinforce existing power imbalances and undermine trust" (p. 1183). Meyer (1999) stresses the importance of inviting employee suggestions as a way of addressing the power imbalance between management and employees as well as the more practical issue of finding out what works. He remarks how "allowing employees to suggest events is not enough. You must welcome informal or formal feedback so you can modify or eliminate unpopular or counterproductive activities" (p. 15). Getting external clients to organise the awaydays, which was the case for both organisations, was also even less personal. Reflecting back on my data, this is something that could have been put to respondent L who felt patronised by the lack of information provided about the awayday before the event. It raises the question: if employees were more involved in the process would it affect their perceptions and subsequent experiences of it?

Respondent C was vehement in his dislike of the awayday. He stated that whilst he enjoyed the more social aspects of eating together and chatting he felt that the team games and keynote speeches were a waste of time. When I asked him why he didn't want to take part in the games he suggested that he felt that he felt pressured to act a part, to conform, to perform even. When I asked him to clarify what he meant by this he gave me an example,

I arrived a bit late and missed the intros. People had already started the activities ... I sat on a table to two people I know quite well but they were behaving oddly, as if they wanted to set the rules by which everyone should play by. I felt really uncomfortable when we were given the team-task because I couldn't relax with them. At work, you know who the head honcho is but I didn't know what was going on here ... except that I couldn't be myself.

This respondent prompted me to think about the notion of organisation control. Is it possible to entirely suspend power dynamics and to assert complete autonomy or are there always forms of organisational control going on? “Underlying this “be yourself” ideology is the notion that employees are free agents, no longer objects of corporate control” (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009, p. 573). Perhaps another strategy at work here was a change from “hierarchical, bureaucratic control to concertive control in the form of self-managing teams” (Barker, 1993, p. 408). The ideal set up would be in a democratic environment where there was “involvement in decision making, team interaction, listening and sharing feelings, communication, and satisfaction” (Coopman, 2001, p. 261) but according to respondent C this was not the case and some members had already tried to assert their values and get others to share these values. It is clear that the issue of surveillance cannot be ignored when thinking about the awayday, and that the forms may be more implicit and less bureaucratic but they are present nonetheless.

The multifarious responses to the awayday suggest that it is both impossible and undesirable to pin the awayday down to one notion. It clearly represents different things for different people: it is a break from work; an opportunity for reflection; socialisation; an opportunity for management to push forward with a new initiative. I have shown how, the awayday can be seen as an experience of the liminal which suspends social hierarchies and promotes the idea of community. Yet, for others, it displays a form of organisational control and the push ‘to be yourself’ and ‘let your hair down’ creates pressure for the individual to *perform* and don an “organisational persona” (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009, p. 574), which maybe a different persona to the one shown at work but is a persona nonetheless. The issues explored here as pioneered by the sociologist Erving Goffman in his studies of “impression management” revealed the flipside to the awayday. Whilst respondents who were positively disposed to the awayday enjoyed the possibilities of exploring their identities, one can argue that these identities were merely artificial impressions of falsity (see Burns, 1992, p. 116).

The awayday can be described as having “ambiguous goals ... which have ‘multiple, indistinct, incoherent or fragmented meanings, in which no single meaning is the ‘best’ or most coherent interpretation” (Jarzabkowski *et. al.*, 2010, p. 220). Many of these goals are not mutually exclusive – it is possible to socialise whilst also simultaneously being aware that the awayday is a management strategy (although this may affect the extent of socialisation). However, some of these goals display conflicting priorities, such as the need to exercise autonomy and the boundaries asserted by management. The presence of multiple goals and opportunities further supports the idea that the awayday is a liminal and transitional space.

Conclusion

At the beginning of the paper I asserted that in spite of its widespread popularity in organisations little research has been done to investigate the phenomenon of the awayday. It has universal currency amongst employees from different organisations but it is under-theorised. It is plausible that the constancy and continuation of the phenomenon in organisations may be as the result of peer-pressure, where directors and managers want to entitle their own employees with the same treatment that other organisations have. To do away with the awayday would seem as a deprivation and hence it continues from year to year with little regard for the benefits that may result.

The awayday is central to management discourse because it deals with critical issues that are central to management theory and practice, namely organisational strategies of getting people together to accomplish desired objectives. The awayday entails suspending the set hierarchies in the workplace and explores the potential for different groups to be arranged across social and recreational lines.

Earlier in the paper I referred to the awayday within the context of ‘fun at work’. Indeed the broader focus of the sociological and psychological implications of fun, recreation, socialisation, what might commonly be regarded as ‘non-work’ activities are of burgeoning importance in management discourse in contemporary culture. The emergence and implementation of the awayday in workplaces is not limited or localised to certain types of organisations and is becoming more increasingly widespread. This testified to its growing importance in management culture.

The interview data and related theoretical positions demonstrate the complexity of the phenomenon, which cannot be reduced to one formulation. There were mixed views about the awayday. For some the awayday was fulfilling on many levels, including in a professional and personal level. It was “existentially empowering” (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009, p. 570) and represented the apotheosis of the management goal where the person was treated holistically and instrumentally, and not in terms of their job role. The awayday provided material satisfaction in the form of refreshments and the comfort of a luxurious setting. It also provided non-material satisfaction in the form of new social bonds, the formation of community.

The most positive aspect on the awayday was the opportunity to socialise, to meet new people and form new bonds, and to rekindle or reconfiguring existing relationships. Many forged new links with people in their organisation that were not necessarily connected with work but with activities, interests and shared values that took them out of the sphere of work. These links enabled respondents to begin a relationship that was based around the ideals of community.

Many respondents responded favourably to the social aspect because of the lack of social contact that they have during normal working hours since the intervention of technologies, such as emails. It was significant that it was generally the more mature employees who brought this up. And it was clear that the impersonal interchanges with people during the working day (emails, conference calls, phone calls, memos) had not reduced the need for human contact and the need to socialise which was clearly the most popular aspect of the awayday. Keenoy and Seijo (2010) discusses the paradox of “digital connectivity” which he claims puts people in instant communication with each other over a digital interface but also adds to “people feeling increasingly disconnected” (p. 184). The important point made here is that human contact provided in the organisation in this awayday (and indeed many others) provided a multitude of non-tangible benefits linked to emotional and spiritual well-being.

The awayday also elicited a series of negative remarks from respondents regarding measures of implicit and explicit control and the more difficult task for some of having to socialise with people that they didn’t know, respondents feeling self-conscious about the activities and many such as respondent K who wanted to keep work life and home life separate: “*I do get on with people but I’m not massively chatty and I’ve got my own friends ... and so I didn’t really want this awayday thing – it’s different with the Christmas party because you can make excuses but with this who have to take part even if you don’t want to*”. Furthermore she found the encroachment of the awayday on a Saturday “*thoroughly inconvenient ... and troublesome*” but when I asked why she didn’t convey this she reiterated the importance of taking part as company policy. Fleming and Spicer (2004) give a similar example in their study of how “organisations use normative control to encroach upon the private lives of employees” (p. 77).

Although the majority of respondents were positively disposed towards the awayday, the negative issues that respondents have contribute towards a more critical appraisal of the phenomenon. The critical implications of my analysis are immense and reveal the potential significance, both positive and negative, that the awayday has for management culture. The strong sentiments that employees shared with me during their interviews suggested that, by and large, the awayday was not merely perceived as a neutral phenomenon but that it was influential in shaping and restructuring relationships in the workplace as well as perceptions of work and self. Thus the wider implications of awaydays need to be considered in order to ensure that they are effective. They should not be regarded as mere *ad hoc* gestures but as important evaluative exercises. Some respondents commented on how they wanted to be informed of the schedule of the awayday beforehand and employers should use the opportunity to empower employees by asking for their views on the nature or structure of their awayday. After the event employees should be provided with the opportunity to feed back their experiences to employers. By keeping employees informed both before and after integrates the awayday into the organisation more, rather than it just being viewed as an enforced and anomalous event. This also shifts the power dynamic – employees are not merely recipients but are instrumental in shaping the awayday. By recognising the significance that the awayday has (or could have) on the organisation and by involving employees more in the planning of the event may have a positive impact on working relations and trust. Andrew Ross claimed how “an ‘awayday’ can awaken an organisation” (Ross, 2005, p. 178). This short but apt phrase is a fitting concluding statement to this research. Whether to discuss a new initiative, get people together, or to have a team-building session an awayday has many functions and purposes and although transitory in nature has great potential in management and organisational studies.

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<http://www.impactfactory.com>
<http://www.teamawayday.co.uk>

¹ These two perceptions are not mutually exclusive – a work-productive awayday doesn't preclude having fun.

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Liminal Space in a State-Owned Companyⁱ

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to determine how liminality can be applied to the specific legal and organizational forms of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Poland. Using van Gennep's and Turner's anthropological perspective and based on our experience with such companies, we reveal these organizations' motives for taking liminal actions, particularly actions that determine the relationships among the management and supervisory board members, shareholders and employees. Our aim is to identify such actions and organizational spaces for dealing with particular problems in organizations.

State-owned enterprises (SOEs) in Poland are a specific form of entrepreneurship: legal entities created by the government to undertake commercial activities. This form of organization emerged in Western Europe, where massive nationalization took place in the 20th century. Typical sectors included in this process were telecommunications, power, petroleum, railways, airports, airlines, public transport, health care, postal services, banks, and many large industrial corporations were also nationalized or created as government corporations. Starting in the late 1970s and increasingly throughout the 1980s and 1990s, many of these corporations were once again privatized, although many remain wholly or partially owned by the respective governments.

Given this historical reason for existence, SOEs are very specific forms of organizations, and practitioners and theorists alike have studied many aspects of such organizations. For example, Kostera (1996) interviewed Polish general managers of such companies for discovering their social role, while Morck (2005) collected stories about state-owned companies from all over the world to bring closer the specificity of this form of organization. Erakovic, Forster, and Mouly (2006) investigated changes in the organizational design of sixteen corporatized and privatized organizations in the electricity industry in New Zealand and examined the content and process of change associated with the deregulation of that industry.

In general, SOEs are (or should be) the same as other companies established to operate in commercial affairs except that they have a distinct legal form and may have public policy objectives. Since they operate in the commercial realm, they are different from other forms of government agencies or state entities established to pursue purely non-financial objectives, so they have no need to maximize shareholders' return on their investments. SOEs can be either fully or partially owned by the government, but

determining categorically what level of state ownership qualifies an entity as “state-owned” is problematic because governments can also own stock in companies without implying any special interference. Therefore, this paper focuses on companies fully owned by the state.

The activities of SOEs in Poland are subject to legal regulations that are considerably more complicated than those for private companies and that result in SOEs’ being much less flexible than private companies. SOEs’ actions are often legally controlled to the extent that it is impossible to make quick and reasonable economic decisions. The shareholder—that is, the state—is represented in these companies by governmental officials who often do not want to take the kinds of risks that are sometimes necessary in business. Similarly, members of the companies’ management and supervisory boards, who depend on the state for their salaries, know that they have to operate in a way that will be acceptable for to the governmental officials (i.e., legal and not too risky). Despite such strong institutional determinants, SOEs in Poland are managing to deal with their business problems. People at various levels in these companies (line workers as well as higher-level managers) often take actions that are not part of institutional procedures, programs, or commonly known rules. These actions are part of the liminal space in these companies.

This paper identifies such actions, the people who take part in them, and the organizational spaces that are not the common way of dealing with problems in organizations. The discussion seeks to find connections among different liminal spaces, to discover the most significant relationships, to describe them in terms of their liminality, and to describe their roles in organizations.

First, the paper introduces the term liminality and discusses its place in the foundation of organizational theories. Next, the relationship between SOEs and the liminal phase is explained, followed by notes from the field. By sharing the story of the Steel Silesia, a particular SOE in Poland, we present all the relationships as connected in a highly complex way. The conclusion analyzes these relationships, and practical comments are provided about liminality in SOEs. Finally, some rules and suggestions are presented for managing the liminal space in organizations.

Method

Data presented in this paper are the result of a semi-ethnographic project conducted in Poland in 2008 and 2009. Specifically, it is a window study of the difficult moments in a company’s organizational life (Kostera, 1996). The primary researcher (only one of the authors participated in the company regularly) has been working in the company as a member of the supervisory board for more than three years (since 2007), but the research itself took approximately one year. The researchers are conscious of the sequence of the employment–research process but are convinced that, in this case, conducting research in a familiar organization had no negative consequences because the research conducted for the purposes of this paper was not classic ethnography (e.g., Burawoy, 1979) but was directly related to the topic of liminality.

Methods used in this research are mainly ethnographic; however, the writing style uses both functional and typically ethnographic (Van Maanen, 1988) approaches. The researchers, coming from different fields, bring together two completely different ways of perceiving organizations, although we have worked to ensure that the text is coherent from the methodological perspective. Material analyses were based on field notes and direct reports from participants’ observations (Burawoy, 1979; Konecki, 2000; Polanyi, 1958; Whyte, 1943). This approach to gathering field material is one of the most traditional (Malinowski, 1929; Mead, 1928) and exhaustive. A key principle of the method is that one may not merely observe but must also find a role within the group observed in order to participate in some manner since insiders have access to data that are usually forbidden to outsiders. In addition, participants are not inclined to reveal many interesting problems and phenomena to researchers who remain outsiders as overt observers (Kostera, 2007). Covert participant observation allows for investigation of almost every organizational area, especially when conducting studies on government entities or criminal organizations (Douglas, 1976). Meanwhile, insiders may ‘learn by doing’, which is a very intense and indispensable form of knowledge. For the anthropologist, the most interesting and desirable factor is tacit knowledge—that is, knowledge in action (Polanyi, 1958). Liminality is an area that cannot be discovered in a static environment because it concerns processes that are undoubtedly dynamic, and the only way to investigate these phenomena is through participant observation.

As researchers, we considered using overt participant observation, but we were concerned about employees’ reaction to a strange observer. Research material can consist only of information that is safe and in keeping with the interests of every group in the company, which is why we chose covert observation. From one perspective, this choice limited us to observing people, without the possibility of conducting an interview, but it also gave us considerable freedom in collecting data informally since the primary researcher was able to talk to participants freely without creating suspicion or being held at a distance. The conversations with workers from various organizational levels gave us the key material for this paper.

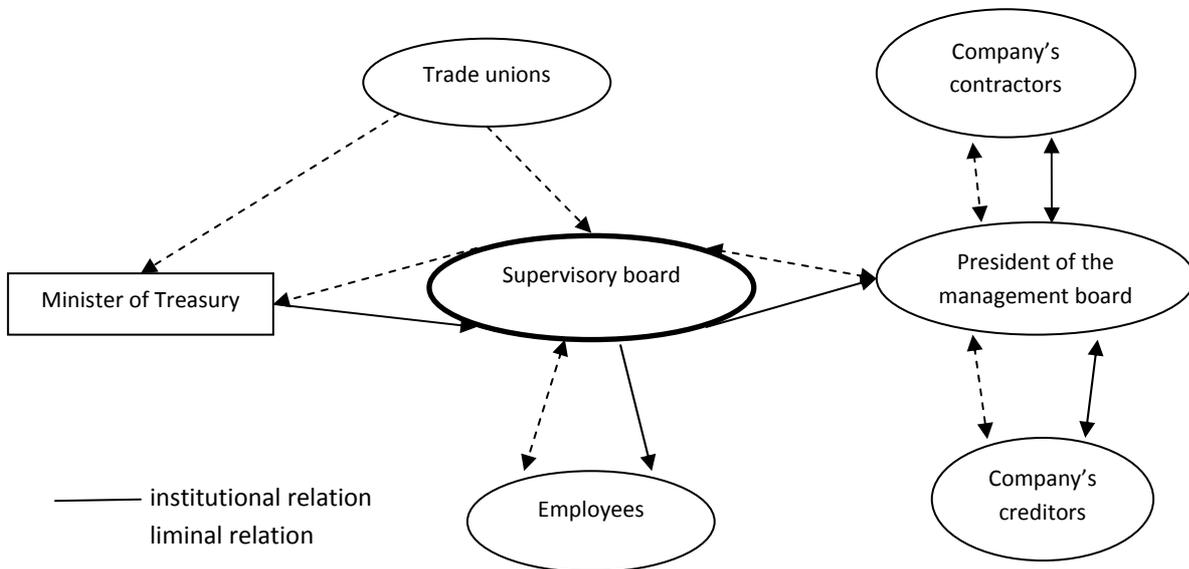
Liminality

Van Gennep (1909/1960) coined the term “liminality”, but the concept was developed further by Turner (1969, 1974, 1982). Van Gennep’s threefold structure of rites of passage consists of the pre-liminal phase (separation), the liminal phase (transition), and the post-liminal phase (reincorporation). In the first phase, people withdraw from the group and begin moving from one place or status to another. During this phase, there is often a detachment or ‘cutting away’ from the former self, which is signified in symbolic actions and rituals (e.g., a person who cuts his/her hair after joining the army to symbolize ‘cutting away’ the former self as a civilian). In the third phase, they re-enter society, having completed the rite and assumed their new identity. This re-incorporation is characterized by elaborate rituals and ceremonies (e.g., debutant balls and college graduation). The liminal phase is the period between these two states, during which people have left one place or state but have not yet entered or joined the next.

Structure	Communitas
Emphasizes distinctions	Reduces distinctions
Has an exclusive character	Has an inclusive character
People are seen as role-performers.	People are seen as totalities, as human entities.
Individuals are perceived in terms of statuses and roles; a person wears a role-mask (Radcliffe-Brown).	Individuals are perceived as unique personalities.
Real status quo	The status quo is Eden, paradise, utopian.
Society is a hierarchy.	Society is made up of free and equal participants.
Rank, post, and status give significance to individuals.	Rank, post, and status are suspended.

Table 1. Differences between Structure and Communitas (based on Turner, 1974)

Figure 1. Institutional and liminal relationships among different interest groups in considering Steel Silesia



Turner (1974) noted that, in liminality (the transitional state between two phases) individuals were ‘betwixt and between’: they had left the society of which they had been a part, and they were not yet reincorporated into that society. Liminality is, in essence, a point in limbo, an ambiguous period characterized by humility, seclusion, tests, sexual ambiguity, and communitas, an unstructured community in which all members are equal. Thus, structure and anti-structure become central points of reference in Turner’s analysis. Following Sartre, Turner treats structure as ‘complex dialectics of freedom and inertia’ in which ‘emergence and persistence of each group in its collective activity is dependent on the voluntary commitment of each individual’ (Turner, 1974, p. 200). However, in our context, Levi-Strauss’s (1963) approach to structure as something beyond what we can empirically observe might be closer to our research perspective. In our opinion, structure as it is classically perceived in anthropology (Radcliffe-Brown, 1922/2006) is best suited for the first and third phases of the rites of passage, while Levi-

Strauss's approach is more appropriate for the second phase (i.e., liminality). However, Turner perceives liminal phase as anti-structure, naming this space 'communitas', although sometimes (1969, 1974) he admits that communitas also has some undefined structure. Table 1 highlights the primary differences between structure and communitas identified by Turner (1974).

According to Goffman (1959), liminality means 'alignment and deprivation of structural status'. Another description of liminality suggests that this phase of rites of passage is driven by nature, whereas the first (separation) and the third (reincorporation) stages are more about culture. The liminal phase (second) represents a situation of objectivity that is difficult to find in structural situations; it is more saturated than other stages by symbols that refer to biological processes (considering people or not) and other aspects of natural order. This idea is related to the idea of equalization with other people and becoming a passenger (Turner, 1974). In addition, the transition between structure and communitas is fluent and sometimes hard to mark and define.

Communitas is a typical phenomenon in huge social changes and sometimes a way of reacting that forces humans into structures related to statuses and role-playing. It may also be a reaction against the people of the organization, the revolt of lower workers against higher levels of management. In Turner's concept, liminality is a phase of social life in which the confrontation between "action without a structure" and its "structural consequences" evokes people's highest level of self-consciousness. Moreover, liminality is temporary and has no clearly defined role in society; as such, it could be both alienating and freeing, as well as a source of perspective and creativity.

Liminality in Organizations

The concept of liminality as it relates to organizations was first discussed by Trice and Beyer (1993), who perceived cultures as an internal (dependent) variable. By employing symbols, rituals, languages, stories, myths, metaphors, rites, and ceremonies they analyzed how to select, modify, and create appropriate cultural forms. A decade later, Czarniawska and Mazza (2003) discussed consulting using liminality as a metaphor. Using their experience as consultants and observers, they suggested that consulting can be represented as a liminal space for both consultants and their client organizations. As a result, Czarniawska and Mazza introduced and developed the concept of the "liminal organization" and discussed the possibility that liminality is becoming "the modern condition". We agree with this conclusion.

Sturdy, Schwarz, and Spicer (2006) described the transitional characteristic of precarious or mobile employment, such as temporary, project, and consulting work, as a fluid and largely unstructured space in which normal order is suspended and which is both unsettling and creative. The authors critically explored the liminality of such work spaces through a detailed study of the neglected activities of business dinners and back-stage management consultancy, arguing that liminality can be a highly multi-structured, comfortable, and strategic or tactical space.

Tempest and Starkey (2004) examined the changing nature of organizations in the television industry in the United Kingdom, reflecting on the impact of liminality on learning, while Powley and Cameron (2006) used liminality to analyze organizational healing, which 'occurs during a transition space that is both metaphorical and literal, a liminal space where social structure is suspended as individuals engage in actions that support and enable others to become whole again. The liminal space rebuilds and renews an organization's social fabric, sense of continuity, expectations, and identity' (p. 4). Tansley, Wagner, and Newell (in press) investigated the IS project environment as a liminal space that exists between the status quo and the new ES-enabled environment and found that liminality can be beneficial within a project team, but a liminal space that is too strong (therefore hard to control) makes it difficult to incorporate the learning and software back into the organizational working environment after the project is completed. They also presented mechanisms that can be used to create the liminal space and highlighted the positive and negative impacts of creating a semi-permanent versus rotating liminality.

Pina, Cunha and Cabral-Cardoso (2006) and, later Guimarães-Costa, Pina and Cunha (2009) examined liminal space in organizations. Pina, Cunha and Cabra-Cardoso examined the concept of liminality in their analysis of legality and illegality in organizations, and Guimarães-Costa, Pina and Cunha observed international managers and their roles in organizations. In both papers, the authors considered the centrality of rules to modern organizations and the potential discrepancy between general rules and specific situations. They found that people are often confronted with a dilemma: apply the rules when they should not be applied or bend the rules to improve their applicability. This double-bind situation forced people to slip into a liminal space, betwixt and between, accepting the structure while simultaneously challenging it.

The current paper identifies the liminal space in SOEs in Poland. Particular groups within companies (i.e., employees, trade unions, management, and supervisory board members) often take actions that do not follow procedures and that are, although common, sometimes even illegal. The relationship between liminality and illegality is explored in order to extracting implications for the control of legal and illegal networks. We analyze how these actions influence individuals and organizations

as a whole. Given the deep and complex context of liminal processes, we concentrate on descriptions of final changes and compare them to legal procedures and organizational rules.

State-owned Enterprises (SOEs)

SOEs rely on the institutional determinants of its governing bodies (i.e., management board, supervisory board, and the general meeting of the shareholders). Because shareholders transfer their rights to run the company to the management board, which is supervised by the supervisory board, supervisory board members should exercise their duty based not only on legal, economic, and financial rules, but also taking into consideration shareholders' interests. In SOEs in Poland, the supervisory board may not give any binding instructions to the management board in regard to how the company's day-to-day business is run.

SOEs in Poland provide a unique field for research because of their traditions and cultural context. Older people in Poland who remember the socialist regime treat SOEs as 'nobody's organizations' (100% of the shares belong to the Ministry of Treasury). SOEs are a psychological and sociological phenomenon of publicly owned (Wiens, 2000) companies that belong to the treasury—an abstract legal entity. Consequently, SOEs have no concrete owner, giving the impression that the organizational infrastructure is comprised of 'nobodies'. Given the difficulty of understanding such an approach, we focus on describing single positions and relationships in specific contexts.

Steel Silesia—Context

Steel Silesia is located in the Silesia region of Poland. The company is part of the steel industry; while it does not produce steel, it does provide steelworks with the services necessary to facilitate steel production. The Ministry of the Treasury is Steel Silesia's only shareholder; 100% of Steel Silesia's shares belong to the Treasury. The Polish government decided not to privatize Steel Silesia (i.e., by selling it to Steel International) since it played an important role in controlling Steel International's activity in Poland. However, today that situation has changed; controlling Steel International has become irrelevant because it owns the majority of the Polish steel industry anyway. The Polish government wants to speed up the privatization processes in Poland since it needs money to cover its high budgetary deficits, so it plans to privatize Steel Silesia as soon as possible. However, Steel Silesia's financial situation is less than ideal; its debts are so high that the company's financial costs (i.e., the cost of interest) exceed its earnings from operational activity. Even so, Steel Silesia owns very attractive real estate in the centre of Silesia, the estimated value of which exceeds the value of the company's debt.

In the summer of 2008, Steel Silesia had two interested investors ready to pay an acceptable price for the real estate. Unfortunately, according to the procedure binding SOEs, selling the company's real property required a general meeting and, at that time, the department of the Ministry of Treasury that supervised Steel Silesia and whose director represented the Ministry of Treasury at the general meetings was engaged in the preparation of the privatization of Polish shipyards, a crucial process for the Polish government for political reasons. As a symbol of the Solidarity movement, the Polish shipyards—which were in bad economic conditions—were also subject to intense public interest. As a result of activities related to privatizing the Polish shipyards, the general meeting of Steel Silesia was postponed several times and, by the time it finally convened and consensus on selling the real estate was achieved, the global financial crisis had begun and the investors were no longer interested in the property.

Clearly, Steel Silesia has faced difficult years in its recent history, but the company continues to operate. In fact, if it weren't for its financial costs, the company would likely be seeing a profit. Considering all the financial, legal, and economic rules that Steel Silesia must follow, and considering its financial condition, it should not have been able to function for such a long time. So what factors enabled it to continue operating?

Steel Silesia's Liminal Spaces

As previously described, Steel Silesia is operating in a strongly institutionally determined environment. These institutional factors indicate that the company is in such a bad condition that it should not be able to function for such a long time. However, Steel Silesia occupies several transitional spaces that may have led to the organization's ability to survive.

While the supervisory board's institutional task is to supervise the management's activity in keeping with its shareholder's interests, in practice, Steel Silesia's supervisory board plays a different role. Understanding this role requires appreciating the position of each member of the board. The supervisory board consists of five members: two elected by the employees and three appointed by the Minister of Treasury. Of the three members appointed by the Minister of Treasury, one works in the Ministry of Treasury—Ministry employees' membership on Steel Silesia's supervisory board is a form of reward for their job in the

Ministry—and the other two board members are independent members, one a specialist in finance and the other a specialist in commercial law.

Liminal space between employees and board members. Steel Silesia's employees' attitude toward the supervisory board members—especially those from outside the company—has been sceptical from the beginning. Board members were perceived as intruders from 'far Warsaw' (the capital) who did not understand employees' problems and whose only task is to control the company so it did not do anything to contradict the Minister of Treasury. Moreover, employees were convinced that board members were politically related to the governing coalition.

However, as employees came to realize that the board members were interested in their situation and wanted to spend time with them, they realized their initial perceptions were off target. As a result, board members who initially felt like intruders ultimately came to be perceived as part of the company. The board members also realized that the most important tasks were the restructuring and subsequent privatization process necessary to preserving jobs for the employees. Board members understood that, to help the company go through these processes, they had to convince those attending the general meeting to embrace solutions that preserved jobs.

As a result, the supervisory board members began to represent the company's interest at the general meeting to a much greater extent than the shareholders' interest, thereby constituting an inversion from the board's institutional role. In other words, board members changed their institutional roles from representing the Ministry of the treasury before the company to representing the company and all the workers before the Ministry. As such, a liminal space emerged as a new relationship between workers and supervisory board members evolved.

Gap liminality. Another situation that emerged to suggest liminality involved the two supervisory board members appointed through a competitive procedure carried out by the ministerial appointment committee authorized by the Minister of Treasury. Both members came from outside Silesia, and both were academics (one is the primary researcher of this study). Neither of the appointees was a member of any political party or related to the Minister or to any other official in the Ministry of Treasury. They were appointed to the board in 2006, prior to the parliamentary election in 2007 that resulted in a change in the governing coalition in Poland and a change of the Minister and main officials in the Ministry of Treasury. The new Minister decided that all SOEs' supervisory board members had to be appointed through a competitive procedure, which led to changes in the vast majority of supervisory board memberships as independent members were replaced by new, often politically affiliated candidates.

Steel Silesia's supervisory board was the exception; its membership did not change at all, perhaps because the company's bad situation made it unattractive to political insiders. In addition, the role of the supervisory board's independent members had strengthened during their first year, prior to the elections, because the recall of the president of the management board in 2007 had required them to serve on that board as well until a new president could be appointed. Consequently, they were able to become acquainted with the company from the inside and to meet many of the employees. In meeting with employees from each department, the board members were astonished to learn of the employees' knowledge about the company; most had spent their entire careers with the company, understood the company's difficult situation, and realized that they could not afford to pressure management for higher salaries or other privileges. Moreover, they knew that their counterparts in privatized companies earned much more than they did and that they would benefit directly if the company were able to pay off its debts and then become privatized. Because employees of Polish SOEs generally prefer that their companies remain state-owned, which guarantees them a stable job, unlike private companies, the gap between the attitude of most SOE employees and that of Steel Silesia's employees constitutes liminality.

Trade unions. A third liminal space had to do with the company's trade unions. Another of the reasons that Steel Silesia's board members were not replaced after the 2008 election was that the trade unions supported them. Three trade unions operate in Steel Silesia and compete with one another. These trade unions have historically kept their distance from the supervisory board, but they saw that the supervisory board seemed to appreciate trade unions' position and the contributions and interests of the employees. As a result, all three trade unions wrote letters of support for the company's board members, highlighting their roles after the recall of the management board's president and how employees had put their trust in them. Such support by the trade unions is an exceptional case; the Minister of the Treasury remarked that this had been the first time that all trade unions, which usually compete with one another, had come together to support a supervisory board. The character of this relationship is clearly liminal since trade unions usually clash with supervisory boards.

Management board. A fourth liminal space was related to Steel Silesia's management board, which consists of only one member: the president. The company's financial situation was difficult, and the company was teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Its bank accounts had been blocked by the courts, and the president of the management board had to negotiate with the main creditors (i.e., Custom Chamber and Social Insurance Institution) on a month-to-month basis to release money from the

company's bank accounts to pay salaries and other set liabilities. If the creditors had not agreed, the company would have gone bankrupt.

Two considerations stopped the creditors from blocking the president's efforts by freezing its bank accounts. First, Steel Silesia is an SOE, so pressure from public creditors is not as strong as it is for a private company. Although the main competition law requires that SOEs and private companies be treated equally, the bankruptcy law does not forbid creditors from releasing debtors' bank accounts. Second, Steel Silesia has existed for almost 200 years and has a long history of providing jobs for many people from Silesia. Thus, the Custom Chamber's and Social Insurance Institution's directors likely realized that they were not taking a professional approach so much as they were succumbing to strong traditional sentiment in Silesia. Since factors other than tradition or local cultural values have crucial meanings and influence organizations' management decisions in the contemporary market, the relationship between Steel Silesia and its creditors was unusual.

Another important factor was the personality of the president of the management board. The president had worked at Steel Silesia for almost 35 years, and people recognized him as a hardworking and honest man, so creditors did not associate Steel Silesia's poor financial condition with management's activity. In their opinion, Steel Silesia was the victim of transition and unreasonable restructuring processes carried out by politicians.

As for the relationship between the management board and the supervisory board, if they maintained their formal roles, the supervisory board was limited to the supervision of company's financial and legal documentation. However, the turning point was the delegation of supervisory board members to the management board after the recall of the president of the management board. When the new president was finally appointed, he took advantage of the opportunity to meet with the supervisory board members who had been delegated to the management board. They openly discussed their opinions of the company's situation and ultimately came to the same conclusion: the company's weak condition was the result of most important decisions concerning the company having been made by officials from the Ministry of Treasury, who were too far away to understand the company. Consequently, when the supervisory board members' role changed from supervising the management board to representing the company's interest in relation to the general meetings (i.e., that of the Minister of the Treasury), the change in the relationship between the supervisory board and the president of the management board had a surprisingly positive impact on Ministry officials' work as they were able to glean much more comprehensive information about the company.

Contractors. The fifth liminal space was that of contractors. Steel Silesia's main contractors are companies owned by the largest steel holding in the world: Steel International, whose production process depends on Steel Silesia. The members of the contractor's management boards know the president of Steel Silesia's management board, having worked together for almost 30 years in the state-owned steel holding to which both Steel Silesia and its contractors belonged. The owners of Steel Silesia and the private companies are far removed from daily operations and, while the management boards of Steel Silesia and the private companies operate according to owners' interests, they also have interpersonal relationships.

Normally, private contractors wait until the final due date to make their payments, but this is not the case with Steel Silesia; they pay earlier in order to help Steel Silesia pay its own creditors. The private companies' management understands that their production depends on Steel Silesia and that the management and employees of Steel Silesia are their colleagues—people with whom they have worked for many years. This is also a part of the liminal space.

Conclusion

The stories about all the liminal spaces of Steel Silesia combine to form a model of the company's most significant relationships. Given limitations of space, not all the liminal spheres are present, but these five examples help to reveal how liminality operates in Steel Silesia's organizational life.

Liminality occurs in organizational processes in many ways. In Steel Silesia, rigid procedures and complicated rules are difficult to obey and just as difficult to omit. As Cunha and Cabral-Cardoso (2006) indicated, people in institutionally determined organizations constantly choose between applying the rules when they should not be applied and bending the rules to improve their applicability. Although working in such conditions is inconvenient, it promotes the development of people's creativity and innovativeness as they try to reach solutions that are neither obvious nor related to the company's regulations or procedures.

A question of the legality of such actions emerges. We described only few specific situations in which people were pushed to circumvent the rules in some manner. We cannot define such actions as illegal, but those involved dissolved problems in unusual ways. When the trade unions stood together to support the supervisory board, the trade unions' actions were not so much illegal as surprising and unusual. In this case, transcending procedures was not only the result of organizational restraints, but also strongly connected with the atmosphere at Steel Silesia.

The organizational climate in Steel Silesia is unique among SOEs in Poland. Many SOEs continue to operate in post-Soviet and socialistic countries; in Eastern European countries they are remnants of the centrally planned economy, although they are

supposed to be privatized. Their organizational culture remains a topic of interest; in particular, the organizational cultures of Chinese SOEs have been investigated by researchers (Wang, 1997; Wang & Yang, 2007), and organizational culture has been considered a crucial factor in determining their learning ability, organizational performance, economic results, and general development.

Parties to the relationship	Institutional relationship	Liminal relationship
Minister of the Treasury and supervisory board	Supervisory board's members are obliged to supervise the company with reference to legal and financial rules, but also in regard to the shareholder's interests. They may be dismissed by the Minister of the Treasury for failing to fulfil this duty.	Supervisory board represents the company's and the employees' interests.
Supervisory board and president of the management board	Supervisory board's duty is to supervise the management board in all elements of the company's activity.	Supervisory board and president of the management board cooperate to convince shareholders of the solutions concerning restructuring and privatization processes that would be conducive to employees' interests (i.e., preserving jobs).
Supervisory board and employees	Supervisory board's duty is to supervise all fields of the company's activity (i.e., work of all company's departments and company's remuneration policy). Employees are distrustful of board members.	Employees see the activity of the supervisory board as a way to retain jobs. They influence the trade unions to support board members.
Trade unions and Minister of the Treasury	No direct institutional relationship exists between these two parties.	Trade unions support board members in the competitive procedure for new board members.
President of the management board and the company's creditors	Creditors, as public institutions (Custom Chamber and Social Insurance Institution), are obliged to block debtors' bank accounts.	Creditors release money from the company's bank accounts to pay employees' salaries and other set liabilities.
President of the management board and the company's contractors	Contractors' interest is to pay Steel Silesia at maturity.	Contractors pay Steel Silesia before the day of maturity so as not to create problems for Steel Silesia in regard to its creditors.
Trade unions and supervisory board	No direct institutional relationship exists between these two parties. They prefer to avoid each other.	Trade unions treat the activities of the supervisory board as the way to preserve jobs in the restructuring and privatization processes. They support board members in the competitive procedure for new board members.

Table 2. Meaning of all the Relationships among the Different Interest Groups in Steel Silesia

Babüroglu and Göcer (1994) highlighted the culture clash between the economic and financial assumptions of privatization and the fact that many such companies become 'Sumerbankian'—a withering organizational culture. We think that, without its liminal spaces, Steel Silesia could face a similar fate. In the case of Steel Silesia, its liminal spaces were not only legal, but also indispensable. It is likely that, without the liminal actions taken by all the participants in this organization, Steel Silesia would no longer exist.

In analyzing this case, we wondered whether liminal space exists in every organization regardless of the form, ownership, size, branch, or other factors. Liminal space can be helpful in diverse organizational contexts. It is significant that organizational

culture influences the direction of liminal actions. In confronting, competitive, and dynamic cultures, liminal space may cause problems for fundamental organizational activities, but in cooperative, friendly, relational cultures, liminal space can reinforce organizational activity in a beneficial way. In the case of Steel Silesia, it was not the organization as a whole but the people who formed a sub-culture in the company that allowed liminal space to have a positive impact in day-to-day activities.

Problems with liminal actions may arise in the area of controlling them. A company's participants (e.g., the president of the management board and supervisory board members) may feel the need to control liminal actions and influence them for their own purposes. As demonstrated in this case study, in the majority of situations, the liminal actions were impulsive and improvised, so they would have been difficult to control. The only way to use knowledge about liminal spaces in practice is to observe relationships and try to understand them. At Steel Silesia, among the most important and powerful of these relationships may have been that between members of the supervisory board and the employees and that between the supervisory board and the trade unions. Further analysis reveals that the supervisory board was the focal point of liminal actions. It is likely that having two independent members of the supervisory board resulted in establishing completely new relationships and specific managing spaces that we call liminal. The relationships are depicted in Figure 1.

The relationships among the particular parties influencing Steel Silesia are determined by institutional factors (institutional relationships) and relationships within the liminal space (liminal relationships). Both institutional and liminal relationships determine the company's activity in the way described in this paper, and both kinds of relationships determined that Steel Silesia would still exist. The institutional and liminal relationships among the parties are described in Table 2.

The institutional determinants should have sent Steel Silesia into bankruptcy, but the liminal space within the company was strong enough to overcome the institutional determinants and allow the company to continue to operate. Because of the efforts of the participants who were so deeply engaged in their roles and committed to the company, and because of their embrace of liminal spaces, many positive actions led to a satisfactory outcome.

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Dancing on the limen~~~Embodied and Creative Inter-Spaces as Thresholds of Be(com)ing: Phenomenological Perspectives on Liminality and Transitional Spaces in Organisation and Leadership

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Keywords

Keywords

Abstract

Based on the insights of advanced phenomenology, this paper inquires into spaces and places of transition and liminality in organisations and leader-/followership. After interpreting liminality relationally, basic ideas of a phenomenology of space and embodied place as media for transition are given. The text then discusses the significance of liminality and transitional space in organisations and leadership, particularly its embodied and emotional dimensions as well as ambivalences and ambiguities. In conclusion implications and perspectives on research and practice for transitional spaces and embodied place in organisations and leadership are provided.

Introduction

At present, organisations and its members with their embedding cultural and societal contexts are exposed to an increased occurrence of changes. They move through transitional states with high levels of insecurity, uncertainty and disorder and exist in precarious positions. These shifts require organisations to respond to various challenges, transform and reconstruct and adapt flexibly, while sustaining integrity and identity. Caused by different trigger events and various internal and external reasons, transitions can take many forms and archetypal patterns (Miller & Friesen, 1980). Even more, organisational arrangements become themselves more and more transitional spaces of liminality and its members need to get ready for liminal moves. Liminality seems to be an important condition by which organisations dangle their usual placedness, re-placed by or transformed towards new forms of practices and emplacements. Spaces and places have always been basic conditions for all transitions of human being, things and occasions. As constitutive medium and lived form spaces and places influence or inflect how we understand, engage and transform in the world (Casey, 1993, p. XV). The way we are placed and how we sense space are inseparably linked to our lived experience of the actual and situated every-day life-worlds. These worlds of living include, besides homes and places of leisure, places of work. With all their artefacts, ongoing practices and relationship, as well as with ambiguous experiences and meanings, places of work have multifarious impacts on those dwelling in them. As media of

intentions, passions and actions workplaces are providing a forum for potent experiences of meaningful events (Norberg-Schulz, 1971, p. 19). Specific features of the physical environment correlate not only with worker-motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity, but also with a basic sense of well-being (e.g. Becker, 1981), but can also be experienced as panoptical institution of control (Foucault, 1977). Ambivalently, the way spaces and places are experienced, understood and organised relationally, either enable and include, or constrain and exclude, transitional possibilities and potentialities.

Importantly, transitional places and moves in space refer to spheres of an in-between as very basic constituents of liminality. The *limen* of liminality refers to a threshold or passageway, a state of being *between* two different existential planes. Crossing this threshold is a transient moment, but requires to actually 'take place'. Like the bottom part of a doorway that must be crossed when entering a building, traversing the liminal refers to a practical move through transitional times and spaces. As thresholds are situated at an edge calling for a movement, they carry with them a sense of opening up towards and closing away from. Very phenomenologically, the state of being in liminality gives space for reflective suspension, moments when action is temporarily held in abeyance (bracketed), and disclosing a space, in which phenomena themselves emerge that is to materialize as or fade out of appearance. Liminality as between-space and between-time (Malpas, 2007) are indeterminate and opaque, realms for never asked questions and non-thought possibilities. Thus the liminal is characterized by an inherent ambiguity, and a specific potential for subversion and transformation, highly relevant for today's organisations. By linking phenomenology and organisational studies, this paper aims at contributing to a more comprehensive understanding and reflecting implications of embodied places of and for liminality in organisations. Correspondingly the textual space and interpretative place of this paper will be organised as following.

Firstly the term and realms of liminality will be interpreted as a relational construct and dynamic milieu of in-between. Then basic ideas of a phenomenology of space and embodied place as media for liminality and transition will be presented. Such a phenomenological approach allows not only considering the forgotten ground or media of directly felt and lived experience of liminality. Rather, using Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (1962; 1995), essential qualities of the living body and the embodiment of place as they are connected to liminal space reveal important insights about its inter-relationality. Afterwards the text discusses the significance of the liminal and transitional space in organisations and leadership, particularly the embodied and emotional dimensions and the ambiguities of liminality and moving through transitional space. The conclusion will outline some critical implications and perspectives on research and practice in transitional spaces in organisations and leadership.

Inter-standing Transition and Liminality

As already referred in its original Latin pre-fix, *trans-* means 'across', 'beyond' or 'on the opposite side' of something and transition derives from the Latin verb 'transire' meaning 'crossover'. Accordingly, to go through a *trans*-ition is constituted by a journeying, a state of continuous and discontinuous change, restabilising patterns by differentiating and integrating media. Based on this dynamic interpretation it becomes possible to see the liminal as a potential transitional space for a creative *inter-play*, practices particularly by tricksters as liminal agents of change¹.

Classically, liminality has been interpreted in the context of rituals, as a midpoint between a starting point and an ending point, and as such it is a temporary state of highly intensive awareness and reflectivity. In his seminal study van Gennep (1909) described rites of passage, which accompany changes of place, state, social position, and age. According to him these rites consist of three structural phases: separation, marginalization, reincorporation or re-assimilation, referring to pre-liminal, liminal, post-liminal states. Interestingly, there are special acts reserved for transitions between states. These acts are deviant compared to daily activities, designed to limit discomfort and injury as they are extra-mundane and protected. Correspondingly, and based on the comparison between rites in different cultures, religions and times, Eliade (1958) emphasized the cyclical elements in and metaphorical basis of symbolic rituals of passage as sacred, in contrast to the profane. Building on both van Gennep's structuralist analysis and Eliade's concept, Turner (1969; 1977; 1982) developed his influential concept of liminal experience and liminal space as a transitional state and marginal 'location'. According to Turner (1982) liminality refers to being situated in an ambiguous condition that is present at the limits of existing and emerging social structures. He defines liminal individuals or entities as neither here nor there; they are *betwixt and between* the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony (1969, p. 95), which makes them vulnerable but also liberates them from structural obligations (Turner, 1982, p. 27).

As experiences within the liminal temporal, geographic or psychological spaces are not belonging to an old order, or wholly to a new one, they manifest struggles about identity and agency, creating a productive and disruptive 'third space'. This sphere constitutes a hybrid trans-cultural and inherently uncanny alien territory (Bhabha, 1994, p.56), where distinctions are blurred and politics of polarity are eluded and values can be refashioned.

How much liminal places are part of an in-between sphere, which provides playful potentials, has been shown by Winnicott (1971/1991). He described 'potential spaces' as an area of intermediate transitional experiencing that is between inner and outer worlds, 'between the subjective object and the object objectively perceived' (Winnicott, 1991, p. 100). Being situated between the imagination and the realisation then new creative experiences emerge that include parts of both. One important element of this transitional zone between the self and the real world are transitional objects. As ambiguous phenomena these objects are partaking and connecting playfully the internal world of fantasy and future possibility with the external world of reality and constraints. Forming a boundary-region, transitional objects and figures enact and emplace alternative worldly positioning and heterogeneous trajectories (Massey, 2005, p. 9). Importantly, all these qualities transitional spaces and objects are not only relevant for infants, but also influence social adult life to become a creative one (Young, 1989; 1994) and as such are helpful for critically interpreting organisations (Carr & Downs, 2004).ⁱⁱ

Transitional places, like airport, hotels, or being situated in front of computers, refer to what Augé (1995) calls transit through 'non-space'. For him these are late-capitalist phenomena of self-contained 'supermodernity' resulting in an incoherent perception to which individuals are connected in a uniform manner and where no organic social life is possible. However he tends to underestimate the heterogeneity and materiality of the social networks bound up with the production of non-places/places. Instead of focusing on the presences and absences associated with the polarities of place and non-place, it has been suggested to focus more on the multiple, partial, dynamic and relational 'placings' which arise through the diverse performances and movements associated with travel, consumption and exchange (Merriman, 2004) and organising.

It seems that in contemporary life there exists increasingly a kind of fluid liminality (Rich & Rasmussen, 2002) and permanent state of transition as liminoidityⁱⁱⁱ. Even as some forms and contents of this liminoidity are becoming more routinised, shifting from extraordinary to ordinary (Murphy, 2002), all transition requires embodied spaces and places as media. Therefore, and before relating the liminal and transitional space to organizations and leadership, first basic ideas of a phenomenology of embodied space and place as media for the liminal will be presented.

Phenomenology of Embodied Space & Place as Media for Liminality and Transition

In the following the constitutive role and significance as well as some functions, features and qualities of the space, and place as very medium for transitions will be discussed from an phenomenological perspective. Based on a basic involvement in the world existential spatiality and situated places are constitutive for the human condition. Far from being merely locatory, both space and place are essential for existence that is to 'be' is to be bounded by spatial and placial realities. Through spaces and places the world manifests itself to human beings; and where 'being-in-the-world' happens.

Phenomenologically, place-related experiences are associated with dwelling in-the-world (Bachelard, 1964; Heidegger, 1962) in which space is cleared or freed for settlement and boundary-forming lodging. Unlike the Euclidian homogenous character of space, the Cartesian notion of extension as measurable distance, a Newtonian idea of space as a container or the Kantian separation of space and time, phenomenologically living spaces and places of living – as very base for liminal experiences – are *media* for things, processes and experiences to take place (Stroeker, 1987). Consequently, 'existential space' is not a mere shell, or a location, but a setting for experiences, and life-worldly events, which are implicated in the accomplishment of situated activities. As the very structure and possibility of experience is grounded in place (Malpas, 1999), this binding is not a contingent feature, but rather constitutive for the entire human existence at all. Even more, place refers to a qualitative matrix, that is to a pulsing or 'potentized' field of liminal experience, able to move us even in its stillness (Abram, 1996, p. 190).

Based on an important critical understanding of the differences and relationship between space and place^{iv} a phenomenological interpretation of them relies on an underlying, primordial and living dimension (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 290-294). This embodied and *lived-space* is not geometrical space^v as 'far from my body's being for me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space at all for me if I had no body' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 117). The body and the world form a dynamic spatio-temporal connection that is oriented by the primacy of the bodily space. Giving the central role of locality as it arises through embodiment, Merleau-Ponty shows that spaces and places are themselves *incorporated within* us.

Embodiment refers to our lived being-and-placed-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 & Burrell, 2008, p. 215). Accordingly, human experience and action is essentially grounded in the placed concrete corporeal therefore are intimately connected with the 'environing' and socio-cultural world in its particularity and immediacy. The living and lived body is always emplaced, and as such takes us to and through spaces and places of transition. Accordingly, the living, moving, and knowing body is bonding and bounded agent, vehicle, articulation, and witness of being in place (Casey, 1993, pp. 48, 313).

Merleau-Ponty's conceptualisation of the embodied subject (Crossley, 1996, p. 101) helps to investigate the relationship and negotiation of the material, the individual, and social in relation to the given and production of space and complex realities of

place and liminality. Bodies mediate and navigate humans into co-orientation with places allowing the co-creation of and dwelling in 'place-scapes' (Casey, 1993, p. 25).

Particular places shape and are shaped by physical objects, events, and causal processes that have both spatial and temporal dimensions as well as by memories, personal and communal narratives, social activities, and institutions. Relating to both internal and external subjective and collective horizons, place is 'a structure comprising spatiality *and* temporality, subjectivity *and* objectivity, self *and* others' (Malpas, 1999, p. 163). Thus, place and its liminal qualities are neither objective nor subjective, but the *relational 'ground'* for both and as such part of a (post-dualistic) social body and reflexive embodiment (Crossley, 2001; 2006).

Inter-Relationality of Spaces and Places

What does it imply that places are not simple locations, but relational (Casey, 1993, p. 65) and that a place is more an *event* than a thing to be assimilated into known categories (Casey, 1996, p. 260)? How can we think of place as medium for liminality in an in-between, processing as an inter-relational event?

Referring to a chiasmic, incorporated intertwining and a reversibility of pre-personal, personal and interpersonal dimensions, Merleau-Ponty's indirect and post-dualistic ontology of elemental 'flesh', as incarnated principle and formative medium (1995), allows a relational base to 'inter-stand' placed phenomena (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994, p. 1, 8). With this philosophy of in-between, we can see that place and placing is only possible by being open to the flux of ambiguous processes of which embodied, spheres are interplaying constituents. It is in a chiasmic nexus, where embodied selves and world entwine, through which relational place is part of ongoing spiralling cycles of dissipation and re-creation of an unfolding co-creation. Following this ontological shift away from a substantialist object located in a Cartesian grid, allows seeing places of becoming as emerging events of passages. A relational approach interprets transitional places and times as a dispersed and inherently indeterminate process, which is continually reconfiguring itself. Thus places of transitions are not simple locations, but relational happenings (Casey, 1993, p. 65), eluding reifying categorisation (Casey, 1996, p. 260).

Relationally, transitional places are not seen reductively as identifiable entities *sui generis* based on individuality or inter-subjectivity or made objectively measurable. With a relational intelligibility in place, attention shifts from an understanding of space as a container to transitional places as what transpires *between* situated people and their placed artefacts-in-use.

With Merleau-Ponty, we can acknowledge the in-between of this becoming as a processual gap or as a corporeal difference (Weiss, 2000): a non-dual relational 'inter-being' (Merleau-Ponty, 2003, p. 208).

Correspondingly, transitional place and placing of and within organising becomes factually based on processes and practices that are jointly structured events and activities within a complex set of inter-relations. Out of these interconnections then embodied perceptions, feelings, cognitions and meanings, and communities, as well as artefacts, structures and functions of transitional place and emplacement are continually created, questioned, re-created, and re-negotiated.

It is this recursive and reversible nexus of in-between of place and placing as an ongoing processes of 'be(com)ing' that serves as the (re-)source for creative transitions. By recognizing the pre-eminence of relational processes, these become *form-in-media*, in which transitional places are continuously co-created and changed in the course of being realised through the practices of organising, leading and following.

A relational approach allows overcoming the inherent problems and limits of a mechanistic and essentialist perspective on space and place in conventional organisational and leadership studies. Relationality encourages to describe 'inter-connections' and processes through which the world of organising, leading, following and its placing are experienced in a continual state of transitional, hyper-dialectical relating (Calori 2002) and becoming (Hernes, 2007; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).^{vi}

Being embedded and entangled in relational practices, organisational practices and particularly those of leader- and followership, can be seen as distributed and dispersed, thus de-centered and disseminated through multiple, dynamic sets of constellations of relationships. Therefore transitional places are shifting cluster of variable elements throughout a configured lattice. All of these dimensions and its forms, formations and transformations of place interrelate and co-create each other within an 'inter-world' as a shared 'inter-mundane' space (Merleau-Ponty, 1995, p. 269). Ultimately, it is the inter-relational 'space in-between' (Bradbury and Lichtenstein, 2000), with its gaps and interstices and therein unfolding in-tensions (Cooper & Law, 1995), which is the 'birthplace' and medium for transitional and meaningful places respectively emplacement of organisations and its members. It is in this processual in-between, where we can find the 'source' and 're-sources' also for creativity, innovation and the added value of embodied practices in organisations and its members. The inclusion of such a relational places and placing in an in-between provides renewed possibilities for developing richer, more textured, understandings of how organising, leading and following are part of a lived and creative involvement and transformation through the liminal.

Transitional Spaces Liminality and in Organisational and Managerial Practices

In which way are the outlined concepts of a relational transitional space and liminality relevant for organisation and leadership research and practice? What role do the body and embodiment play for transitions and transitional spaces in and for them? Why is it important to think about a liminal organization (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003) or liminalities in organising or organising as ‘liminalising’? As we have seen before, liminality as the condition and state of be(com)ing in-between and moving through transitional spaces refers to be at the limits or margins of existing arrangement and realities. It is a state of being where new values, behaviours, social dynamics and functions or structures are emerging and coordinated. This process seems to describe circumstances many organisations and its members are operating and situated in. Apparently, in today’s world of change, organisational realities are not only becoming more transitional, but organisation and ways of organising are media or liminal processes. While current organisations are facing various challenges concerning an acceleration of complex and discontinuous change processes, various activities, such as downsizing, delayering, outsourcing and restructuring are increasingly part of organisational and leadership realities. Additionally, being embedded in competitive market dynamics, the necessity to adapt to changes and pressure for innovation requires corporations to transform themselves continuously. As organisations have to incorporate transient realities and transformational movements increasingly, the concept of liminality provides an explanatory potential.

Forms of liminality in occupational life can be found in organisational socialization (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008), particularly work role transition, for example cases of organizational entries and exits (Ebaugh, 1988), or career transitions (Louis, 1980) like promotions, transfers, and demotions; inter-organizational moves or function and profession changes. Liminality and transitional spaces have been linked to management trainees (Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2002), and training of so-called ‘High-Potential-Managers’ (Dubouloy, 2004). Another area is interim-management, being temporarily in an interstitial role of an in- and outsider, while orchestrating stability and instability, and balancing various other opposing pressures also for implementing nasty corporate shake-outs (Goss & Bridson, 1998). Furthermore, management consultants (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003) and embodied performances of management gurus (Carlone, 2006), but also media-practices and intermediality in organisations (Fornäs, 2002) have been explored as transitional states and spaces. All these studies confirm and imply that liminality is not outside or peripheral to organisation and leadership, but in the cracks within its very social structure and processes.

As a metaphor and experience, liminality is informative for investigating the shifting relationship between work and organization as response to requirements of hyper-flexibility (Volberda, 1996) and regional or global competition. This pressure for organizational flexibility and dealing with competitive forces are modifying employment relationships as they are restructured to become more transitory and individualized (Tempest, 2007). Correspondingly, one special field of application of present phenomena of liminality in organisations refers to flexible workers and organizational learning (Tempest & Starkey, 2004). Increasingly, mobile and transient positions of temporary and flexible employees make them liminal. Due to temporal and contractual flexibilisations, employees turn into ‘threshold people’ (Garsten, 1999, p. 606), who, like their organization, become more episodic, and fragile (p. 604). This state generates positive, but also undermining effects, particularly in temporary project teams (Tempest & Starke, 2004). For temporary or part-time employed staff, a constant liminality can cause a disruption, implying a loss of social bonding and qualities like mutual trust, loyalties and commitments. Not being fully members of their host organization nor its community they operate in a marginal space, and experience liminality as a social limbo. But also more generally, while moving through periods of transition towards developing new perspectives and practices the situation of many organisations and its members is characterized by dissolution of identity, ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. Importantly all of these liminal realities are mediated through embodied and emotional dimensions.

Embodied and Emotional Dimensions of Transitions in Organisations

The significance of liminality lies in that it is a vital and inherent part of embodied and emotional spheres of life-worldly organisations, where placing, spacing and timing happen (Hansen, 2004). It is by this emplacement that organisational practices are being realised and transitions literally take place (Jones et al, 2004). Functionalist and utilitarian orientations tried to determine key elements of organisational space as entities that are divided, controlled, imposed and which have hierarchical, productive, symbolic and social dimensions (Chanlat, 2006). Correspondingly, also leaders and followers organise values through contextual and textual construction of space and place (Waistell, 2006) and linguistically inscribe spacings (Jones, et al., 2004).

Spacing and timing constitute the internal and external horizontal ground of moving, comprehending and communicating in the world of organizing. Importantly, these processes implicate the whole sensorium of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch

(Hoskin, 2004, p. 752; Küpers, 2009a). While sensual bodily experience co-constitutes transitional spaces, the existence and movement through transitional spaces influences and impacts in turn on the body and embodiment.

Embodied transitional processes, enable the persons or groups concerned to reconcile and integrate dynamically the inner and outer world, to work through the tensions in the here-and-now between the past and the future and the provisions for a transitional reality and non-linear passage during change processes in organization (Amado & Ambrose, 2001). Importantly, this includes the often underestimated pre-reflexive and non-cognitive dimension involved in transitions and transitional spaces and places.

For developing a more integral understanding of transition in organisation the following discusses some embodied and emotional constituencies. Following the embodied turn in social and organizational science (Hassard, et al., 2000, p. 12) advanced phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; 1995) offers possibilities for developing an understanding of a re-embodied organization (Styhre, 2004) and a corresponding sense-based organisational practice (Küpers, 2009a) of transitions. Through their embodied selves the 'subjects' of the transitional processes are situated in their life-world in a tactile, visual, olfactory or auditory way. Whatever they think, feel or do, during and in relation to transitions and transitional spaces they are exposed to a synchronised field of inter-related senses (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.207). It is through the living body and situated embodiment, in the midst of a world of touch, sight, smell, and sound of organisational life-worlds in which transitions and its spaces are being experienced and realised. Even more, being embodied is already transitional in situated organising. Within this situatedness, the living body mediates between internal and external or subjective and objective as well as individual and collective dimensions and meanings. It is this body-mediated process that coordinates the relationship between individual behaviour, socio-cultural relations and apersonal artefacts and systems. For example in using resources, workers, who operate computers, 'tune in' to their working environment by an embodied ocular and haptic coordination, while in turn being touched by the physical properties of their working terrain (Hindmarsch & Heath 2000).

Or as part rhythmic transition (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1997) a corporeal rhythm and timing functions as a patterned energy-flow of action, which is marked in and through the body by varied stress and directional change, influenced by various levels of intensity, speed and duration (Goodridges 1999, p. 43). Importantly many synchronised transitions in organisations are coordinated by living, bodily, spontaneous, expressive and responsive activities as forms of emotion- and aesthetic sensitive answerability (Shotter 2004; Küpers 2002) and mutually placed relationship makes embodied workers and affording workplaces 'respondents' and 'co-respondents' enacting a specific place-responsiveness (Cameron et al., 2004). In this way transition can be seen as an emergent process of bodily subjects within an embodied context, which is closely linked to emotional dimensions.

Moods, feelings and emotions are highly relevant for any kind of transition in organisations (Küpers & Weibler, 2008). As emotions emerge as potential movement, they imply a particular embodied orientation and enactment of dynamic dispositions for action. Accordingly, the realities of various emotions reflects and organizes the transition of different intentional relation to the persons, objects, events, and actions involved (de Rivera, 1977) or generate particular emotional responses in organisations. The 'logos' of emotion begins in the pre-articulated, embodied experience of moving and being moved in some manner and related to an 'other'. Even more, the already understood, implicit, lived ways of 'being-in-the-world' emotionally are shaped by the articulation of reflected meaning through symbols and language, thus implies a cognitive dimension. It is through embodied and symbolic 'presentational' acts (Langer, 1953) that emotionally intermediated potential for transitions are triggered. The relation between emotions and organisational change and transformation has been investigated (Huy, 2002; Kiefer, 2002). Emotions are an especially strong force related to job insecurity and layoffs (Brockner et al., 1992), downsizing (Paterson & Härtel, 2002), and resistance (Bovey & Hede, 2001). Employees' ambivalence towards change initiatives is often linked to conflicts and associated with negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction and grievances (Kirkman et al., 2000). Although change can be perceived as a challenge or an opportunity and may stimulate positive emotions such as excitement, enthusiasm, pride, and creativity (Goleman et al., 2002), it is more often experienced as threatening, creating negative feelings such as anger, fear, anxiety, cynicism, resentment, and withdrawal (French, 2001). Moreover, moods also affect various trans-formational and transition-related phenomena in organisation (Küpers & Weibler, 2005; Küpers, 2010a). Together with embodiment emotions are a co-constitutive base also for aesthetic processes. When work-places in this way become stages for potential spaces of play and enacted narratives and embodied performances these are not only fixed work-stations, but milieus for movement, rhythms and even dance as media 'that allows the human body to play with space – seeking a concretisation of spatial possibilities' (Atkinson, 2008, p. 1089) as an emerging, localised form of 'aesthetics' of co-presence (Atkinson, 2008, p. 1083).

Transformational Potential of Transition Management

Liminality provides a transformational potential for organization and leader-/followership, as it not only disrupts the given status quo, but also invites transcending what is taken for granted towards new forms and where social and structure emerges.

Particularly, when an organisation becomes overregulated, or trapped in an overemphasis on rigid structures the liminal provides a kind of transformational counterforce. Manifested in trickster-like change agents, liminal practices spontaneously irritate by introducing dis-order or opening up for new formations.

Crossing boundaries and breaking the rules transformational transitions alter the way that things are organized. They mediate or create a life-world that is more complexified, colourful and vivacious, but also uncertain, questionable and indeterminate, calling for *negative capabilities*.^{vii}

The practice of transformations implies a set of mediated forms of multi-folded transitions on various levels in organisations. In particular the interdependent practice of leader- and followership generates transforming effects through interwoven situated embodied, material, emotional and aesthetic qualities (Küpers 2010b). Overcoming the shortcomings of conventional transformational person-centred leadership an inter-leadership (Küpers & Weibler, 2008) includes as transitional dimensions of selves, agents, cultures and systems within a complex interconnected nexus of an integral practice. Based on a dynamic view of integration, such a transitional inter-leadership cannot only 'bear' contradictions and inconsistencies (Conger, 1989), but leverages and moves strategically between poles of multiple paradoxa (Bloodgood & Bongsug, 2010; Clegg et al. 2002).

For example such leadership oscillates on the edges of a mechanistic and organic style, or global and local orientations, while being responsive to contradictions and complexities (Denison et al., 1995). Transitional inter-leaders and -followers are not resolving paradoxa, but holding them open or working through them chiasmically (Küpers, 2011). By keeping and learning from the creative tensions and moving between opposing forces and paradoxes of transitions, these can be dynamically interrelated and transcended. Such moves would not only help reframing entrenched assumptions and meanings, but also developing a more adequate repertoire of understandings and behaviors that better reflects organizational intricacies (Quinn, Kahn, & Mandl, 1994) in the creative zones of transition. Being fertile for further development and inherent in re-evolutionary spiraling towards new levels and ways of being, contradiction can then be taken as an invitation to take part in a game in which serious playfulness encourages the actor to engage fully with the sensorial, emotional and intellectual dimensions of paradoxical experience (Beech et al. 2004, p. 1314).

As part of changing individual and organizational identities (Fiol, 1995) in many occupational passages and professional role-transitions, people experience some kind of identity ambiguity (Corley & Gioia, 2004), and identity dynamics (Ashforth, 2001; Trice & Morand, 1989). This in turn requires an effective narrative identity-work to sustain feelings of authenticity and need to match the narrative repertoires (Ibarra, 2003; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). As stories help people to articulate provisional but continuous selves, while linking the past and the future and enlisting others (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 138), narratives are media, which serve to build *transition bridges* (Ashforth, 2001). In this way they assist crossing the gaps between old and new identities and roles, claimed and granted, in transition-related social interactions as well as to facilitate the interplay between these day-to-day negotiations and the accumulated understandings of a whole life's experience and corresponding reflexive amendments (Ibarra & Barbulescu 2010, p. 149).

Oriented towards long-term sustainability and combined with short-term experimental learning a policy-focused transition management can be envisioned as a process-oriented approach of reflexive governance (Voß & Kemp, 2006). As such it is designed to deal with complexity and uncertainty in a constructive way, while offering a goal-oriented modulation for meeting goals in a recursive cycle (Kemp et al., 2007). An integral transition management refrains from fixing specific measures and strategies too early and too rigidly. Rather it modulates co-evolutionary dynamics that already drive change, 'bending' them in ways that facilitate and nurture transformative innovation and practices of sustainable development (Kemp et al. 2007), which requires new ways of thinking, organising and acting from all actors while facing ambivalences of liminality.

Ambivalences of Liminality

Liminal conditions are both exhilarating and frustrating, as workers were torn between the promise of freedom given by a transitional space, and the promise of stability given by the comfort of a place of their own. The uncertainties involved in allowing the in-between of the liminal to happen can be exciting and enables creative learning, but can also be unsettling and anxiety-provoking, causing a sense of incompetence, fear and loss of control.

The ambivalence of the liminal becomes apparent when temporary workers' employment contracts afford potentially liberating fluidity and creativity while situating them as outsiders, separated from work-based community (Garsten, 1999). Liminality and moving through transitional spaces can be both liberating and daunting for workers. Potentially, being in the liminal frees people from the controls and the social rigidities of organizations, thereby opening the door to enhanced creativity. But equally it places them in a marginal place removed from the benefits of permanent employment with the uncertainty and disadvantages that this entails. There exists also the danger of a loss of genuine transformational qualities of experiencing the liminal if it becomes persistent: As liminality becomes routinised, marginal innovations may be happening all the time, but rarely

inventions or break-throughs (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 287). Furthermore, there are threats of cultic and ideological misuse as neophytes in a liminoid space, largely suspended abilities of critical reflection (Turner, 1969). In the same vein, lectures by management gurus have been interpreted as liminoid places of transition, where overloaded neophytes undergo transformation during which their uncertainty was simultaneously assuaged and deepened (Carlone, 2006).

From a critical perspective also self-help lectures and texts are highly problematic. For example, Covey in his best-selling book on habits of highly effective people (1989), propagates an epiphany-inducing technology to generate a discipline of effectiveness, producing de-saturated, financialized and expressivist, selves and belaboured selfhoods, while also support conservative, universalist and self-exploitive modes of being for late capitalism (Cullen, 2009).

In transitional states, when the old world has not yet passed away, and the new world is not fully formed the sense of security and identity is destabilised, which makes those involved prone to cling to restabilising ideologies.

The ambivalence of the liminal is also shown by a longitudinal ethnographic study of a strategic change consulting project and focusing on liminal experience of sharing business meals (Sturdy et al., 2006). The findings show that multi-structured and layered liminal space is not only creative and unsettling. Rather it can also be highly structured and conservative, as it is connected to and coloured by normal organizational routines and hierarchies, and supplementing norms. Correspondingly they can be used tactically e.g. for assessing trustworthiness, exploring and shaping political dynamics, or as a safety valve for pent up cynicism and frustration. Following defining embedded scripts the liminality of meals reinforces and re-shapes 'partnership' relations and is used as a political, rhetorical and relationship building, time-space, subject to negotiation and contestation.

Because of these potential usages and dangers, there is a need to consider the status of *power* and micro-politics involved in transitions, particularly in the context of long-term process of structural change (Avelino & Rotmans, 2009).

Another issue are pseudo-transitions, in which a superficial change is promoted, instead of a genuine transition. Metaphorically the supposed change is just a rearrangement of the furniture, without embodied, emotional, cognitive and structural transformation and re-orderings, which implies relinquishing old arrangements and to radically embrace new ones.

As transition takes time and effort, assessing the readiness for transition indicates what lies ahead, and what specific competencies and restructuring activities are and will become important. Correspondingly, for transition managers' it is vital to use transitions as an opportunity to reevaluate, not only psychological, and social dimensions, but also to redesign the policies, procedures, and systems, to provide in organization a facilitative environment (Winnicott, 1965) and making it more capable for present transits and 'transition-worthy' in the future (Bridges, 2009).

Conclusion – Implications and Perspectives

The exploration of this conceptual space here ventured into localities and dynamics of liminality, applied to organisation and leadership. Investigating embodied and emotional dimensions of spacing and placing related to the liminal provided insights into organising, leading and following as an emplaced and relational event of mediation. These findings have far-reaching theoretical and methodological implications, particularly for developing a more integral research on organisation and leader- and followership (Küpers & Weibler, 2008). For further investigating transitional space and liminality theoretically and empirically requires 'transitions' of conventional theory and methodology. If a discipline organizes an analytical space (Foucault, 1977, p. 143), there is the need to enter more transitional spaces of research and considering new epistemological locations (Knights, 1992) particularly with regard to liminal phenomena. As transition is about crossing boundaries, also corresponding research requires endeavouring into more multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary orientations (Küpers 2010c).

For this to happen, future research needs to break the largely univocal narrative and open up to multiple and new forms of knowledge and methods. This also implies investigating transitional spaces and liminality with first-, second- and third-person perspectives in its singular and plural forms, and specific methodologies or modes of inquiry (Torbert et al., 2004).^{viii}

Future research could examine how the interaction between individual and organizational levels and priorities, as well as dynamic and relational contexts (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006) affects and impacts experiences or processes involved in liminal spacing. A special focus could be given to embodied and emotional dimensions as well as communicational, improvisational and aesthetic qualities (Küpers, 2009a; Hansen et al., 2007).

An adequately placed liminal organisation and leader- and followership will be also one that gives space for revived forms of practical wisdom (Sternberg et al., 2000). Such a wise practice comprises and enacts possibilities for integral transitions of individuals, teams and organizations in their interdependencies (Küpers, 2007; Küpers & Statler, 2008). An integration of embodied feeling thinking, knowing, and doing effectuate wise practices that support realising transitions authentically while contributing to the 'well-be(com)ing' in organizations (Küpers, 2005).

While a more integral form of embodied transition in organisation is strategically important, it also requires investing time, energy, money and other resources with a long-term orientation. It will be challenging to pursue this undertakings, particularly in

current times of increasing pressures to perform, short-term orientation and to produce and measure objectively direct outcomes. Furthermore, transition can be misused for all kind of ideological interests. Calling for transition is always in danger of becoming just another tool or marketing device instrumentalising, appropriating or co-opting the potential of transformational transitions for questionable unsustainable objectives. For that reason, critical questions need to be asked like: What and who is involved in what kind of transition, towards which ends or states, in which ways and before all why? Moreover, how to organize transitional spaces in a way to ensure responsive forms of leading and following not only in economical viable, but also environmental and social sustainable ways? Responding to these questions and for developing proactively, a more prudent and transitional organisations requires an integral responsibility (Küpers, 2010a). Such responsible practice can then become part of a localised sustainable development and business strategy (Dumreicher & Kolb, 2008; Hofmeister, 2002)^{ix}, which follows a place-conscious orientation (Gruenewald, 2003).

Metaphorically, moving on the limen and through transitional spaces resembles the motion of a tightrope walker, in that through under- and over-balancing, the liminal mover find some dynamic temporary moments of balance and then step forward. Like in dancing, this act of moving is a process of falling and re-arising: The dancing body falls forward, as the foot moves advances in order to avoid tumbling and for then taking a step or leap to regain a dynamic 'equilibrium' while purposes or new challenges leads to move onwards again. It is this movement between the falling during walking and re-grounding, which helps being responsive and re-evaluative within the paradoxical dynamics of 'bounded instability' (Stacey, 2003). Instead of pathological fixations this kind of flexible, embodied liminal moves follow transformative causalities and emergent movements between heterogeneous entities.

By considering and integrating the lived body and forms of embodiments and emotions as media for moving through transitional place-scapes, phenomenology helps to find an appropriate understanding of incorporating transitions in organizations and leadership. In this way the liminal, as a transitional inter-space, co-creates a milieu for an in-between that forms an unfolding and dynamic be(com)ing. Moving through transitional spheres of organising, leading and following is then like setting out for exploring territories and relations-ships of the unknown by dancing on and beyond transits of limens of inter-places.

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ⁱ For the archetypal figure and liminal mythic character of tricksters, liminality is their original state of becoming. Their transitional existence in liminality allows 'betwixing' and 'betweening' whom and what they relate to at different entry points, flitting across the borders at any time, penetrating the social structure at will, but not being able to stay. S/He must return to that state of betwixt and between in order to manifest his/her powers. As s/he needs to return to his element, that is liminality it is not possible for him/her to remain static within a given social structure. This liminal nature of the trickster seems to be something that in its radical practice of constantly inverting reality is only possible in mythic literature, while as an existential life-form it is more a temporary phenomenon coming and going, flashing and vanishing. In the modern world with its absorbing or co-opting grip and linearity the danger is to lose one's liminal nature or liminality can be a liability on an individual level. Trickster as personification of ambiguity Radin 1956 xxiii) are trans-former that is deconstructing and re-creating and opening up for different values and practices. Living in liminal times and places trickster withdrawal from conventional social (inter-)action scrutinizing and reconsidering values and basic orientation of the culture from which they are marginalized. Trickster, not only lives on boundaries but also redefines them, sets traps but also evades them while taking the bait, and, while not having their own way of dealing with the world, takes the ways of others and adapts, surviving through this protean flexibility. Trickster may change the world in which they reside but more often will remain on the edge as a disturbing influence, a reminder that things could be different and maybe they should. Trickster does not break rules, but rather redefines them or provides a setting where the rules are, usually temporarily, removed. As the trickster crosses the line, breaks the rules, and undermines duality, he is polytropic, turning many ways (Hyde, 2008, p. 52). With their specific characteristics and competencies like anomalous; trick-player; shape-shifter; situation inverter turning upside down messenger; bricoleur (Hynes, 1993) tricksters function as agents of change for society and organizations by helping or provoking to be creative in seeing things from a different point of view or perspective particularly relevant for organizations.

ⁱⁱ While the notions of transitional objects and potential space are raised within a context of an infant, Winnicott (1991, p. 24) showed that they are not simply confined to the experience of toddlers, but are something that 'throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to and is the basis of the arts and to religion and to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work and culture. Also in adult life finding a transitional space is an opportunity to develop further and mature allowing a passage from a fused to an autonomous and creative self. From the experience of a connectedness between sense of inner and outer (shared) reality offered by the creative and cultural activity of transitional space meaning and self emerge. In a Schillerian way Winnicott claimed: 'It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self' (Winnicott 1971, p. 54). In the ambiguous transitional realm the tension and strain between inner and outer worlds between separateness and union are not eliminated, but are bound, as they become part of interplaying. The Winnicottian notion of transitional-objects shows how the psychodynamics of self and other are played out through objects, and how these objects function as projections of unconscious thought processes and affective states. Moreover, this interpretation can be extended, by using Serres' theory, to connect the micro-level world of object relations to macro-level social and economic relations particularly applied to organisations and their pathological splitting (Carr & Downs, 2004). Withdrawing from the reigning order of necessity (and instrumentality) they offer (temporary) spaces for creative process, play and imagination to make or give new sense to experiences. Winnicott believed that given a 'good enough' environment, the interplay of the inner world and external reality promotes

the development of self and facilitates growth. It is a space where we can develop psychologically, to *integrate* love and hate and to *create, destroy and re-create* ourselves (see Winnicott, 1971/1997, p.41). To enable such spaces of potential in organisations and in the relationship between leaders and followers requires cultivating a playground for developing ideas that is a realm of serious play. Like a caterpillar dissolving into a cellular soup in order to transform into a butterfly, a process only possible because of the containment afforded by the cocoon, organisational containments and supportive relationship hold the transitional space for new identities to emerge, an invisible womb, which can nurture previously unknown realities. By emplacing creative spaces and trying-out-grounds a leeway needs to be given for relatively free movements and unforeseeable possibilities to emerge. In this way the potential space is related to what Foucault (1984) calls '*heterotopia*' which is the *actualised other space*.

ⁱⁱⁱ In an attempt of linking liminality to our times, Turner (1969) used the term liminoid, or liminal-like, for rituals of modern, industrial societies. While liminal phenomena of pre-tribal societies are sacred; liminoid phenomena are typically secular, although they may retain vestiges of the sacred. Turner (1969) noted the possibility of liminality becoming a permanent condition of contemporary life: with the increasing specialization of society and culture, with progressive complexity in the social division of labor, what was in tribal society principally a set of transitional qualities 'betwixt and between' defined states of culture, and society has become itself an institutionalized state (107). Liminality and liminoidity are different in the relation towards societal order. Liminal phenomena appeal to the entire collective in their emotional and intellectual content and are centrally integrated into the total social process, forming with all its other aspects a complete whole (Turner, 1969, p.44). By contrast, liminoid phenomena may be more plural and fragmentary in their relation to the whole culture.

^{iv} For understanding the differences and relationship between space and place, it is worthwhile to have a close look at their place in history and language. The etymology of both terms is revealing: *Place* along with related terms in other European languages such as the German Platz, French place, and Italian piazza, derives from the classical Greek plateia and Latin platea meaning a 'broad way' or 'open space' (see The Oxford English Dictionary). Place brings with it not 'exhausting' notions of openness and spatiality. The origin of the English *space* along with the French *l'espace* can be traced back to the Greek stadion (a standard of length) and the Latin spatium (distance, magnitude or interval). Thus, space designates a realm of atemporal physical extension, a realm within which we make sense of notions of volume, site and shape; of length, breadth and height of distance and position as those notions apply to physical objects. In a broader sense space means room including the non-physical and refers to dimensionality and direction. Accordingly, space is conceived as abstract geometry that is a general, universalised sphere. As such it is interpreted as detached from material form and cultural interpretation (Hillier & Hanson, 1984). Reversely, and put positively, place is space filled up by people practices, objects, and representation (Gieryn, 2000, p.465) and meaning. Both space and place are 'givens' and products of social practice and different sorts of possibly colliding cultural logics albeit different systems of practice. By considering re-place-ing space and re-space-ing place, 'space is a practiced place' (Lefebvre 1991, p. 117) but also place can be taken as practiced space. While existence requires space and is essentially spatial, it is always situated that is bodily existence in a place, and implaced. We are *located* in space, but we feel, interpret, *act* in place, imbued with social meanings. Therefore places are series of affordances for action and what make the experience of space possible. Furthermore place is a space which is invested with understandings of behavioural appropriateness, individual, social and cultural expectations and orientations. To put in other words, places are those enlivened 'spaces' - built or in some way physically carved out - which are perceived, felt, imagined, interpreted, understood narrated (Soja, 1996). Places are endlessly made, not just through brick and mortar, not just when given form to function, but also when we extract from continuous and abstract space a bounded, identified, meaningful, named, and significant place (Etlin, 1997). A place is remarkable as it is constituted by an unwindable spiral of material form and interpretative understandings or experience (Gieryn, 2000, p.471). As such places both constrain and enable us. On the one side they offer us structural, cultural, social clues that shape our conduct and our actions and interactions within that place add to its meanings (Sack, 1997, p.13). On the other side being institutional frames, places can and do constrain and shape action (Goffman, 1961). As such place stabilizes and gives durability to spatial and social structural categories, differences and hierarchies. For example, place arrange patterns of face-to-face interaction that constitute network-formation and collective action as it embodies and secures otherwise intangible cultural norms, identities, memories-and values (Gieryn, 2000: 473). Place sustains (spatial) difference and hierarchy both by routinizing daily rounds in ways that exclude and segregate categories of people, and by manifesting in visible and tangible ways the cultural meanings variously ascribed to them. Places organise space in terms of material, personal, interpersonal, cultural, political, imaginary, and symbolic dimensions and their interrelationship. Thus, in a way, places are organised space, however places lose their character when organised merely spatially. That is such reduced space is what place becomes when the unique gathering of things, meanings, and values are decontextualised and in a way 'sucked out' (de Certeau, 1984; Harvey, 1996). Correspondingly, there has been a substantial critique of abstract space subordinating place (Casey, 1997; Lefebvre, 1991; Abram, 1996) showing the need for reintegrating a relational understanding to re(dis)-cover the significance of dimensions of space and place as events. Furthermore, a transitional placed space resembles an open porous social spaces as described by Benjamin (1985), within which there is no absolute allocation of what happens and where boundaries and opposites interpenetrate.

^v Merleau-Ponty does reject the type of geometric a priori favored by Husserl, however, for he claims that 'Real', i.e., perceived, triangles, do not necessarily have, for all eternity, angles the sum of which equals two right angles, if it is true that the space in which we live is no less amenable to non-Euclidean than to Euclidean geometry (1962, p. 391). This estimate of the underdetermination of physical geometry is potentially misleading, however, for it seems to imply that any geometry is straightforwardly consistent (no less amenable) with the physical evidence. Rather, specific physical assumptions are required in order to render a particular geometry consistent with empirical data, and these assumptions can be challenged in numerous ways: e.g., given the evidence confirming the General Theory of Relativity, one needs to invoke peculiar universal forces so as to retain Euclidean geometry, and thus reject the much simpler non-Euclidean geometry actually employed by the theory. See, also Merleau-Ponty's class notes (2003, p. 101-105), which appears to commit the same oversight.

^{vi} Interpreting spaces as recursive processes resulting of boundary setting the perceivable stabilisation is organised through space formation and reproduction and different spaces brought into interaction lead then to change (Hernes et al. 2006). According to Hernes et al (2006, p. 60) it is in creating spaces, that instability is induced. Therefore space production and reproduction always entail unforeseen consequences, in which then changes reside (ibid. 61). Likewise, Clegg and Kornberger (2006, p. 154) define *spaces in between* as those 'where differences unfold: differences in-between inside-outside, formal-informal, old-new etc.' and suggest the strategy of the void in order to design space for creative organising (ibid. 155). It is this transitional space of an in-between, as a kind of '*inter-space*', which together with '*inter-place*' and inter-face play an important role in and for placing leader- and followership in organisations.

^{vii} For entering the spheres of transitional spaces and moving through transitions the idea of a negative capability as expressed by the poet Keats is inspiring. He describes as capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact & reason (Keats in Gittings 1970, p. 43). This being in uncertain[ty] and state of intentional open-mindedness is a place between the mundane, ready reality and the multiple potentials of a more fully understood existence. It implies the capacity to sustain reflective inaction (Simpson et al., 2002) and to resist the tendency to disperse into actions that are defensive rather than relevant for transitional states and tasks. Not knowing what to do and tolerating ambiguities, paradoxa, uncertainties and complexities for being in the present moment is not only relevant for leadership practice (Simpson & French 2006) but in particular for transitions. Whereas positive capabilities enable to make things happen fast and effectively, conversely negative capability is the capacity to wait without expectations and to hold back the tensions and pressure for solution or quick fixes in response to problems and uncertainties. It is through the very negating of habitual patterns of pressured action that allows the creative process its own rhythm and prevents premature closure. The root meaning of 'capable', like 'capacity' and 'capacious' are derived from the Latin word capax, 'able to hold much' thus refers to 'containing' or 'spacious' whereas the volume of a container is a measure of its internal 'negative' space. However the 'negativeness' of this capability does not indicate negativity, deficiency or insignificance but refraining from action, which may facilitate change and transitions (French, 2001). The active aspect of negative capability is to inhibit the patterns that perpetuate a controlling attitude. The focus is negative in the sense of negating what we know, leaving the space as emergent. The deeper aspect of the creative process

gets a chance to operate when we open the space. Negative capability is both the ability to resist the inappropriate pressure for solution and the capacity to hold the creative tension. It requires considerable skill to remain detached enough to know, not only how, but also when to act – the ripe moment. Negative capability can create an intermediate space, a receptive state of intense and live waiting, attending to deeper patterns of meaning. Negative capability is relevant to organizational change management and transitions because it represents the ability to absorb and respond creatively to the emotional turmoil which can both arise from and in turn cause change and need to be balanced with positive capabilities (French 2001, p. 487).^{viii} Methodologically for investigating transitional spaces and places in organisation and of leader- and followership we need 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, p. 20). This implies focussing on the relationally placed social environment and what this 'allows' or 'permits'. Furthermore, instead of taking isolated observational stances and starting points of reflection the emphasis needs to focus on negotiated procedures and local embedment in everyday life and locally constituted situations or circumstances (Shotter, 1993, p. 20) as realised in action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) and an applied and integral pheno-practice (Küpers 2009b). Practically, also forms of transitional writing (Crème, 2008) are valuable reflective practices that introduce an important element of story-making or personal narrative into academic writing.

^{ix} According to Dumreicher and Kolb (2008, p. 318) sustainability "is a local, informed, participatory balance-seeking process, operating within a Sustainable Area Budget, exporting no nocuous imbalances beyond its territory or into the future, thus opening the spaces of opportunity and possibility." – Local: It happens at a specific place—the living environment of a settlement within its region, including living patterns and creativity of the tenants. – Informed: It benefits from the tools of the global scientific community and requires an interdisciplinary approach, which provides cause and effect feedback as well as systemic loops. – Participatory: It needs informed, empowered, gender sensitive human actors who are the stakeholders in the sustainability negotiation process. – A balance-seeking process: It models alternative future scenarios, taking into account the classical triad of sustainability: economy, ecology, socio-culture, complemented by the context of built environment. – Sustainable area budget: It operates within people's fair earth share. – Spaces of possibilities: Sustainability considers the future as an open space where socio cultural life quality, economic equity, and ecological needs converge towards balance .

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Aesthetics and Ethics: You Can't Have One Without the Other

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Special Issue on Aesthetics and Ethics
Editorial paper

As the old song *Love and Marriage* tells us: you can't have one without the other. Such is the case for aesthetics and ethics and we have too long suffered from the divorce of the two that came with the enlightenment (Wilber, 1998). In this special issue, we sought to mine the rich vein where aesthetics and ethics meet – to look at this relationship that so much of modern organizational scholarship has ignored. Of course, not everyone has ignored it. Brady (1986) broached the subject and concluded that “ethics is fundamentally aesthetic, and the categories of right and wrong ultimately are reduced to the beautiful and ugly (p. 340)”. The authors here do not find the relationship to be quite as simple as that, but there is a persistent theme that aesthetics and ethics are bound with each other and with the instrumentality that drives many of the processes and decision factors in business and management.

We start with Bathurst and Edwards' (this issue) illustration of how aesthetics and ethics work together in Aotearoa/New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi. Using the metaphor of the carver, they consider the Treaty's role in fostering a rich and complex dance among the instrumental, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions of ethical dilemmas in New Zealand – which are applicable to dilemmas in other parts of the world. The tensions within the dance do not resolve, but rather play together in fruitful ways.

Ladkin (this issue) then suggests that moral perception is much like aesthetic perception and managers can be taught moral perception in the way that artists are taught aesthetic perception. Just as artists learn to stay with the evidence of their senses in order to see the world afresh, managers can learn to stay with their senses in order to cultivate their moral perception and see their own world in moral as well as instrumental ways. Yet as with any art, often it requires intention and practice to cultivate the aesthetic sensibility and skill that managers need before they can perceive the moral dimensions of the issues they face.

Finally, Kimball (this issue) offers a first person account of the complex interplay between aesthetics and ethics in her own efforts to make a work of art that included rats. She starts with the idea of creating an artwork that includes live rats running through tubes and wheels, but is quickly faced with both ethical and instrumental issues. Her story shows us a first hand account of Bathurst and Edwards's complex dance of tensions between aesthetic, ethical, and instrumental concerns as well as how an artist practices Ladkin's understanding of moral perception. In the end, Kimball shows us that the dance never ends, the tension never really resolves, yet ethical decisions are made and actions taken along the way.

In all three pieces we see how the three spheres – instrumental, aesthetic, and moral – aren't separate at all. Although great strides have been made in enhancing the material aspects of our existence by separating the instrumental from the moral and the

aesthetic, we have to wonder about the cost of that separation. Although none of the articles address that cost directly, we wonder if the string of corporate ethics scandals of the last decade and the financial crisis of 2008 would have happened in a world where ethics and aesthetics are inseparably bound with the instrumental. Could executives at Enron have tried to game the California electricity market to artificially inflate prices if they were acting from aesthetic and ethical sensibilities as well as instrumental concerns? We don't think so. We think that the cost of the separation of aesthetics and ethics from the instrumental is a world dominated by instrumental logics, a world where the bottom line is the bottom line and managers are incapable of modifying their gaze.

It is a world that is not just overly instrumentalized, but overly intellectualized. The other theme that comes out of these three pieces on the intersection of aesthetics and ethics is embodiment and the way that when aesthetics and ethics come together they do so in a physicalized way. Bathurst and Edward's show us how the aesthetic of the Maori carvings at the *whare whakairo* or carved meeting house (Te Tiriti O Waitangi Whare Runanga) on the land where the Treaty was signed physicalize the ethics of the Treaty. Ladkin shows us how the practice of staying with our senses, with our direct contact with the physical world is a critical practice for artistic and moral perception. And Kimball shows us how actual involvement with the corporal physicality of the rats changed her ethical and aesthetic understanding of her project. Ethics and aesthetic come together in our embodied practice in the world.

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Carving our Future in a World of Possibility: Exploring Contemporary Implications of the Māori-Pākehā Relationship in Aotearoa/New Zealand

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Abstract

This paper explores the aesthetics of ethics through an examination of Aotearoa/New Zealand's Treaty of Waitangi. Through the metaphor of the carver, we demonstrate that instrumentality, ethics and aesthetics work together in a fluid state of play that provides the means to achieve the partnership relationships inherent in the Treaty. We claim that the theory of tensegrity allows for contestations surrounding meanings of the Treaty's intent and opens a space for growth and development. This is illustrated by the March 2010 signing of a memorandum of understanding between Bay of Plenty iwi and Tasman Pulp and Paper which affords both parties with a means to work productively together for their mutual benefit. This contemporary illustration is compared with the construction and carvings of the Te Tiriti O Waitangi Whare Rūnanga which demonstrate in a tangible way how aesthetics and ethics work together to build community solidarity among people of diverse backgrounds.

Introduction: The Mill and the River

On March 4, 2010, agreement was reached in Aotearoa/New Zealand between Bay of Plenty *iwi* (*iwi* is defined as 'tribe' and in this case includes the three tribes Ngati Awa, Ngati Rangitahi and Ngati Tuwharetoa) and the Tasman Pulp and Paper Mill in the town of Kawerau. At the heart of their ongoing 58 year battle is the relationship that *iwi* and the paper mill have with the Tarawera River: a source of life and sustenance to Māori and a waste-disposal facility for Tasman Pulp and Paper. The Tarawera River represents a site of contestation, where business values of efficiency and productivity came into direct conflict with the traditional Māori values of respect for the land and its *mauri* (life force).

By signing the memorandum of understanding, both the owners of the paper mill and *iwi* agreed to work together (a significant achievement in itself) in order to clean up what local Māori called 'the Black Drain' (Davison, 2010). To understand

the importance of this accord, Davison (2010) reports Ngati Awa spokesperson Pouroto Ngaropo saying that ‘The River is a living entity which represents the spiritual, cultural and physical life of our ancestors. If it is unwell, so are we.’ Hence, in agreeing to enter into a long-term partnership with the owners of Tasman Pulp and Paper both parties agreed to ensure each other’s well-being and survival. Iwi would cease its political actions in trying to close the mill, while the mill owners agreed to begin cleaning up the river.

Fulfilling such an agreement, however, will not be an easy task and both groups acknowledge that it will take perhaps up to 50 years before the River is returned to its original condition. Furthermore, for the next 25 years, the mill will still be able to discharge wastes into it. The memorandum, then, sets in motion a process where both parties can carve a future together based on the integration of instrumental, ethical and aesthetic values – ensuring that economic benefits will be accrued; that ethical imperatives of reducing harm and giving life are brought to the forefront of their relationship; and that the aesthetic ideals of striving for beauty and artfulness are embraced.

Although the three elements of instrumental, ethical and aesthetic ideals are held together in the agreement, the provocation that has brought these parties together to seek a common future was the aesthetic of the sublime, encapsulated in statement that declared the River a ‘Black Drain’. Here the idea of blackness is appropriated by Māori, who have dark skin coloring, and turned onto a ‘white’ Western multinational, Norske Skog, the Norwegian-based company that owns Tasman Pulp and Paper (Pankhurst, 2009). This ironic, intertextual reversal, sees Māori venturing into the *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1902/1993; Coppola, 1979/2001) in their motivation to convert the sewer of the ‘drain’ back into the community’s life source. This sublime encounter with blackness introduces a subjective experience that embraces both the profound sense of angst and even ugliness, alongside the quest for beauty. Thus, the ‘terror’ of which Burke writes (1787/1990) – the terror of annihilation of *both* the iwi and the mill – became the sublime motivation to forge a common destiny. For, in the words of Burke, ‘terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime’ (p. 54). In sum, the aesthetic quest for beauty through the experience of the sublime became the common motivation for reaching agreement to work together in partnership.

The ways in which Bay of Plenty iwi have engaged with Tasman Pulp and Paper is an illustration of the idea of partnership that underpins contemporary understandings of the Treaty of Waitangi. In what follows we explore ways in which instrumental, ethical and aesthetic notions may be integrated under the aegis of the Treaty through a localized lens of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Dialogue around the relevance to contemporary business of the Treaty of Waitangi signed between indigenous Māori and the British Crown in 1840 offers a framework within which to examine the active relationship between aesthetics and ethics. We centre our discussion on the notion that Māori have, through their history of settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand, maintained lifestyles centered on the *marae ātea*. This open space in front of a meeting house where people gather to be welcomed also provides a space to carry out debate on current issues, to celebrate an important occasion or hold a *tangihanga* (commemoration of the death of a community member). On the marae stands the *whareniui*, which literally means ‘large meeting house’, a space within which people interact in a vibrant setting that allows for criticism, debate, dialogue and expressions of grief. These spaces, then, present an integral way of life that embraces aesthetics and ethics in a holistic manner. It is this ability to integrate rather than distill and separate that underpins our discussion. In particular, the idea of integration offers a means to carve a future that is sustainable and productive both within the locale that is Aotearoa/New Zealand as well as offering an exemplar for the global business community.

From the outset we acknowledge that much of our discussion will take place within contestable space and that there are contrary opinions within Aotearoa/New Zealand and that these contestations are formalized around debates concerning the value of the Treaty of Waitangi to contemporary society (see for example Moon, 2008). However, we adopt the vibrancy of the *marae ātea* and *whareniui* as places where people of all persuasions are welcomed, embraced, listened to and debated with. The tensional integrity – tensegrity – that is achieved through these spaces and structures presents a means whereby partnership and collaboration can be achieved albeit through dialogue and sometimes vociferous challenge. Furthermore, these spaces represent the tensional integrity between aesthetics and ethics, a place where paradox is accepted without the need to reach resolution; where the past *and* present, along with the living *and* the ancestors inform decision making.

To achieve this dynamic interrelationship requires working with tensegrity. This concept, adopted from structural engineering, was first appropriated as a metaphor for organizational life by Anthony Judge (1979). He argues that ‘functional integrity’ is achieved when we think beyond the constraints of hierarchy and “‘management do’s and don’ts” or of a mathematically generated set of possible functional combinations’ (Judge, 1979, n.p.). Thus neither an ethical rule book nor a strong leader will provide for the development of tensegrity. Instead, organizations require continual relational tension for them to develop and grow so that they achieve their aims and ambitions.

Similarly, and taking her lead from biologist Donald Ingber, Robinson (2005) argues that like the human body, organizational partnerships are in continual tension with outside pressures that pull relationships in different directions, and inside pushers that

help stabilize structures amidst that volatility. She also champions the role of integrators, people who continually monitor organizational health.

Integrators know that efficient tensegrities function best in a climate of continuous tension, modified by opposing applications of discontinuous compression. An organization that is under no tension is one that is not growing or producing to the best of its capabilities. Effective integrators not only provide the connective tissue that stabilizes the organizational structure but also monitor the tensional forces at play within and outside the institution (p. 15).

The bicultural environment that is Aotearoa/New Zealand demonstrates a social tensegrity that allows for the expression of ethical aesthetics. Hence contestations around the Treaty of Waitangi present an ideal context for growth and development that does not necessarily require for disagreements to be resolved and finalized, but rather allows for dialogue, interchange and creative problem solving.

To explore this dynamic relationship, our method of inquiry is to work with the metaphor of the carver who gradually, over time, seeks ways of working with the material that is given, so that the *whareniui* becomes populated with the narratives that are told through the dynamic shapes and figures that make up the completed works. Thus, in the context of our various ancestories, with affinities in both Māori and Pākehā communities, we chart our own pathway through the tensions and contestations that surround the Treaty of Waitangi in order to offer ways in which we might, with you our readers, collaborate together to carve our world rich in possibility¹. We also consider the carver an apt metaphor not only because carvings are central to Māori identity and culture, but also because it affords us the opportunity of working with what is given without relitigating past offences and wrongs (Wright, 2010). Thus, in this paper, although we acknowledge the past, our intention is to work within the present as authors engaged in the hermeneutics of making meaning within our given context.

The Aesthetic Turn

In contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand society, the Treaty of Waitangi is a constitutional document that enshrines in law the notion of partnership. Inherent in the Treaty, Māori aspirations are set alongside those of the original European colonizers. The continued contestations of the meaning and spirit of the Treaty provide a context that avoids the totalizing demands of one community over another and represents an exemplar for contemporary business on how to maintain productive tension, thereby mitigating the tendency towards control and domination. Thus, it is the pluralism that underpins Aotearoa/New Zealand social identity where Māori (literally meaning ‘the same’) and Pākehā (‘the other’) live in bicultural partnership, that offers an ethics of aesthetics that has global implications.

Notwithstanding our tendency in the West to atomize and categorize activities, thereby codifying practice by standardizing policies, strategies and procedures into ‘best practice’ ideologies, our understanding of the Treaty’s place in contemporary society is by means of integration (Küpers, 2008). Hence the need to separate instrumental, ethical and aesthetic activities into discrete areas of concern is resolved into an integral pathway that investigates the intersection of these ideals (Johansson, 2004). In order, however, to understand how this integration occurs we first explore aesthetics and its role in making sense of fluidity and complexity in organizational life.

The rise of aesthetics within organizational studies has been met with enthusiasm by a growing coterie of scholars. Aesthetics, it is claimed, offers a dimension that has been missing in a discipline that has been dominated by instrumental approaches (Dobson, 1999). It is not surprising, then, that Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, one of the field’s champions, asserts that ‘if the German artist Joseph Beuys...was right in claiming that art is tomorrow’s capital, it seems reasonable to consider aesthetics its new organization theory’ (Guillet de Monthoux, 2000, p. 35).

For Guillet de Monthoux, aesthetics has opened the possibility of organizations acting beyond the rational by embracing *Schwung*. Drawing on the philosophy of German Idealism and in particular the works of Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), Guillet de Monthoux argues for a pre-conscious creative drive that enables artists to bring ideas into concrete form. He writes that:

Part of bringing about the object of art has been conscious, for the artist has made skillful use of all the rules, techniques, methods, and tools of art. However, the true driving force of creation, its *Schwung*, says Schelling, will forever remain unconscious (Guillet de Monthoux, 2004, pp. 34–35).

Schiller explores this unconscious dynamic which is ultimately concretized in artifacts by discussing the place of individual freedom within the larger collective that is society. Schiller’s notion of the ‘play impulse’ provides for continual movement

rather than a fixed state of being. He maintains that social order cannot be achieved by ethical means alone, for that would mean the invocation of laws that restrict freedom. Rather, it is through the aesthetics of play, the dynamic interaction of form and substance, which creates a cohesive society.

This idea of play is far from the frivolous activities carried out by children when playing games or tricking friends. Rather, it is the essence of what it means to be human. As Schiller declares, ‘Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and he is only wholly Man when he is playing’ (Schiller, 1795/1965, p. 80). Thus the continual movement of being and becoming involves attention to logic *and* ethics which then find their ultimate expression in aesthetics. Schiller claims that ‘though need may drive Man into society, and Reason implant social principles in him, Beauty alone can confer on him a *social character*’ (Schiller, 1795/1965, p. 138, emphasis in the original). For Schiller, then, the concept of play is a *living* impulse that allows for ideas to be continually renegotiated rather than reaching fixed and final meanings.

This notion of the aesthetic has its roots in Greek antiquity in the word *aesthesis* which can be translated as ‘sense perception’ (Sorbom, 1994; Williams, 1983, p. 31). However, according to Dobson (2010), in his reading of Onians *Origins of European Thought*, its etymology is found even further back in the pre-Socratic notion of a sudden inward breath, a gasp. He notes:

Phenomena which manifest or appear with the impact of a prominent or memorable emergence...provoke the involuntary intake of breath...A gasp of this order ‘stops’, as it were, time itself – one is invariably ‘breathless’ before the emergence of the authentically beautiful (p. 393).

Through the gasp, says Dobson, time stops, thereby opening the opportunity for play ‘beyond time’ (p. 393). The gasp is a moment of opening where the eyes actively penetrate *and* take hold of a perception. Onians (1951/1973) describes this paradox by claiming that “‘to breathe at’”, means “‘to look at’”, the eyes being in fact not only passive and recipient like the ears, but active outwardly’ (p. 75).

The gasp creates a fecund moment rich in sensory possibilities, it is this moment that creates opportunities for the kind of play that seeks to make sense of the past and anticipate the future. Inevitably the gasp of aesthetic encounter, embraces ethical considerations. For, although our sense of being in time may be temporarily suspended, we return to our embodied place and act as aesthetically alert ethical agents in time and space.

Perhaps aesthesis is illustrated most compellingly through architecture. Collier (2006) claims that architecture embodies the three elements that Dobson (2007) argues are the basis for all business activity: profit-making, ethics and aesthetics. For Collier, architecture is necessarily functional, but a building’s functions can only be fully realized when it facilitates both ethical and aesthetic engagement. She cites Chicago architect Stanley Tigerman who created living spaces that attended to these elements. She notes that:

[Tigerman’s] vision is of the role that architecture and architects can play in creating an environment that fulfils the needs of people, supports them in the difficulties of their lives and opens their eyes to the possibilities of living together secure in an unstable world. Architects have the challenge and the responsibility of imagining and nurturing a truly human and sustainable home for us all (p. 308).

For Collier, architecture embodies an ‘ethicism’ that links the formal, ethical and aesthetic together in an overarching ethos and pathos of community solidarity. This integration of ethics and aesthetics is also explored by Marcia Eaton (2001). She notes that:

The fact that the rush of life is distilled in art does not imply that art is separate from life. What it means is that the thoughts and emotions of people can be evoked vividly in such a way that applications to real moral life are encouraged (p. 148).

To understand the world into which we are thrown, and the dynamic *Schwung* which provides a means for ethics and aesthetics to play together, we turn to a summary of the history of the Treaty of Waitangi and explore how it came to take its place in the constitutional and social fabric of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

A Primer on the Treaty of Waitangi

European settlement of Aotearoa/New Zealand began shortly after Captain James Cook’s first voyage in 1769 and throughout the early 1800s people from various nations made the perilous journey south (King, 2003), across the treacherous and inaptly named Pacific Ocean. This influx of people led to a number of Northern Māori tribes signing a Declaration of Independence of New Zealand in 1835, as a first move towards securing nationhood and limiting the impact of British settlement on tribal areas.

While the deal was acknowledged locally and internationally, Britain wanted a stronger political presence in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The British were, however, outnumbered by Māori ‘fifty to one’ (Kawharu, 1989, p. x) and were in no position to take control by force. Further, the traditional approach of a forceful takeover was not favored at the time (Orange, 1987); so a more peaceful course was sought. The British proposed the development of a treaty, a partnership agreement with Māori, designed to provide a measure of control over settler behavior, described by James Busby (the British Resident in Aotearoa/New Zealand at the time) as ‘the accumulating evils of permanent anarchy’, and to facilitate a more organized approach to the intended further entry by British citizens ahead of peoples from other interested countries (cited in King, 2003, p. 155). The Treaty was first signed by representatives of the British Government and Māori Chiefs in the village of Waitangi on February 6, 1840 and became known as the Treaty of Waitangi.

An examination of the original English text of the Treaty, and its three main articles, provides a broad perspective on what was originally intended by the British. Article One concerned the legality of Britain as having sovereign rights and legal status to govern the country under the rule of the British Crown. For the British, this first article aimed at providing a form of civil government that would potentially result in a more cultured society and the opportunities expected with such progress. However, Māori believed they were signing an agreement that their status and prestige, their *mana*, would be protected. In reality, Article One smoothed the way for greater British intrusion.

Article Two promised to protect the highly valued assets of Māori, as they were guaranteed ‘the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their land and estates, forests and fisheries’ (Orange, 1987, p. 40). Yet the settlers began to wrest control of parcels of land for farming, which ultimately sparked armed resistance, soon turning to outright war.

The third article, illustrating a humanitarian ideal rarely enacted in colonial times, promised full participation in the new society as Māori were granted ‘all the rights and privileges of British subjects’ (Orange, 1987, p. 42). Hence, the cultural mores and values of Māori were to be protected under law.

In effect, therefore, the Treaty confirmed the legal status of Britain as sovereign but also contained elaborate assurances for Māori about protecting valued possessions as well as promises of opportunities associated with participating in society as British citizens. With such assurances, along with the attraction of a grand ceremony, Māori were persuaded to sign the Treaty, despite the difficulties faced by English-Māori translations (Biggs, 1989).

After the initial ceremony on February 6, 1840, Treaty negotiations and signings continued in various other parts of the country for many months, and although some tribes balked at the idea of British rule, there was a time of peaceful coexistence, before the partnership fractured and war erupted (Belich, 1998). The impact of war along with considerable traumas associated with colonization, were detrimental to the Māori population. Regardless, many tribal leaders remained firmly committed to the promises contained within the Treaty document (McHugh, 1991). This unwavering commitment, in part, explains why the Treaty ‘has been better honored by Māori than Pākehā/New Zealand Europeans’ (Liu, 2005, p. 73). That Māori continue to uphold the spirit of the Treaty is even more surprising given the cavalier attitude many Pākehā New Zealanders show towards the Treaty today, considering it irrelevant to business and society.

Hence, for much of the twentieth century, the Māori population was assimilated into the British colony and the population stagnated (King, 2003). Concerns over Māori welfare, (including endemic poverty, the lack of access to health services and the high representation of Māori in the criminal justice system), along with the Government’s wish to provide a forum for the airing of grievances against the Crown since the Treaty’s signing, led to Parliament passing the Treaty of Waitangi Act of 1975 (Durie, 2003). The recognition of Treaty obligations and the special nature of the ‘partnership’ between two parties – the Crown and Māori – was subsequently reaffirmed by the 1985 judgment of the High Court (Kawharu, 1989), and this judicial acceptance, in turn, has led to the concept of biculturalism percolating into constitutional reforms and political action (Liu & Hilton, 2005). Therefore, in honor of the Treaty of Waitangi, biculturalism is considered as a relationship between Māori and Pākehā. This, however, is cause for angst among recent migrants from countries outside the South Pacific who have little awareness of the bicultural nature of their new society, expecting instead that multiculturalism be favored and misunderstanding the importance of the Māori-Pākehā duopoly. Liu and Hilton (2005) encapsulate the changing fortunes of the Treaty in Aotearoa/New Zealand society:

The example of the rise and fall and rise again of the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand shows how an historical event can be the constitutional basis for the founding of a nation at one time (1840), a legal nullity 37 years later, and then remobilised as a social representation with charter status another hundred or so years later (p. 543).

The remobilization described here and the renewed interest in the Treaty's promise to guide community ideals about justice and fairness did not, however, result. As Pearson (1990) explains: 'The dream of "two people, one nation" is a dream deferred' (p. 246). Hence, today the Treaty of Waitangi has become a document on which discussions concerning the identity of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the rights and privileges of all its citizens, including recent migrants, are carried out.

As alluded to earlier, obtaining a Māori translation of the Treaty was not easy, and there are considerable discrepancies between that and the English version. The imprecise translations of key words such as 'governance' and 'sovereignty', a lack of knowledge of these concepts by the Māori (Biggs, 1989), and the lack of any united tribal authority (King, 2003), created rifts of understandings. Based on their indigenous language version, Māori anticipated benefits from the relationship. They saw opportunities for trade, education and health care; opportunities that would enhance their ability for future development. Many believed their lands and valuable assets would be better protected under British law and order, and that they had absolute control over all matters Māori. Furthermore, there was no reason to doubt that with their new status as British citizens, they would participate as equals in a safer, more civilized society. For Māori, the Treaty was summed up in the themes of opportunity, protection and participation, while for the British, the Treaty implied sovereignty and governance. As the settler community grew in number and through military conquest, the English translation became the preferred reading of the Treaty and this gave opportunity for manipulation and control.

Unfortunately, as history demonstrates, the gulf between expectation and reality led to perceptions of broken promises, grievance claims and deep resentment, and has kept the Treaty alive at the forefront of Māori struggles towards self-determination. Some believe that Māori integrity has been progressively destroyed as all interactions are based on the Pākehā/New Zealand European model of competition, exploitation and a definition of success which has 'eroded or dominated traditional or radically egalitarian Māori values' (Poata-Smith, 1996, p. 107).

We consider that it is the Māori version of the Treaty that has the potential to provide ethical guidance for business and that there is a need for all Aotearoa/New Zealanders to once again engage with the core principles of the Treaty and to forge sustainable communities. In making this call we acknowledge the voices of many Pākehā/New Zealand Europeans who will discourage our attempts to reengage with the Treaty even though Pākehā have shared the benefits of alienation of Māori land and culture (Awatere, 1984). However, refusing to be silenced by prisoners of ambivalence (Dench, 1986), we adopt the forward looking perspective espoused by Sorrenson (1987):

The spirit of the Treaty transcends the sum total of its component written words and puts narrow or literal interpretations out of place. The Treaty was not to be regarded as simply a tract for its time, a 'Māori' Magna Carta...It was not intended to merely fossilise a status quo, but to provide directions for future growth and development (pp. 177-178).

In adopting this hopeful stance, we again emphasize the key themes of opportunity, protection and participation as the elements that should underpin future, instrumental and ethical business practices informed by the rich aesthetics evident in Māori life and society.

This aesthetic approach to understanding the partnership ideals of the Treaty liberate us as organizational scholars from the constraints of functionalism and the philosophical inconsistencies raised by the privileging of economics over other measures of organizational identity and success. To this end, in his advocacy for aesthetics, Dobson (1999) discusses the detrimental effect of just focusing on technical and moral issues. He argues that promoting ethics because it is economically advantageous, while a laudable business goal, in itself lacks the necessary philosophical tools to understand the paradoxes inherent in a quest for individual wealth maximization while at the same time seeking social solidarity. Thus for Dobson (1999), aesthetics holds the promise for a more sophisticated approach to organizational research and leadership practice because it helps fill the 'metaphysical void left by the collapse of modernity' (p. 59), a void, we maintain, that can be filled by appreciating the aesthetic underpinnings of Māori society.

Māori Aesthetics and Ethics

For Māori, aesthetics are intrinsically linked to social identity and ethical practice. This is most evident in the physical spaces and buildings around which Māori live. The centre of life is the *marae ātea*, the open space in front of a meeting house and *whareniui*, the meeting house itself. As mentioned earlier, we adopt Collier's (2006) view that the integration of ethics and aesthetics is found in architecture and that the *marae ātea* and *whareniui* are structures that embody this integral approach.

The meeting house is of deep symbolic importance. Its A-frame roof is supported by a number of rafters (*heke*) running off a ridge pole (*tāhuhu*) and attached to one or more central columns (*poutokomanawa*). Depending on the location, tribal affiliation

and history, the meeting house may act as a body of an ancestor, the belly of a fish or a mythological figure, each which embraces those who enter. Carvings and woven panels which adorn the interior tell the tribe's history, narrating in these sacred artifacts stories which may go back to the origin of Māori in Hawaiki.

Although Māori are ethnically Polynesian, the whareniui is uniquely an Aotearoa/New Zealand design. What distinguishes them from their Polynesian counterparts is the porch at the front. The porch begins with a threshold (*paepae*) which provides a boundary for the open space under the porch's roof. People then pass under a door lintel (*pare*) through the main entrance into the meeting house itself. As Brown (2009) describes:

The front...porch represents the mythological world, since it generally faces Hawaiki in the east, which is the land of the gods, legends and the place to which the dead return. In contrast the interior of the house is regarded as the present and living world of the local area. Between these worlds is the threshold between life and death, between the mythological past and the living present. The change between realms is marked by the *paepae* or *pare*. Therefore, passing over the *paepae*, or under the *pare*, is akin to changing states (pp. 53–54).

Thus for Māori the aesthetics of the whareniui articulates in a visceral sense the idea of partnership; of joining distinctly different, sometimes contested, and yet equally familiar worlds together. It is this notion of partnership, of acting together for the betterment of society, which informed their desire to enter into a formal and legal relationship with the British Crown. Hence, where the colonists saw an opportunity to enrich themselves individually with the resources that this new land provided, Māori invited the new arrivals into a partnership relationship where all would benefit. Perhaps the notion of an ethically informed aesthetic of partnership is made most profoundly visible in the place that commemorates the initial signing of the Treaty at Waitangi's, *Te Tiriti O Waitangi Whare Rūnanga*.

The aesthetic elements visible in this meeting house represent the ethic of living as Māori. For example, the wooden carvings, the woven wall panels, and the choice of colors, embody the fundamental beliefs, as well as the natural and spiritual ties that provide a blueprint of survival possibilities and a guide to living. In particular, the carvings represent important ancestors and rely to some extent on what Thornton (1959) describes as 'picture-writing' (p. 42) in the sense that narrative meanings are contained in the patterns and symbolic elements that are then offered to the viewer for interpretation.

The Te Tiriti O Waitangi Whare Rūnanga is the aesthetic embodiment of Māori commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and its location offers a unique reference point for all Aotearoa/New Zealanders. Completed in 1940, the *whare whakairo* (carved meeting house) provides a unifying function as recognizable tribal styles from various iwi 'whose ancient forms of carving were still extant' were incorporated into the design (Walker, 2001, p. 351). The meeting house was the brain child of Sir Āpirana Ngata (1874–1950), a highly revered orator and Member of Parliament from 1905–1934. Ngata believed that the construction would serve two main purposes; firstly as a publically accessible monument to Māori spirit and strength of character and secondly as a place for Pākehā to develop their understandings of the Māori point of view. Because it was built on the site of the 1840 Treaty signing, Ngata believed it would necessitate visitors breathing in and seeing Māori aesthetic values, giving opportunity to reflect on the journey that all citizens had taken to reach this moment in time.

In effect, Ngata used the aesthetics of the meeting house to enhance his strategy of 'rapprochement between Māori and Pākehā' (Walker, 2001, p. 214). This possibility is supported by Neich (1994) who explains that meeting house art functioned to represent the ideology of the group in a purposeful manner and although the populace did not always live up to the ideals in their struggle for life, within the confines of the house 'all the resources of art could be marshalled to keep this ideal before the people' (p. 147). In this way, the whare at Waitangi can be seen as an ethical totem, that 'stands both literally and conceptually at the heart of Ngata's engagement with politics, Pākehā, and the unification of Maori as a cultural and political force' (Skinner, 2008, p. 27); a living symbol of the nation's integration under the banner of bicultural partnership.

In order to fulfill the need to be both authentically Māori and at the same time being invitational for Pākehā, Ngata insisted that the carvers balance artistic license with traditional requirements of customary *Te Ao Māori* (the Māori world), and the constraints of perpetuation and preservation (Skinner, 2008, p. 25). In this way the carvers worked within the dual notions of tradition and modern sensibilities. Brown (1999, p. 254) notes that Ngata deliberately chose a more traditional architectural model, one that Pākehā equated with 'static ordered and loyal societies'. In essence, the designs for the whare whakairo at Waitangi emphasized a more prescribed approach precisely because Ngata wanted to favor a style which 'could address more than one audience at the same time, giving each what they needed, while alienating neither' (Skinner, 2008, p. 41). Thus the whare embodies in its architecture and carved artifacts the essence of what it means to be bicultural.

In order to convey to our readers this sense of aesthetic engagement we narrate the experience of one of us in a visit to the whare whakairo at Waitangi:

I visited the whare whakairo at Waitangi with the intention of feeling the whare's ambience and discovering how it impacted on my sense of personal history and identity. Although I was immediately struck with its beauty, my most conscious moments were spent contemplating the experience of being overwhelmed. My most unexpected reaction was to the sanctity of the interior. I am not a religious person but I recognized a truly spiritual element in the thickened air – I spontaneously drew breath and mouthed a silent '*Tihei mauri ora*' (the breath of life) to give thanks to the whare's creators.

I consciously slowed my breathing and while pivoting in the middle of the room I considered the grand stature and size of the *poupou* (wall panels), and their placement on all internal walls as silent sentinels to the might of Māoridom. The colorful roof panel connections between the *pou* heightened the sense of formidable power. I began to question the conceit of the British colonizers in attempting to penetrate and undermine the mana of such a proud people.

I then moved to each panel in turn to inspect in detail the finer work of the carvers. I understood that the spirals deeply etched into the *tiki* figures reflected the chiefly powers as described by Thornton the year I was born – 'warlike in battle, and creative of offspring and food in peace' (1959, p. 42). I searched for eels (*tuna*), fern fronds (*koru*), and the owl (*ruru*), and noticed how they were entwined with symbols of humanity. The *mauri* or spiritual essence in each carving fought for my attention, but the intended meanings were unfathomable. What was apparent, even to my untrained eye, was the invincible link to the whole of humanity, and I pondered on what had been lost through the process of colonization.

I searched for the *poutokomanawa*, the supporting pole by the front entrance, that according to Skinner (2008, p. 38) had been adapted from one carved for a whare at Whanganui, my own *whakapapa* [genealogy], and I briefly imagined the chief, statuesque, defiantly watching over the river. This reflection unearthed an acute feeling of loss, for my *whanau* [extended family], especially for my grandmother who lived on the Whanganui River. I knew that this visit, although it would not unearth all the secrets of my whakapapa, was a sublime moment that reaffirmed my abiding respect for Māori. I was taken by a sense of awe and wonder while at the same time experiencing an invitation into partnership. This heightened response reminded me of Ruskin's discussion on why this place 'stirred' me (De Botton, 2002, p. 235). I was taking the time to notice, rather than to look. This place, this discovery, this possibility, has the potential to 'jolt' us all towards a future of mutual respect and partnership, and I felt that this journey could begin, again, at Te Tiriti O Waitangi Whare Rūnanga.

This narrative of visiting a site important to the identity of all Aotearoa/New Zealanders contains within it the concepts envisaged by its designer Sir Āpirana Ngata. Here the pragmatic notion that it is better to work together than in opposition to achieve a sustainable and mutually respectful sense of ethical existence as a nation is embodied in the architecture of Waitangi marae and whareniui. Visitors have a visceral sense that it is by being in partnership with the natural environment *and* with each other in community solidarity that provides the means to achieve a sustainable future.

The whare whakairo is much more than a museum of Māori identity (Skinner, 2008); the unique power of the whare is its aesthetic of '*taonga tuku iho*' (a treasure of Māori heritage). And this is, as Ngata intended, palpable (Ellis, 1998, p. 86). The monumental achievements of the physical craftsmanship are equally matched by the spiritual dimensions of community connections that made the whare's creation possible. In essence, the project was pan-tribal and bi-cultural in its conception and construction, as the land, resources, and labor were gifted from various sources throughout the country. As such we think that a visit to the whare whakairo has the potential to spark a more determined understanding of the possibilities provided by the Treaty of Waitangi. Therefore the aesthetic representation of ethics, as embodied in the carved symbols and woven images, as well as the unique materials and styles of work, create a powerful aesthetic experience rich with possibility. Furthermore, we maintain that these possibilities are encapsulated in the three articles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Treaty Ideals

In this section of the paper our aim is to explore the kinds of ethical and aesthetic values that are embedded in the Treaty, values that may offer leaders both locally and globally a way of strengthening partnerships between their organizations and the communities within which they operate. In spite of the contestations around and the rise and rise of the so-called 'Treaty industry' where special-interest groups within Māoridom are seen to receive unfair financial advantage while at the same time holding up the settlement process, by unnecessarily focusing on their grievances (Tunnah, 2002), our emphasis is on the business community and its responses to the ethical and aesthetic ideals highlighted within the Treaty.

The Treaty of Waitangi contains within it concepts that provide the tools with which to carve partnership relationships in business in particular, and society in general. Yet it has been the business sector's reluctance to see the Treaty's relevance which is our concern. What is required is for an aesthetic approach that is keenly aware of the ethical implications that underpin organizational strategy and leadership, and an acknowledgment that the Treaty offers concepts of engagement relevant to business that promote self-expression and partnership; growth and sustainable practice; an integration of aesthetic elegance and ethical behavior.

In particular, three concepts articulated in the Treaty are of significance to contemporary business and may help corporate leaders move beyond the tendency to dominate, and pursue an alternative ethical route guided by the aesthetics of the partnership under the conjunction 'and' (Barry & Rerup, 2006).

Achieving partnership requires, however, the deft touch of the carver who through gentle persuasion creates shapes and figures out of timber that sometimes constrains and at other times yields to the knocking mallet and sharpened tools. The bicultural environment that is Aotearoa/New Zealand demonstrates a social tensegrity that is embodied in the carver's craft and which allows for the integration of ethical aesthetics. Indeed, as the business community looks beyond favoring economic rationality over other societal values, organizational leaders may begin to see the creative potential that is enshrined in the Treaty and look for ways of carving a future out of the rich material that is presented through partnership.

For example, the most contentious concept of *kāwanatanga* (sovereignty) which is contained in the first article of the Treaty presents an opportunity to see beyond the business mantra that 'this is about winning, winning, and winning' (Freeth, 2006). Of importance to Māori in the term *kāwanatanga* is the preservation of *mana*; of guaranteeing the continuance of their prestige and pride. The classic business approach of claiming sovereignty and wresting control of resources, as seen in the Crown's approach to the concept, we think is unethical. However, if protecting the *mana* of staff is an important ideal, we might renounce a winner-takes-all approach and seek ways in which a climate of collaboration and interrelationship may occur.

This, though, raises the question of the meaning of the key term of the second article of the Treaty: *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination). Here the Western view of the autonomous self, acting independently, is to misunderstand the importance of the term, for *tino rangatiratanga* implies a collective self which acts for the betterment of the group. Hence individual creativity is vital *and* group solutions to problems facing the business are equally valued. Innovations are not just individual achievements but rely on the concerted efforts of collaborative teams who are engaged with each other co-creatively in a continual search for workable solutions that sometimes only develop over a sustained period of creative thinking, trial-and-error experimentation and the openness to keep inquiring into possible new solutions (Grint, 2005).

The tensegrital integrator that enables *kāwanatanga*, *mana* and *tino rangatiratanga* to work productively and ethically together is contained in the third article of the Treaty in the concept of *tikanga* (culture and customs). This concept embraces the aesthetics of the Treaty under notions of cultural values, protocols, customs and identity and it is *tikanga* that establishes the uniqueness of the organization. However, *tikanga* takes time and effort to maintain. For instance, the tendency for organizations to downsize in their efforts to balance budgets is ethically flawed. Rather than delivering the desired efficiencies, we think cost-cutting drives are mechanisms of control which create a climate of fear and retribution, especially when programs fail to achieve their intended goals. Under the rubric of *tikanga*, leaders would want to communicate to staff that their contribution to the organization's unique identity is valued and that while costs are an important consideration, experimentation and trying new things without necessarily achieving immediate market success (McGrath, 1999) is vital to preserving cultural vitality, the *mana* of the enterprise.

Conclusions

In this paper we have examined Te Ao Māori, focusing on its ethical and aesthetic dimensions. We have contextualized within the focal point of *tikanga* Māori, the *marae ātea* and *wharehenui* as vehicles through which the instrumental, ethical and aesthetic elements of Māori come together as a complete whole. This is all held together by the overriding idea of partnership that guides the bicultural context of Aotearoa/New Zealand and can, by extension, provide a model for enterprises around the globe to embrace an aesthetics of ethics. We have maintained that the place of its signing in Waitangi and the Treaty itself offers

means of business engagement that promote self-expression and partnership, growth and sustainable practice, a mix of aesthetic elegance and ethical behavior. That the Treaty's currency to contemporary society is still debated is evidence of its potency as a guide to achieving the aesthetics of ethics.

Our discussions of the Treaty of Waitangi have both local and global implications (Barber, 1996), and we believe that the ideas we have outlined preserve local identity as well as achieving universal relevance. Hence, notwithstanding the abuses by those who misunderstand the partnership implications, the Treaty contains concepts that enable aesthetics and ethics to come together to achieve mature relationships and assist business organizations contribute to community development.

The kind of aesthetics that characterize Te Ao Māori have liberatory potential in that they are able to free organizations from the constraints of functionalism and the philosophical inconsistencies raised by the privileging of economics over other measures of organizational identity and success. By making this statement, we advance Dobson's (1999) assertion that modernity has collapsed and that business is searching for a new and enlightened trajectory informed by aesthetics, by going back to the tribal roots of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Paradoxically, though, this is not with the intent of retrogression and of valorizing pre-colonial Aotearoa/ New Zealand, but with the anticipation of the *avant guard* artist who seeks new and innovative expressions.

The ideals that underpin Māori society and the integration they achieve is, we think, exemplary for contemporary businesses which seek to live beyond economic and instrumental ends, as shown in the new relationship forged between Bay of Plenty iwi and Tasman Pulp and Paper. This relationship exemplifies ways that enhance social interaction and solidarity. Thus the concept of the ideal of the 'triple bottom line' (Harmon, Bucy, Nickbarg, Rao, & Wirtenberg, 2009, p. 93), where economic, environmental and social elements are all included as important business goals, does not go far enough in assisting organizations move beyond modernity's penchant for privileging measurable variables of an organization's performance rather than offering a new and enlightened way forward.

The questions that have driven this rise of aesthetic awareness resolve back to the existential question posed by Michel Foucault, who asked: 'Couldn't everyone's *life* become a work of art?' (Foucault, 1991, p. 350, emphasis added). Organizational scholars have gone further and posited that if life itself is to be lived artfully, could this notion be extended beyond the individual to the corporate? Furthermore, 'What happens if we understand the raw materials of everyday lived cultures [including organizations] as if they were *living art forms*?' (Willis, 2000, p. ix, emphasis added).

The assumptions, then, that guide developments in the field are that organizations are cultural products which can be approached and interacted with in the same ways as works of art, and further, that aesthetic ideals provide the tools for social action leading to the revitalization of organizational life. We need to carve a common destiny together: business and society sensitized to environmental and social well-being and to enhancing the mana of all participants in the possibilities that partnership implies.

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An Aesthetic Inquiry into Organizing Some Rats and Some People

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Keywords

Art
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Research
Rancière

Abstract

Rats crawling, an art gallery, rats as art, warm furry bodies, bright plastic tubes, disgusting, chilled dead frogs, rats for science, a preparation, a sweet little rat, a village hall, women in white coats, rats in cages, a rosette, urine, a rat in a pouch, cuddles, rats for art, the winner is, strong black tea, how many do you have, in the literature, breeding, get more rats, a rat down a sleeve, I'll give you a lift, sign in, a rack of cages, what is that, the data shows, please wash your hands, they can smell your perfume, protestors, I don't know, a knock out, brain surgery, squeak squeak, the Morris water maze, toys, slice, you are a messy boy, the critique, I haven't got a licence, drawings, rats in art, do you mind, a duvet, insurance, a queue, a drawing device, sugar rats, chunky knits, where's the nearest rat, black rubbery tails, video camera, a T-maze, sawdust, a cleavage, nail clippings, face painting, artist rat, drawings, it's different, two young women, a judge, art for rats, agility training, he remembers from last time.

Here is an artwork I want to make but have not yet been able to make. It's called the *Rat Evaluated Artwork* or REA¹ (shown in Figure 1). I imagined it as a gallery piece, sitting on tables, with many tubes and wheels, a closed environment for rats visible to the spectators who might watch and engage with them, offering diversions and decisions points for rats, and diversions and decision points for humans. The rats would be inside the tubes, and the humans would be outside, able to read the labels on the tubes that the rats would move through. The rats would be invited to evaluate different aspects of the artwork by making choices about which tube to move through. For the audience, where the rats moved would help them understand how beautiful the work was, how exploitative and how critically engaged.

As I began to explore how to make this work, an artist colleague one day found me photocopying pages from a catalogue from a company which makes play environments for small animals in brightly-coloured plastic. When I told her what I wanted to do, she was horrified: not by the rats but by my ignorance. These tubes were designed for hamsters and would be far too small for rats. I grew up in a family with dogs. I don't remember dissecting anything warm at school. I knew nothing about rats other than that there were both objects of disgust and fear in Western culture and objects of respect – as survivors, fast breeders, quick adaptors. But I really liked my idea for the *Rat Evaluated Artwork*, and since it depended on live rats, so began my research.

A friend in Cambridge arranged for me a visit to the experimental psychology lab there to see a demonstration with live rats for undergraduate students. Here in a box was a small creature. Alive, but alive for science. Ordered from a catalogue, No Name animal, an instrumentalized animal, sweet in its box, enjoying being handled by the professor, enjoying being caressed and stroked and cuddled, here, did I want a go, did I want to hold it. I held science in my hands. Actually it looked pretty small and I wondered if it would after all fit through the plastic toy

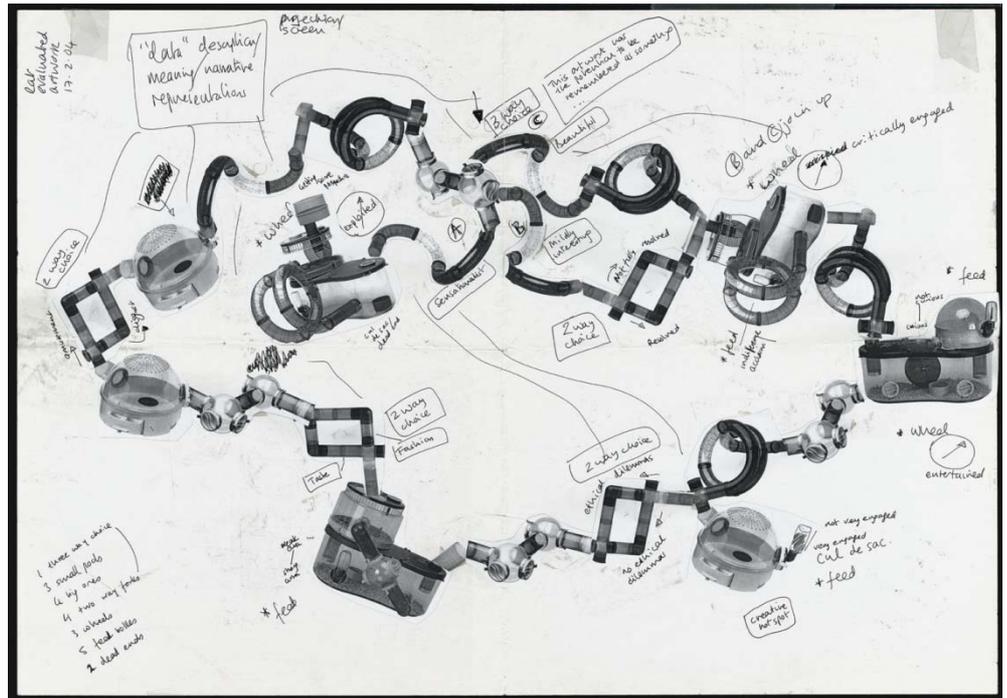


Figure 1. Sketch for the proposed Rat Evaluated Artwork © Lucy Kimbell

tubes from the catalogue. I wondered how would it cope if I was able to make the REA and get lots of rats to crawl through it in an art gallery in front of lots of people. How it would cope and how I would cope.

Could it be beautiful, as well as disturbing, as well as funny, as well as compelling, as well as unusual, as well as shocking, as well as all the other things that contemporary art projects like this can be? In order to answer these questions I had to make the work and find ways to make the work. Finding out how to make the REA by trying to make it, would be my aesthetic inquiry into rats.

This desire to make an artwork with rats lead to a study of one informal and one formal organizational context in which rats play important roles, in fancy rat shows and among fancy rat breeders, and in experimental laboratories among scientists. Originating in contemporary art, but analysed through the lens of organizational aesthetics, this research adds to the understanding of how to do an aesthetic inquiry by describing in detail how a study into aesthetics, using artistic means, can be undertaken. Further, it explores the intersections between aesthetics and ethics through a description of a project involving live rats. Artistic intent was possibly in conflict with doing the right thing but a creative resolution to this was found by reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible ordering what was thinkable and sayable (Ranci re, 2004; Beyes, 2008). Written reflexively in several voices, this account is also an exploration of ways to do ethnographic writing (Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Wolf, 1992).

I begin with a review of literature on organizational aesthetics to which this account makes a contribution, and extend this to a discussion of contemporary art and in particular work on aesthetics and politics by Jacques Ranci re (2004; 2007). Interwoven with the story of how I undertook my research and what I made is an account of the potential for an aesthetic inquiry that draws on contemporary arts practices to change what is thinkable and sayable. I describe how such research can be undertaken and what kinds of works can be created using “thick sensory description” (rather than just thick description) (Taylor and Hansen, 2005) and “participant construction” (rather than participant observation) (Taylor and Hansen, 2005), adding to understanding of aesthetic knowledge in practice.

Second, through a description of how I made art involving live animals, I portray my response to a situation in which I asked myself, what was the right thing to do with the rats if I wanted to make my artwork? Could my art project work aesthetically and ethically? Brady (1986) used Ryle’s (1949) distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how” to shift the discussion of ethics in much management literature from seeing ethics as rules, towards an awareness of the aesthetics within practice. For Brady, the aesthetic dimension of managing involves balancing these two forms of knowing. However the relationships between “aesthetics, ethics and science, or, put differently, between beauty, morality and truth” have been researched over centuries without any definitive position emerging or likelihood of ways of identifying a balance between artistic intention and ethical concerns (Kersten, 2008, p. 188). Instead, she suggests, it is important to develop a meaningful understanding of ethics and aesthetics by locating these issues in the everyday. Here I describe how I tried to avoid using animals instrumentally and instead

made the rats' involvement in the art-making more equal. By giving up my plan to create the REA and creating a different artwork, that also involved live rats, I changed what was thinkable but, however, this generated other ethical questions.

STUDYING AESTHETICS, AESTHETICALLY

The aesthetic turn in organization studies has now reached the point that scholars are able to map out a field with several different approaches identifiable in the work of researchers (eg Gagliardi, 1996; Strati, 1999; Strati, 2000; Taylor and Hansen, 2005; Gagliardi, 2006; Strati, 2009). For example Taylor and Hansen (2005) make a distinction between embodied, sensory and aesthetic knowing versus intellectual and propositional knowing, with implications for modes of representation in research. They identify four approaches in the literature which they see as located along two axes, one concerned with the content of research and the other concerned with method: intellectual analysis of instrumental issues; using artistic form look at instrumental issues; intellectual analysis of aesthetic issues; and using artistic form to look at aesthetic issues. Strati (2009) also describes four different approaches: an archaeological approach, emphasizing the study of symbolic artefacts in organizations; an empathic-logical approach, involving the researcher immersing herself in the organization to encounter its pathos; an aesthetic approach, emphasizing collective, everyday organizational interactions; and an artistic approach, focussing on the playfulness of everyday organizational interactions.

Several scholars agree there is potential is using arts-based approaches to study aesthetics in organizations (eg Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Taylor and Hansen, 2005; Gagliardi, 2006; Strati, 2009) although they disagree about what the implications might be. For Strati (2009), the artistic approach draws indiscriminately on methods of artistic understanding and those used in the social sciences, mixing artistic sensibility and cognitive rationality and projecting the scholar into the playfulness, improvisation and sensuality of the research experience and its end result. However for Strati, a weakness of this approach is that it is "art-bounded" (Strati, 2009, p. 237). For Taylor and Hansen (2005) this hybridity would seem to be the point since aesthetic knowing, as they describe it, asks not just how we know things but why we know things: "Aesthetic inquiry deepens our understanding of organizations by providing a new epistemology, criteria to assess member judgments and decision making, meaning, connection and provides categories for this sensory data." (Taylor and Hansen, 2005, p. 1226). But although for Taylor and Hansen, this is an area full of promise, it is one that is as yet unrealized. "The use of artistic forms to look at aesthetic issues offers a medium that can capture and communicate the felt experience, the affect, and something of the tacit knowledge of the day-to-day, moment-to-moment reality of organizations. Not just the cleaned-up, instrumental concerns of 'the business', but the messy, unordered side as well." (Taylor and Hansen, 2005, p. 1224). This has led to questions of how to develop an attentiveness to aesthetics in the researcher (Gagliardi, 1996), suggestions to develop terminology such as "thick sensory description" (Taylor and Hansen 2005, p. 1225) or draw directly on contemporary art practice as a way to understand contemporary organizations (Guillet de Monthoux, 2004) or to find new ways to do anthropological research (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2005). However the value of contemporary art within organizational aesthetics has not yet been fully realized (Beyes, 2008).

AESTHETICS AND POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Before returning to the rats, I offer a brief exploration of the ways that concepts of aesthetics are mobilized in contemporary art practice and in the work of Jacques Rancière (2004; 2007) and the possible implications for ethics. For contemporary artists, aesthetics is not a stable term. In the studio, and in teaching and group critiques, I have observed myself and others using the term as a proxy for visual beauty and sensation, denoting a coherent arrangement of elements that answers a question posed in a work, but with an openness to ugliness, disgust and the sublime as aesthetic qualities that can also be explored in art. For those of us working with liveness (Auslander, 1999), questions of aesthetics are not limited to visuality. Timing, rhythm, space and choreography are also part of the work and its context as artists construct ways to constitute audiences and experiences. Aesthetics, in my lay terminology as an arts practitioner, was tied up with bodily sensation and intellectual delight, but also with an artist's purpose and reflexivity in relation to the institutions of art. Following Dewey (1958), my thinking about aesthetics is not reduced to thinking solely about the art object but suffused in the encounter of the audience, spectator or participant with and within the work and in relation to the everyday. But this focus on objects and encounters with them is not sufficient on its own to capture the activities and concepts involved in much contemporary art practiceⁱⁱ, an issue that Rancière (2004; 2007)'s work has helped illuminate leading to it being taken up within art criticism and art history (Funcke, 2007; Tanke 2010).

Rancière's (2004; 2007) analysis of images and art over several centuries, drawing on a wide range of sources and not limited to just the visual arts, offers a way to see how ideas of aesthetics, images and art have changed in relation to politics, relating to the wider question in this paper of the relationship between aesthetics and ethics in organizational research. For Rancière, art is not a separate sphere from life or only concerned with life (or forms of life such as organization research). Art is political and

politics has aesthetics. Rather than simply politicizing art, he argues art and politics are both different forms of the distribution of the sensible (*le partage du sensible*) in which subjects are constituted by what is sayable and visible. He identifies three “regimes” and argues that they have particular and different ways in which they order this distribution. Central to his work is the concept of equality and the question of which subjects are excluded or included in a particular arrangement. Social orderings are contingent. Politics is linked to dissent, as those that were previously not counted partake of a given order and novel forms of subjectivity come to the fore (Beyes, 2008). Rancière (2004) describes three different regimes of art which appear to approximate a chronology but which can also co-exist (Tanke, 2010).

The *ethical regime of images* is exemplified in Platonic ideals of the collective and questions of how to represent truth. For Plato, image-makers are dissemblers. The arts offer an imperfect copy of ideal forms (Beyes, 2008). Artistic images are evaluated in terms of their utility to society. What we now call art is seen as mere labour. In his critique of imitation (mimesis), Plato evaluates two things: “an image’s faithfulness to an Idea, and its effects upon a community. Within the ethical regime of images, there is no art, because all arts/crafts (techne) are judged by these two factors” (Tanke, 2010, p. 8).

In the *representational regime*, art becomes a kind of labour with its own rules and styles. An artwork is considered in relation to the active power of shaping matter, part of the Aristotelian tradition of catharsis, and how it relates what society is, requiring a concordance between sense and sense (Rancière, 2008). It prescribes correct ways of representing subject matter and assesses the relationship between form and matter (Tanke, 2010). Hence a set of norms ordering the relations between the visible and the sayable is constituted. Art is autonomous but with this comes a hierarchy of genres and techniques (Beyes, 2008).

In contrast, the *aesthetic regime of art* that emerged over the past two centuries figures “the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroy[s] any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. It simultaneously establishes the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself” (Rancière, 2004, p. 23). Key here is an irreducible tension between the singularity of art, and the idea of art as a collective activity. It does not give art a particular place in society, and does not require any particular skill. The aesthetic regime enables ruptures in subjects, representations, techniques and any pre-determined relationship between aesthesis and poesis. This regime emphasizes art’s autonomy and freedom from prescribed or normative criteria. It invites departures from classical hierarchies about what constitutes art in terms of subject matter, form or style (Ross, 2008). It may also allow new modes and new possibilities. “By bringing previously neglected aspects of existence into the space of the page or place of the canvas, the aesthetic regime redefines the contours of what can be seen and said” (Tanke, 2010, p. 9). But paradoxically the clear distinction between art and non-art has been ruptured (Beyes, 2008). It is this assertion of the political nature of art that has made Rancière attractive to the art world in recent years (Davis, 2006; Tamke, 2010) although not without some criticism (Charlesworth, 2010).

For Rancière, the aesthetic regime gives those who call themselves artists (and those who seek to take up these practices) a licence to challenge categories and disrupt hierarchies such as defining what is considered an appropriate subject matter, form or style. It offers art practice as an antidote to instrumental reason, but not just through attending to the senses but also through challenges to accepted paradigms by including new subjects and actors within the distribution of the sensible. Art is seen as has a significant power of rearranging and expanding what can be perceived and what is thinkable (Beyes, 2008), echoing discussions within the social sciences about the limits of representation (eg Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Denzin, 1997; Latour and Weibel, 2005; Macdonald and Basu, 2007; Thrift, 2008).

This necessarily limited account of Rancière’s work has several implications for organizational aesthetics and in particular for this discussion of aesthetics and ethics. First, Rancière argues there is an aesthetics in politics and a politics in aesthetics, apparently echoing Brady’s (1986) view that managing involves balancing ethics and aesthetics. However Rancière’s formulation is more fundamental: it is not that there are two things in tension with one another that can be balanced. Rather aesthetics is the distribution of the sensible that enables ways of perceiving, thinking and saying. “Politics and aesthetics fold into one another when what is brought forth and made visible has been hitherto invisible, when what is made audible was hitherto inaudible” (Beyes, 2008).

Second, Beyes (2008) argues that Rancière’s work problematizes scholarship by expanding what is thinkable and sayable within research, destabilizing “royal science” (Beyes, 2008, p. 33), by attending to and disrupting how existing practices keep things within a certain order. Rancière’s attentiveness to what is sayable and visible within particular regimes points to how research accounts constitute themselves as coherent, valid, and credible, in opposition to forms of ignorance. When knowledge is proffered, what form of ignorance is thereby produced (Pelletier, 2009)? Research thus has an aesthetic dimension in the way that it makes distributions about what can be said or seen.

Third, Beyes argues that Rancière’s work “disrupts the safe bet of employing aesthetics either affirmatively or ‘purely’ critically” (Beyes, 2008, p. 38). Instead, a Rancièrian organizational aesthetics would imply “an empirical engagement with the

‘poetic’ moments, when the excluded bring forth their own claims – when *they speak for themselves* – or when artistic endeavours disturb existing orders” (Beyes, 2008, p. 39; italics in original).

This allows a reconfiguring of a problematic at the heart of making art using live animals. The “safe bet” would be deciding *not* to use live animals in making art, or making a “critical” artwork unmasking the instrumentalization of doing so. However this was not the right starting point for me. Instead, Rancière’s work suggests a different way forward: the aesthetic regime disturbs how things are ordered. Art historian Steve Baker’s (2000) research into contemporary art shows how concerned artists are to engage with animals in ways that are not subject to the conventional distinctions between animal and human. For example instead of simply depicting animals, many artists engage with them performatively and materially in the making of art. For artists, Baker suggests, the animal is in some way aligned with creativity. “For many contemporary artists,” he says, “the animal stands in as a new form of being, a creative post-modern being and it emphatically does have hands” (Baker, 2000, p. 94). Within the aesthetic regime, artworks made with animals can suggest new ways to explore the relations between human and non-human animals. Using Rancière’s work on aesthetics offers a way to commit to equality for animals, and leads to a new configuration of what is thinkable and sayable in an artwork. The ethical implications of these arrangements are not predetermined but can be explored in practice (Kersten, 2008).

GETTING CLOSE TO SOME RATS

These ways of thinking about my research came later. Back then, my main concern was how to get near some rats. To proceed with my inquiry, I called another colleague and he suggested names of people at the University of Oxford, where I was then based within its art school. Within a few emails I had an appointment with experimental psychologists in their lab down South Parks Road. Pasted onto a hoarding outside this building was a court injunction ordering animal rights protestors to protest over the road, away from the lab. There weren’t animal rights protestors outside the first day I went. They were only allowed there on Thursdays.

I began developing this inquiry as part of a research fellowship at an art school. I took what I saw as a license that I had as an artist-researcher and deployed it to help me conduct my researchⁱⁱⁱ. But what was it that I was researching, other than my ability to get into buildings with animal rights protestors outside? I visited researchers using animals at Cambridge, Oxford and later the National Institute of Medical Research behind its bars at Mill Hill in north London. Gated communities of scientists and live and dead bits of science, flesh warm in their hands.

At my various meetings I found myself making explanations, apologies even, for my arts-based research. The outcomes of my research might be performances or public events. No, probably no drawings, no photographs, no paintings, no sculptures. No installations although possibly this idea for a *Rat Evaluated Artwork*. My institutional affiliation and the fact that I was funded by one of the research councils legitimised my inquiry.

Hello, I just want to know what you know about rats. Hello, I don’t even know what I want to know exactly but will you let me be here and watch and ask some questions. Practising within the aesthetic regime of art, my enquiries were unregulated by any one discipline or field of knowledge, but resembled several. Not knowing, rather than claims about knowledge, mattered. In one meeting with a scientist working with rats I declared: I don’t know what I’m doing with the rats. I don’t know how to do it.



Figure 2. Legal injunction displayed outside the construction site for a science building, South Parks Road, University of Oxford, in 2004 (photo: Lucy Kimbell)

To my surprise, he seemed fine with this. What I had to do at that point was hold open a place of ambiguity and be there in it, a space of doubt that researchers outside the arts have to remind themselves to value.

I can't remember where the first rat show was, but it was in either Essex or Kent. It was in a village hall down an unremarkable road, and I found my way there on a train from London, and then on foot, a day trip with my knapsack and bottle of water and sketchbook. I entered the hall which was arranged with many tables, on top of which were clear plastic boxes with wire grilles. Inside each box was a rat or two, often asleep, sitting on sawdust with a quarter of an apple, or half a carrot to nibble on. There were thirty or so people in the hall, mostly on chairs round the edges, sitting near their bags and their boxes, chatting, with cups of tea. Inside an arrangement of tables was a table on its own, where a woman in a white coat sat, with a helper by her side, with a couple of the boxes in front of them. The helper opened the plastic box by pushing aside its grille and the judge in the white coat picked up the rat and held it in the palm of her hand and regarded it, not an it, a him or a her. Together they looked at it, him or her, and talked about it, him or her. Then one of them put it back in the box and the judge wrote notes on a white slip with a pink carbon copy backing sheet. The judge put a sticker on the tank and then the tank went back to the outer ring of tables. This went on for hours.

In the small village hall, the judge's comments and cooing punctuated the day.

Good tail.

Good head and ears.

Let's have a look at you then. Hello sweetheart. Good tail. Good type.

Oooh I do like you as well.

Oooh you are a messy boy, pooh all over you.

Many of the people attending the rat show were women, sometimes accompanied by partners and children. Many of them brought two or three rats but they had more at home. The question "How many rats do you have?" typically generates three answers: a number of rats; a number of cages; or the response "I've stopped counting".

Like other small animals rats do not live long in human years, perhaps until two or three and then they die or are put down by the vet or knocked on the head and buried in the garden. The rat mailing lists are stirred up weekly by stories of loss. Talk of illness and death is part of the way ratters talk to each other.

I am sorry to hear about Hermione. She went at such a young age. My thoughts are with you.

The individual animals matter to their owners but the real subject of the group's conversation is loss.

In contemporary science it seems easier to get hold of a rat model than a rat. One of the world's biggest animal production companies describes itself as a provider of animal models, not animals (see Figure 4). Rats, it seems, don't really exist in science, although there are millions of hot breathing bodies boxed in laboratories all over the world. The rats don't exist without the rat models, which are one of the means by which science is reproduced. At Charles River or Harlan or Jackson Laboratories you can search through a list of rat varieties and find the one you need to suit your experiment.

I was given several reasons for the use of rats within scientific research^{iv}. They share over 90% of their genetic material with humans, are omnivores, are small and easy to house. They reproduce very fast and are intelligent. What the scientists I met didn't say was what I learned from the fancy rat owners and breeders whose communities I circled at the rat shows. I learned rats like lots of everything. Lots of food of nearly any kind, lots of physical contact, lots of sex. They are excessive animals.



Figure 3. Judge and assistant at fancy rat show (photo: Lucy Kimbell)

Using terms like “animal models” instead of “animals” is like calling “abortions” “terminations”. Such terms maintain a necessary distance from the live flesh they work with. In lectures some scientists refer to an animal prepared for a demonstration as a “surgical preparation” instead of a rat. The rat, or preparation, is brain dead. The rat, or preparation, will feel no pain. Animals suffer. But can a preparation suffer?

In labs the rats arrive in boxes, shipped in very controlled conditions. One batch is almost identical to the previous batch, its features conforming to the specification sheets you see on the website.

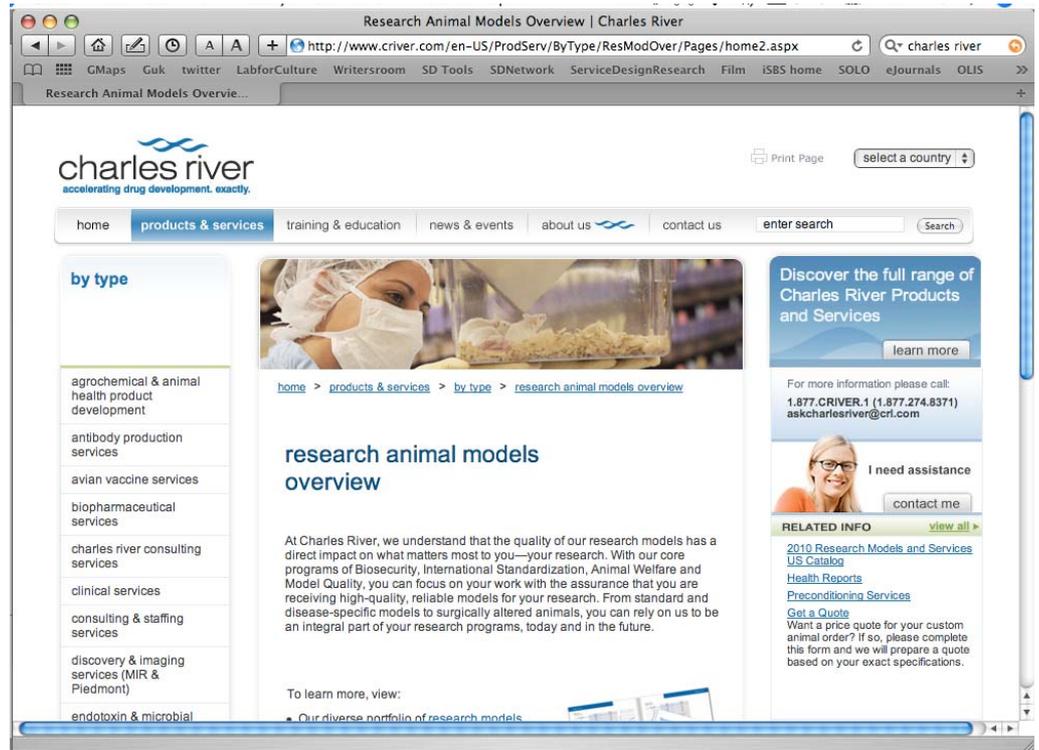


Figure 4. Webpage from Charles River

Inbred rats are virtually clones. A scientist on the other side of the world can do exactly the same experiment, with exactly the same rodent, genetically speaking, and get the same result.

At the time I started taking an interest in rats, I found that a group of people were taking a close interest in the animals used within the labs at Oxford, the people I had not seen since I had not visited the labs on Thursdays, the only days they were allowed to demonstrate outside. One summer I joined a rally organized by a pressure group to try to understand how animals like the rats mattered to them. It was like a summer fete where the cakes were all vegan.

One of the speakers, who described himself as a scientist, claimed that the use of animal models within science, far from enabling science, disables it by producing results that are not relevant to human physiologies and pathologies. A factoid was visible on t-shirts worn by protestors: “Drug side effects are the fourth biggest killer in the western world”. Elsewhere another claimed “Adverse reactions to prescribed drugs were the third commonest cause of death in the western world.” Here was science against science, and politics against science. When starting to visit animal labs I felt I would have to find my position with respect to animal testing, although it did not seem so pressing to arrive at a political stance in relation to the fancy rat community. But attending the pressure group’s rally left me feeling confused. Too polarising to be useful to me, this was not a discussion to which I had access. I nonetheless wanted to acknowledge the living and dying in the labs and in the rat show community. Here we are, our bodies protected over the years by vaccinations and drugs most of which were probably tested on animals, using animal models of human disease. My body, your bodies, are a charnelhouse; stacked in it are the corpses of millions of rats and mice and guinea pigs and fish and birds and cats and dogs and primates used by doctors and scientists over hundreds of years. I do not shy away from these bodies. I see them. I am glad of the drugs.

In her work on companion species, Donna Haraway (2003) made visible her entanglement with dogs, significant others for her and for many other people. Like dogs, rats have long been associated with human beings and human settlement, survival and development. Where there are rats there are people and where there are people there are rats. Significant as vermin, as rat models within science, as pets, rats are also significant others for humans. Rats are very good at training humans to acquire more of them. Since pet rats are often kept in single sex cages, breeding is supposedly controlled or at least monitored by the humans with whom the rats live. But rat fanciers find that one rat leads to two, because how can you keep such social animals on their own, which leads to three and four and ten and eleven and thirty.

I’ve got a bad case of GMR^v, they say. The animals’ sociability and curiosity feeds the desire of their human companions. They might spend 90 percent of their time in cages but during that other 10 percent, the rats are undertaking a complex training process, which looks like it has secured long-term viability of the species.

I wondered what Haraway might have discovered if she had talked of rats instead of dogs. The particular intimacy that rat lovers have with rats is partly a function of their size. Dogs, being larger, don’t crawl down your shirt and into your cleavage so

easily. Most dogs can't hide in your sleeve. Dog lovers don't commonly have tens of dogs. The excess of rats makes them a different kind of other for humans.

If these visits to labs and rat shows and protests were research^{vi}, the knowledge I was producing was rapidly making my *Rat Evaluated Artwork* an impossibility. Firstly, rats tend to sleep during the day so there was not point making an installation with rats in it for a conventional gallery context, since galleries are usually open during the day. Second, rats, especially male rats, are "not known for having a Protestant work ethic" as one scientist put it. While they instinctually want to explore novel environments, they would need to be motivated to engage with the decision points and features I envisaged in the REA. Scientists often motivate the animals they use with food rewards. For these to be effective, the animals need to be hungry and keeping them hungry would have to be part of my artwork. Thirdly, I decided was probably not acceptable to me to have live animals on display in a gallery as a spectacle for audiences in search of novelty. Fourthly, where would I get the rats from to put into the REA? What would I do with them after showing the work?

It was becoming clear that the *Rat Evaluated Artwork* was a problem: an ethical problem and a set of practical problems. In Rancièrian terms, a growing commitment to making the rats countable within the social orders I was investigating meant that I could reconfigure what was visible and sayable. To disrupt the ways that rats were engaged with in the two contexts I was exploring, I could create a new distribution of the sensible involving humans, rats and artefacts from several domains. I began to configure a space rendered visible and thinkable through my ignorance of both fancy ratting and experimental psychology.

What could I do? Inspired by other artists I could lock myself in a cage with a rat for a week to see what would happen. I could pickle a rat colony and put it on display in a vitrine. I could create a transgenic rat by adding genetic material from some other species and keep it as my family pet. I could dress up in a rat costume and perform my rat knowledge in front of a bemused audience and video it. I could turn myself into a Victorian music hall Rat Lady and make a cabaret. I could mimic a rat and run



Figure 5. Aesthetic experiments with rats and humans (photo: Lucy Kimbell)



Figure 6. Aesthetic experiments with rats and humans (photo: Lucy Kimbell)

around the streets for an hour or two. I could try to find some rat road kill and make some clothes from the fur or rope from the tails. I could invite a rat to enter my anus in a public performance. I could stick some rats in a box and have their movements trigger musical samples. I could make a headband with cartoon-like rats ears and give them to animal rights protestors to wear. I could do some paintings of rats and leave them around for them to chew or poo on. I could pretend to be a rat and bite people at openings. I could make body extensions for rats. None of these was quite right.

AESTHETIC EXPERIMENTS

Over the winter months I paid visits to a woman who shared her home with several rats. She had agreed to let me try to train them aesthetically. Neither of us was clear what this meant but I described it as trying to make a performance with the rats. She was initially comfortable with me turning up with objects for the rats to explore (see Figures 5 and 6). We sat on her bed while we watched as rat after rat preferred to snuggle under her duvet rather than be coaxed down the sleeve or tube I had brought along.

After a few visits it became evident that working in someone else's bedroom with someone else's pets was going to be difficult. Instead I could buy my own rat, keep my own rat, nurture him, feed him, love him, cuddle him, let him out to play, buy him presents, pay the vet's bills, keep him clean and watered, and generally extend the duration of the project for two to three years until he died. But there was still a problem. Any rat I bought and kept for this project would still be an instrumentalized animal, a rat for art's sake. I had come to be fond of the rats I had met but did not want (yet) to live with one.

I had wanted to make a *Rat Evaluated Artwork* so I had found out something about rats. I had done this by visiting the village halls used by rat fanciers and the gated community of the scientific lab. I had learnt something about rats as pets and rats as rat models. I had read a study on rats as vermin. In my explanations to others, I had noticed myself using the term "experimental" as

in “I’m not sure what I’m doing – it’s a kind of experiment.” It was a way of avoiding saying what I was doing, since I didn’t know what that was, and so far, no one had challenged me. Within practice-based research within art and design, you can get a way with quite a lot. You are allowed not to know, for quite a lot longer than you are elsewhere in the world. I clutched on to the ambiguity I could carry with me. In the UK it is the Home Office which has responsibility for looking after the welfare of animals used within science under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. There are two key ideas in the legislation. The first is to minimise pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm to animals used in regulated procedures. The second idea is a set of principles called the “3Rs” – replace, reduce, refine: seeking to replace animal use wherever possible; reduce the numbers of animals involved; and refine procedures to minimise their suffering. A license to carry out scientific procedures using animals can only be granted under the Act once a number of conditions have been met.

Hello, I wonder if you can help. I’m calling from Oxford University, the Ruskin School. No, not Ruskin College.

Yes, I’m a researcher. Oxford. No, I’m from a different department.

Yes, I’m trying to find out about whether my planned research programme comes under the Act.

Yes, I’ve looked the website.

No, I’m interested in a personal licence. We’re still designing the project. No, no one in my department has got a project licence at the moment.

Rats.

The sorts of procedures would be things like making them do a forced learning activity, maybe restricting a rat temporarily to a confined area, using auditory stimulæ.

The project supervisor is probably me. No, I haven’t done this before. Oh. I have to have a licence for one year, do I?

Who’s commissioned the research? Well, it comes under some work we’re doing at the Ruskin.

There is a funding body. The Wellcome Trust. The sci-art awards programme.

The experiments are to do with rats. To see whether they can make beautiful drawings.

Psychology. Art. Art history. Zoology. Sociology maybe?

Forced learning activities, restriction to a confined area, auditory stimulæ.

No, I’m not an undergraduate.

Would it be ok to perform these procedures at a place that’s not designated by the Secretary of State? In the notes, it says that other places might be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Page 5. An arts centre. Rats doing drawings. Not Ruskin College. The Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art.

But what about the personal licence? I should call back tomorrow.

I did make this call. I sat with my microphone ready to record the conversation but I could never get through. I remain unlicensed to experiment with rats.

Having put aside the Rat Evaluated Artwork, my aesthetic experiment would ask: What might happen if I brought together different kinds of knowledge, desire and disgust combining what I had found in the two worlds I had explored? Could I make visible rats as rats, not just rats as pets or rats as rat models? What would the rats themselves do and how would they experience the work?

To explore these questions, I designed, organised and hosted a one-day *Rat Fair* at Camden Arts Centre in London^{vii}, attended by around 450 people and 40 rats. Attractions at this event included the world premiere of the “Is Your Rat an Artist?” drawing competition in which rats and humans collaborated with a software tool to create drawings. Other attractions included Maximillian’s Pet Shop presented by two young designers with designs for animals and animal lovers, a chance to design and race a RoboRat, agility training for rats using equipment borrowed from a member of the Estuary Rat Club, and a rat beauty parlour with grooming and advice from a rat lover and a vet. An experimental psychologist brought along a T-maze used within labs to test how good rats’ memories are. Participants were also able to use a new visualisation tool I designed using something resembling rats tails to mark where in London they had seen a rat. There was rat face painting for children. I also created a line of Aunt Lucy’s Sugar Rats, a not-yet traditional greyish sweet with a sticky tail. Over several hours, people, some accompanied by rats in travelling cages, came along to spend time with each other, trying out the various attractions.

Perhaps the highlight of the *Rat Fair* was the “Is Your Rat an Artist?” drawing competition using the device shown in Figure 8. The drawings shown in Figures 9, 10, and 11 were produced by rats, with the help of humans and a software system I designed, inspired by the Morris water maze (Morris, 1984) which had been shown to me during a visit to an experimental psychology laboratory. In the middle of the room where the *Rat Fair* took place was a box on the floor covered in sawdust. Placed into this box one by one, individual rats moved around the box for around ten minutes each, sometimes distracted by various plastic and wooden toys, smells, noise, and by the humans and other rats outside the box. While each rat explored the environment, a video camera mounted overhead tracked its movements and converted these to a line drawing. In the design of

this attraction I was perhaps making the rat’s hands (Baker, 2000) more visible with the help of human hands and software hands. In my arrangement, the rat draws by moving around the drawing box, like a computer mouse moving over a desk. The way the animal moves around in the drawing area depends on her curiosity, how confident she is, how habituated she is to the environment and the people and other rats nearby. From the perspective of animal psychology, a frightened



Figure 7. A mapping tool identifying where the nearest rats were, shown installed at Camden Arts Centre, London, August 2005 (photo: Andy Keate, (c) Lucy Kimbell)

rat will stay close to the walls; a confident rat will quickly start exploring the open area, moving towards the objects placed in the box. Openings, tunnels, corridors and holes are all of interest to the artist-rat. She chooses her own path but her human companion, the other people and rats present, the environment she finds herself in, as well as the software, form part of the assemblage that creates the drawing.

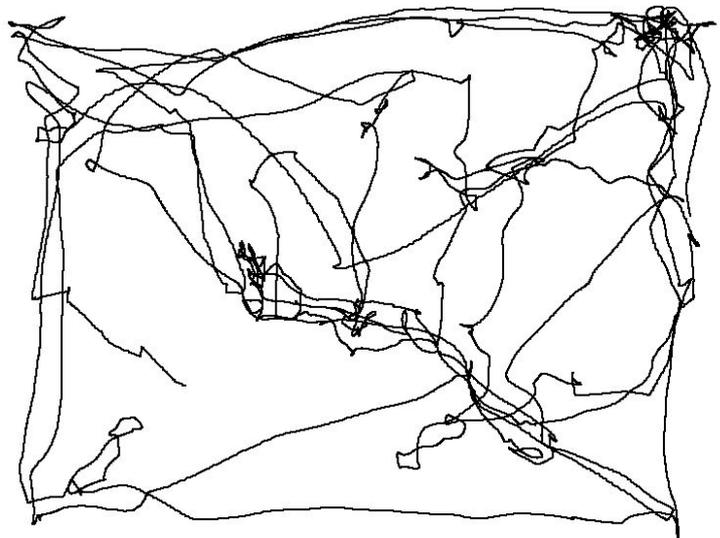
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To assess these artworks, I called on the services of curator Jenni Lomax^{viii} to decide which of these drawings should win the world’s first Rat Art Award. After careful consideration, she selected one by an eight month old female rat called Dinah, whose human companion Nick received the prize on her behalf, a bottle of rat essence somewhat resembling champagne. And thus *Rat Fair* ended, with awards, and clapping, and a sense of aesthetic judgements made. A short film entitled ‘Seven Minutes in the Service of Rats’ (Kimbell, 2009) documents the event.

I still think about the *Rat Evaluated Artwork*. It’s a piece of work I want to make but am not able to

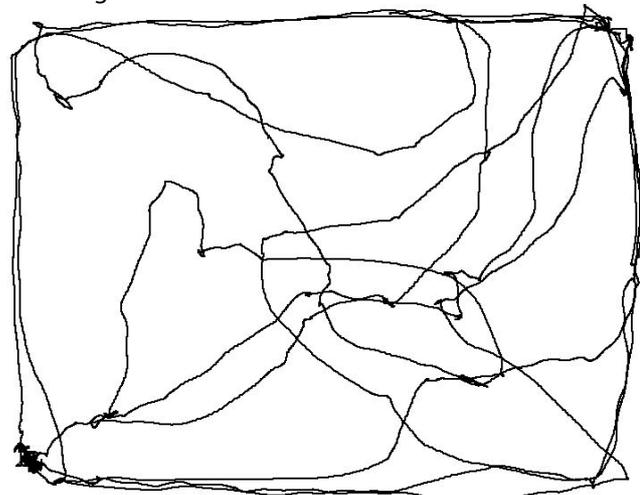


Figure 8. Installation view of the “Is Your Rat an Artist?” drawing device, shown at Camden Arts Centre, London, August 2005 (photo: Andy Keate, (c) Lucy Kimbell)



Eric male 16 months old 8 min 4 seconds Camden Arts Center 27.8.2005

Figure 9. Drawing by Eric, male, 16 months old, using the “Is Your Rat an Artist?” drawing device



Esric male 6 months old 10 min 0 seconds Camden Arts Center 27.8.2005

Figure 10. Drawing by Esric, male, six months old, using the “Is Your Rat an Artist?” drawing device

make. I cannot make it because I can't put live animals into a gallery piece, to make them into a spectacle in an art context and anyway they would sleep, or sit in the corner instead of moving around. It wouldn't work. Could it work aesthetically but not ethically? Could it work ethically but not aesthetically? It exists as an image and as a picture. Not realised and not realisable. It is a work that cannot work.

DISCUSSION

This account of an aesthetic research project into rats and humans in different kinds of organizational context does a number of things. It illustrates a way to undertake an aesthetic inquiry based in contemporary arts practice that resulted in “thick sensory description” (Taylor and Hansen, 2005) in the form of the *Rat Fair* event. This offered several ways for human and non-human participants to be involved in producing both drawings and the event-as-artwork. It enriches understanding of aesthetic knowledge in practice by providing a detailed description of how I went about the research.

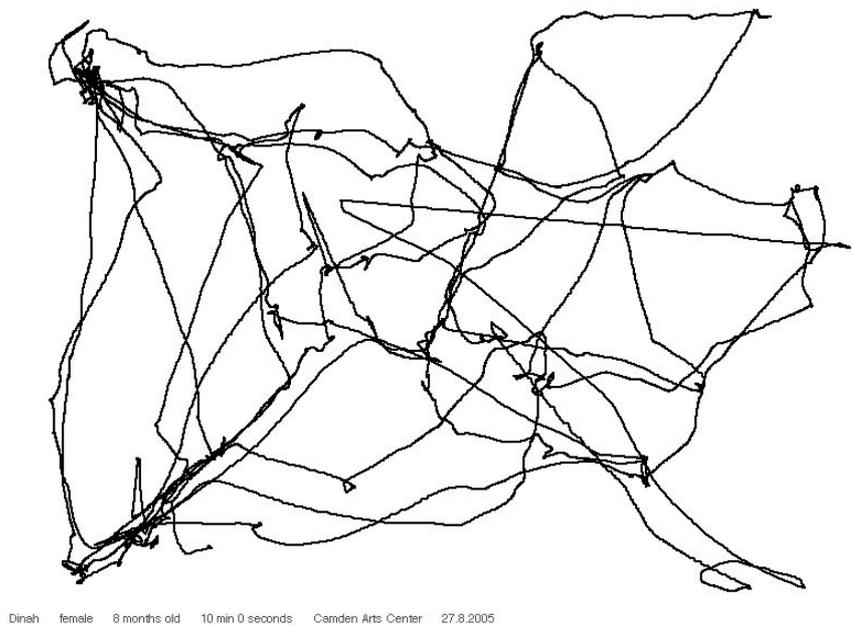
It also contributes to discussions about the intersection of aesthetics and ethics in practice. The initial purpose of the research was concerned with trying to make an artwork involving live rats. This in turn resulted in my increasing discomfort with instrumentalizing animals within an artwork alongside a growing understanding of how rats would not participate in the way I imagined in my proposed *Rat Evaluated Artwork*. I abandoned the initial concept of the REA and instead created an event that combined practices and knowledge from both communities that engaged humans and rats in different ways. The *Rat Fair* offered a new distribution of the sensible (Rancière, 2004). It brought humans and rats involved in three domains, science, fancy rat shows and the arts, into a new kind of relation with one another. Three main contributions are identified.

(1) New configurations create new inequalities

Rancière conceives of the aesthetic as not just a realm of the senses, or the beautiful, or concerned with the arts, but rather as the distribution of the sensible which enables modes of perceiving, thinking and saying. For Rancière, art has an important power of rearranging and expanding what can be perceived and what is thinkable (Beyes, 2008: 32). However with these rearrangements can come new inequalities.

I described above how my initial intention was to create the *Rat Evaluated Artwork*, which resulted in my

learning about rats in two contexts in which humans and rats are organized, the fancy community and experimental science. However as I learned more, I discovered that putting rats into a gallery space as a spectacle, and keeping them hungry to motivate them to take part in the work, were decisions I felt uncomfortable with for ethical reasons. I tried to resolve this by creating a new concept, the *Rat Fair* event, to bring rats and humans from different domains into a more equitable set of relations. But in doing so, I created a new kind of inequality. I set up a situation inviting people who have rats in their lives to come to a live event in a public arts venue, accompanied by the rats. The *Rat Fair* opened up the distribution of the sensible to a wide range of participants including rats and humans, some from arts audiences, some from science and some from the fancy rat community. The event enabled them to create their own connections within several different arrangements, some originating in the fancy rat world, some in science, and some of my own devising. Instead of making rats a spectacle in the REA – which did not seem right to do – I ended up creating an event which figured members of the fancy rat community who attended as an object of study. My effort to act ethically in relation to the rats lead to a situation in which I drew in some humans in ways that raised questions for me and for other participants about how this participation was configured. An implication for researchers concerned with the intersection of ethics and aesthetics is to consider how their own research makes some things sayable and visible, but not others, creating particular inclusions and exclusions. Rancière argues that the aesthetic regime of art rearranges these distributions. However, as I found, trying to create a particular equality created other inequalities.



Dinah female 8 months old 10 min 0 seconds Camden Arts Center 27.8.2005

Figure 11. Winning drawing by Dinah, female, eight months old, using the “Is Your Rat an Artist?” drawing device

(2) Disruption in aesthetic inquiry

Rancière's (2004; 2007) aesthetic regime of art avoids two dead ends: "the total effacement of the boundary between art and life, and the complete separation of art from life" (Tanke, 2010: 10). In this regime, form, content and technique are not predetermined and hierarchies are disrupted, including ethical and other conventions. Much of the art of the 20th and early 21st centuries is illustrative of this, using disgust, humour or subversion to generate a response in the viewer or audience and engaging in institutional critiques (Born and Weszkalnys, 2007). In their analysis of aesthetics, Taylor and Hansen (2005) echo this: "We might also note aesthetics' ability to transform the very categories we use to organize our experiences. Aesthetic forms of expression are like experiments that allow us to reconsider and challenge dominant categories and classifications."

In my aesthetic inquiry, what started off as a desire to make an installation in a gallery changed to creating a live event in an arts venue (form), drawing together a wide range of rats, people and different kinds of artifact and institutional arrangement, from every day life to science (form/content). To do this I used what resemble ethnographic methods and combined them with new ones I created such as the adaptation of the Morris water maze (method). By studying practices and artifacts found in two distinct arenas – fancy rat breeding and shows, and experimental psychology – and recombining them into new arrangements within my event, I disrupted hierarchies about who has knowledge about rats. By bringing rats into an art venue, I reconfigured accepted divisions between art and non-art. An implication for organization researchers interested in practicing aesthetic inquiries is to be willing to go beyond just having a taste for intellectual transgression (Strati, 2009). Instead, situated within the aesthetic regime, researchers can develop dis-tasteful practices that are not (yet) authorized by or comprehensible to the academy, producing new subjects, sites and ways of doing research.

(3) Not knowing in aesthetic inquiry Not knowing might be considered fundamental to research, so obvious to be not worth discussing. The purpose of research is to move from not knowing to knowing and several researchers' efforts have been concerned with understanding the aesthetic dimensions of knowing. Taylor and Hansen propose that aesthetic knowing is a kind of knowing that is "driven by a desire for subjective, personal truth usually for its own sake" (2005: 1213).

However Rancière's efforts to see the connections between art and politics can be read as questioning how social scientists construct their objects of study and how their claims to knowledge produce ignorance (Pelletier, 2009). In my aesthetic inquiry, I discovered that *not* knowing became an important resource in the work, both the process of undertaking the research and in what I wanted to offer participants in the *Rat Fair* event. As I have described above, I did not have clear research questions, or knowledge of a field to which I might contribute, or explicit reasons for using one method over another, let alone findings I could articulate clearly within a particular regime of representation – all of which social science expects (eg Blaikie, 2010). But this did not stop me from doing something resembling research as I tried to make my artwork. Or rather, an aesthetic approach to doing research tolerated or even required me not to know what I was doing, or quite why, or how.

Related to the importance of not knowing in the process of inquiry, is ambiguity about what it achieves. This essay, for example, carries with it some of the slipperiness of contemporary art. Is this paper a satire, or serious attempt at scholarship? Can any paper do both well? Do the multiple voices in this account get in the way of the more theoretical aspects, or vice versa? Which offers a better read? Does the paper contribute to or destabilize the field? In his reading of Rancière, Beyes (2008) argues this undecidability is precisely the value of contemporary art and, by implication, of attempts at an aesthetic inquiry: "artistic in[ter]ventions should not be robbed of their talent for being ambiguous, disputable and preliminary cuts into the distributions of the sensible and thus the orderings of the social" (Beyes, 2008: 38; brackets in original). The difficulty of distinguishing between art and non-art, in the aesthetic regime, or between a scholarly contribution or a satire, in the case of research, can be a contribution. A possible implication for organization researchers is to develop the capacity to give up claims to knowledge and perhaps even enjoy doing so, a purpose that does not sit well with much academic research. Further, by excluding or ignoring aesthetic inquiry in their work, researchers constitute a kind of knowledge production that has disciplinary consequences.

CONCLUSION

Several researchers have concluded that contemporary art might be rewarding for organizational scholars interested in studying aesthetics using aesthetic means. Helping build greater understanding of the possibilities of using such approaches, this paper shows how to go about an aesthetic inquiry based in contemporary art practice. Through a description of how I went about making an artwork involving live rats, I illustrate how considering ethical questions was an important part of my work as an artist but how these could only be understood in practice. Further, rather than seeking to balance ethics and aesthetics as suggested by Brady (1986), my approach was better explained with reference to the work of Jacques Rancière (2004; 2007). He shows how political choices are involved in constituting what is thinkable and sayable in the distribution of the sensible, and suggests that the aesthetic regime of art can expand or rearrange what can be perceived.

My research into how to make my proposed *Rat Evaluated Artwork* lead to my participating in two contexts in which rats and humans engage: fancy rat breeding and shows, and experimental science. The ethical question to which I attended was, what was the right thing to do with the rats within my artwork? Two possible responses were either not using animals instrumentally, or presenting a critical account highlighting their use. Instead I found a way to bring the rats into the artwork on a more equal basis, which reconfigured what was sayable and knowable about rats and the humans and which avoided these “safe bets” (Rancière 2004; Rancière 2007; Beyes, 2008).

There are three findings. First, new configurations of the sensible can lead to new inequalities. Instead of my original idea to create the *Rat Evaluated Artwork*, I made a different artwork that brought together humans, rats and various material and software artefacts into the artwork on the basis, I hoped, of greater equality. However the *Rat Fair* generated new questions about whether it was the right way to engage some of the people in this way. Second, aesthetic enquiries can lead to disruption. Within the aesthetic regime, the method, content and form of the research are undetermined. Humour, absurdity and subversion are equally valid as part of the approach. One concluding element of my inquiry, the *Rat Fair* event, disrupted hierarchies about who has knowledge about rats. Third, not knowing how to go about the research, and an undecidability about what resulted, were important in this project. Far from being peripheral matters, an enquiry within the aesthetic regime of art can reveal how particular configurations change what is sayable and thinkable. For organization researchers intrigued by the possibility of contemporary arts practices in the aesthetic regime, such reconfigurations, disruptions and undecidability can be rewarding, but they can also reconfigure what is thinkable and sayable within research.

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Photographs (c) Lucy Kimbell

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¹ UK researchers will note the intersections between what is discussed here and the government’s attempt to establish the value of academic research through efforts such as the Research Assessment Exercise and its successor.

ⁱⁱ Space does not allow a full discussion of contemporary art. For key themes such as the role of the viewer, the nature of art’s institutions, the materiality or otherwise of art objects see Lippard (1973), Godfrey (1998), Bishop (2006) and Thornton (2008).

ⁱⁱⁱ There is not space here for an extensive discussion of practice-based research in art and design about which researchers remain in deep disagreement about the nature of such work. See Durling and Friedman (2000), Carter (2004), Biggs and Büchler (2008), Rust (2009) and Barrett and Bolt (2010) for some distinct positions.

^{iv} Any mistakes are mine.

^v Interpreter's note: GMR = Get more rats.

^{vi} When my colleague Steve Woolgar, a well-known social scientist, referred to my rat project as an ethnography, I began to wonder what kind of status it would have in the academy, which lead ultimately to writing this paper. Peer-reviewed papers in international databases have a longer shelf-life than one-off public events in art galleries unless I choose and am invited to document the debris from the Rat Fair, or isolate parts of the research such as rat-human-software drawings reproduced here, for display in other art contexts. It remains to be seen what matters more: the art project or this academicized account of it.

^{vii} Rat Fair, Camden Arts Centre, Saturday 27 August 2005.

^{viii} Director of Camden Arts Centre, London.

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The Art of 'perceiving Correctly': What Artists Can Teach Us About Moral Perception

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Abstract

'Moral perception' has long been identified as a key pre-requisite for ethical behaviour (Dewey 1974; Aristotle, 1976; MacIntyre, 1985). In order to respond ethically to a given situation, one must first recognise its ethical component. However, the question of how moral perception is developed is more difficult to address. Perceiving 'accurately' is itself recognised as being fraught with difficulties, ranging from the impact of motivation, expectations, mental schemas as well as mood and physical comfort. This paper turns to the habits of visual artists and musicians who each in their own ways must cultivate the ability to 'see the world afresh' in order to produce art of quality, either through visual artefacts or fleeting performances. The paper highlights how practices of 'staying with the senses', 'engaged detachment', and 'imaginative free play' can enhance our capacity to recognise the moral component of everyday situations encountered and thus increase the possibility of responding to them in ethically astute ways.

She walks on to the stage clothed as I've never seen her before. Rather than formal concert dress, she wears a blue peasant's skirt and a white sleeveless t-shirt. A plate-sized golden medallion cinches a wide smile of leather at her waist. She is Viktoria Mullova, acclaimed Russian violinist, and she is joined in this concert by cellist Steven Barley and a trio of jazz players: Julian Joseph on piano and percussionists Paul Clarvis and Sam Wolton. The setting is medieval – the baronic Hall of the Dartington Estate nestled in a quiet Devonshire valley in the Southwest of England.

The concert is a panoply of musical genres and energies – jazz, contemporary classical, folk. In a stunning display of attention and imagination Mullova and Barley play Bartok's 'Seven Duos for Violin and Cello', and after each piece, one of the other musicians improvises on what he has just heard. Each miniature provides a new way of hearing the previously played music, so that nuances of tone and harmonic structure became apparent in fresh ways.

As I listen and watch, I am struck not just by the virtuosity and power of the playing, but by the way in which the musicians engage with one another. There is a palpable quality of attention working between them. They watch each other intently even as they perform their own solo licks. I notice how the drummer constantly makes small adjustments in tempo and volume as he picks up tiny nuances from the others. Each musician seems able to attend simultaneously to his or her own musical idea, to one another's, and to the possibilities of the 'whole' they are creating together. It is this sense of immediacy and potential for surprise that brings me to the edge of my seat as I listen to their performance.

This paper explores the possibility that artists can make a powerful contribution to the way in which we develop the ability to engage ethically with others and the world around us. It is grounded in the assertion that the ability to act ethically is dependent on our ability to perceive ourselves in relation to others 'correctly' (Aristotle, 1976). In the illustration above, the ability of each musician to express his or her own agency while being attentive to others' was crucial in creating the vitality and quality of their performance. Such relational excellence is grounded not in formal codes of practice or rules of engagement, but in living each moment with a particular perceptual orientation. It is this perceptual orientation, I am suggesting, which could inform not only great musical performances, but also sound ethical relations with others. In other words, we need to 'see' others 'correctly' before we can notice their claim to moral consideration and the implications of that for how we act in relation to them.

How might such an orientation be fostered? This paper speculates about the extent to which the habits practiced by artists and musicians to develop perceptual acuity might be transferable to others aspiring to develop their relational excellence. Of particular interest is how these ideas might be applied to organisational contexts and the managers and leaders working within them who aspire to take up their roles ethically in often stressful and morally ambivalent situations.

Before proceeding, it is important to position this paper in relation to others dealing with how ethical behaviour might be fostered within organizational contexts. Rather than addressing ways in which deliberate ethical malfeasance within organizations might be halted, here practices are offered which may assist those aspiring to perform their organizational roles with mindfulness and care. In drawing from arts based practices for inspiration in this venture, it joins others such as Adler (2006), Collier (2006) and Waddock (2009) in exploring ways in which ideas from aesthetics and the practices artists use to develop their crafts might be applied to the development of moral capabilities.

Two further assumptions underpin the argument. The first is that the ability to respond ethically to the myriad of situations human being face at the beginning of the twenty-first century requires skills born of conscious awareness and deliberate attention. That is, the ability to act ethically must be worked on – it does not just happen as a result of the intention 'to be a good person'. The second assumption is that the skills and capabilities required can be consciously practiced and learned. Much as a cellist must painstakingly practice scales and her bowing technique in order to develop the fluency required to give a recital, those wishing to become masters of ethical awareness can practice techniques which will enable them to identify previously overlooked moral aspects of situations.

The paper begins by placing these ideas within the wider literature concerning moral perception, paying particular attention to what has been written about moral imagination. This review draws from both broad-based philosophical and more specific business ethics literatures. Three practices which foster the ability of artists to 'see the world afresh' in order to create arresting works of art or performances are introduced. A case study of a situation faced by an academic colleague is introduced to bring these ideas alive and test their applicability to an actual organizational event. The paper concludes by suggesting that these practices can work together to foster the most important perceptual orientation of all; the willingness to frame mundane situations and every-day encounters as potent spaces for practicing moral perception.

WHAT IS MORAL PERCEPTION?

Philosophers have long recognised the requirement of noticing the existence of an ethical component within a given situation before moral¹ judgement can come into play (Dewey, 1974; Aristotle, 1976; MacIntyre, 1985). Aristotle was among the first in his *Nichomechan Ethics* to highlight the role of perception in the exercise of virtue. According to him, ethical behaviour relies on the ability to 'perceive rightly', that is, to take proper account of the ethically salient features of a situation' (NEIII 5 1114a 32-b3). More contemporary proponents of the virtue ethics approach, such as the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1985) concur with the importance of moral perception in both recognising that a situation has a moral component, and identifying which option for subsequent behaviour is the most ethically sound. Taking MacIntyre's work as a starting point for his own thinking, the moral philosopher Lawrence Blum theorises extensively about moral perception (1991; 1994). For Blum, perception is 'anything contributing to or encompassed within the agent's 'take' on the situation – his salience perception – prior to deliberating about what to do' (1991: 707). Blum identifies three aspects of moral perception:

Recognising the moral component, that is, simply recognising a moral problem exists in the present;

Fully grasping what the moral component means to the parties affected (this often requires the engagement of sympathy);

Recognising the moral difficulties that could arise from a situation; that is being able to infer possible future ethical issues which could arise from a set of circumstances or as a consequence of a decision.

What is interesting about Blum's categories is they include attention both to aspects of situations which are present, but perhaps unseen, and to aspects of situations which are not present, but could emerge. The requirement for both kinds of perceptual attention will be developed further later in this paper, but is worth highlighting at this stage.

Within the field of business ethics Rest and his colleagues (Rest, 1986; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999) have identified different 'stages' of the process by which ethical behaviour results: moral sensitivity, moral judgement, moral intention and moral behaviour.

Following from Rest's work, a number of business ethics scholars have pursued the idea of moral sensitivity more closely, aligning it to notions of moral perception and moral imagination (Werhane, 1998; 2002; Butterfield et al., 2000; Moberg and Seabright, 2000). Although each of these authors clearly makes the case for the importance of moral awareness, little work has been done to address the question of how this capacity might be fostered, especially within the context of busy, often time-pressured organizational realities.

This is an important question to answer, not least of which because lack of moral awareness is often attributed to be the reason that people fall into 'unwitting' ethical behaviour (Bazerman and Banaji, 2004). The Special Issue of the *Social Justice Research Journal* which they edited in 2004 explicitly sets out to articulate what is known about 'ordinary ethical failures'; those caused not by people intentionally doing wrong, but through any number of social-psychological factors which inhibit well meaning people's ability to recognise and act in accordance with the ethical aspect of situations. Although the articles presented in that volume tease out many of the factors which contribute to unwitting unethical behaviour, there is little to help those who would wish to navigate these territories more successfully.

Others within the field of business ethics also note the role moral perception plays in a manager's ability to act ethically (Jones, 1991; Butterfield et al., 2000; Chikudate, 2002; May and Pauli, 2002; Dasgupta, 2004; Moore and Loewenstein, 2004). These authors cite a range of factors which contribute to the difficulties those in organisations can have in 'perceiving correctly'. For instance, Moore and Loewenstein (2004) consider the role self-interest plays in colouring the way in which a situation is read, suggesting that for human beings, self interest is 'automatic, viscerally compelling, and typically unconscious' (190-191). Dasgupta (2004) writes about the way in which 'in-group favouritism' can colour the way in which actions are interpreted, often leading people to discount the impact of their actions on out-group members in quite unconscious ways. Both of these malfunctions of perception can be attributed to the role 'schemas' play in how we select and interpret perceptual cues.

Werhane (2002) in particular attends to the role schemas play in influencing what is perceived within organizations. Starting with the example of ongoing wrong-doing within the USA-based General Electric Company, she considers how organisational schemas operate to reconfigure ideas about what might be morally acceptable. Rather than attending to the inherent unfairness of insider trading for instance, she cites how schemas operating within GE encouraged its members to focus on being 'opportunistic' and 'clever'. Moberg and Seabright (2000) point out how frequently managers rely on schemas rather than evidence in making decisions, where 'script processing' takes precedence over staying with details of what is happening. They emphasise the importance of 'paying attention to the available information instead of relying totally on schematic interpretation' (849).

In considering these business ethicists' writings and those of Blum, it is apparent that in order to exercise moral awareness individuals must actively expand their habitual patterns of perception. Identifying those affected by one's actions who might otherwise easily be overlooked is critical, as well as being able to empathise with how those others might respond to a given situation. Furthermore, in order to anticipate how one's actions and decisions might affect those not currently present, the ability to imagine into the future is required. This is the work of the moral imagination.

Moral Imagination

Whereas 'imagination' is sometimes thought to be too irrational to be of aid to ethical deliberation, pragmatist philosophy in particular treats imagination as a key element of the ability to respond ethically to situations. In fact, Adam Smith – a writer not usually renowned for writing in favour of 'irrational' approaches, brings to the fore the importance of imagination in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759/1976). The American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey follows Smith in foregrounding the role of imagination within ethical deliberation as a key enabler of empathy. As such, it enables the capacity to 'go beyond ourselves and our concerns and imagine ourselves as the other so that we come to understand and sympathise with their aspirations, interests, and worries' (Dewey, 1974, p. 313). Broader than just empathy, moral imagination enables us to 'imaginatively discern various

possibilities for acting within a given situation and to envision the potential help or harm that are likely to result from a given action' (Johnson, 1993, p. 02).

Colloquially, the moral imagination enables us to 'put ourselves in someone else's shoes', and through that process to gain insight into the feelings, reactions and emotions that might accompany a given action on our part. In enabling us to have such insight, it is an essential element of being able to make moral decisions and enact them.

Business ethics scholars such as Dennis Moberg, Mark Seabright and Patricia Werhane have noted the critical role moral imagination plays in the ability for managers and organisational leaders to act ethically. For instance, Werhane (2002) writes that 'moral imagination is by and large an affective facilitating process that influences, but is not identical to 'reasoning'. She further argues that moral imagination enables one to 'disengage from a particular process, evaluate it and the mindsets which it incorporates, and think more creatively within the constraints of what is morally possible' (34). In her writing, Werhane often alludes to the importance of 'creativity' in this process – without being explicit about how such creativity comes about. Along with others, she does not address how those working within stressful organizational contexts might realistically make time to do this creative work.

The skills of both 'really seeing' what *is* there, while also 'seeing what is *not* there' which are so essential to exercising moral imagination and moral perception are core to artistic processes as demonstrated by Viktoria Mullova and her fellow musicians in the illustration which opened this paper. Excellence within artistic endeavours largely depends on the ability to make these capacities habitual ways of being in the world. Really seeing what *is* there, and imagining what *could* be there, need to become 'second nature' to artists who want to continue to create arresting art. I am suggesting that the practices cultivated by artists to develop these capacities could similarly be practiced by managers and organisational leaders. Like artists, they could learn to habitually draw from these perceptual capacities, rather than experiencing them as time-consuming 'add-ons'.

In this way I am offering a way in which the arts could inform ethical enactment which is different from that suggested by Moberg and Seabright (2000) and Sandelands and Buckner (1989). These authors propose that literature, film, theatre, and visual art – that is, actual artistic outputs -- can be useful in helping individuals develop moral imagination. Instead, here the case is made that artistic practices themselves can provide a powerful means of creating 'habits of perception' which become second nature to the way an individual engages with their world. The following section explores how artists learn and develop the capacities to 'really see', both what *is*, and what *isn't* present, and how these practices might be applied to the development of moral perception.

ARTISTS' PRACTICES OF PERCEPTION

The ideas offered here been developed through engaging with a variety of different sources including artists' written accounts of their perceptual habits, scholars' writing about artistic processes, as well as conversations with practicing artists. Through this exploratory work, three recurring practices emerge which seem to have particular relevance to the question of how moral awareness might be developed. These are: 'staying with the senses', 'engaged detachment', and 'imaginative free play'.

Perceiving like an artist: Staying with the Senses

We don't draw well because we don't learn to see – learn how to draw, you will learn how to see.

(Franck, 1973, p. 34)

Perceiving accurately is fraught with difficulties. Writing about managers' ability to perceive their organizations 'correctly', Mezas and Starbuck (2003) note how factors such as the subject matter being perceived, individual differences, experience, context, organizational and societal proclivities – even physiology – impact on individuals' ability to do so. One of the most habitual ways in which human beings perceive incorrectly is through moving too quickly from the actual sense-data offered by a situation, to interpreting and labelling what that sense-data 'means'. 'Really seeing' involves forgetting the labels so quickly applied to sense data and lingering with the sense data itself. As Weschler notes, 'to see is to forget the name of the thing one sees' (Weschler, 1982: 95). That is, rather than jumping immediately to the conclusion, 'that is my friend John', when I notice a man walking down the street of similar build and comportment as my acquaintance, I pause and take in more data. Is the person dressed similarly to the way John dresses? Does this person move the same way John does? Staying with my sense perceptions provides much more accurate perceptual data, and enables me to avoid the embarrassment of enthusiastically greeting someone I don't know.

Springborg (2010) introduces a distinction between 'sense-making' and 'description-making' which is helpful in elaborating this capacity. 'Description making' involves a conceptual process through which 'yesterday's sense-making' is used to interpret and respond to situations. Suppose that yesterday my boss walked into the office with a grim look on his face, and later in the day

twenty people in the firm were fired. Today, when he enters the office with a grim look on his face, I might immediately interpret his look as indicative of further layoffs. I fail to notice that in addition to looking grim, he has developed a limp because of a fall he suffered the evening before. By carefully seeing him today rather than relying on 'yesterday's sense-making' I might be able to interpret his grimace in the light of new, additional sensory data.

Springborg (2010) argues that art is 'an arrangement of conditions intended to make us perceive some part of the world more directly to our senses, and less through our concepts and ideas about the world' (244). In order to create art which does this, artists themselves must 'stay with their senses'. What are the practices which cultivate the capacity to do so?

Practicing staying with the senses

One of the most popular teachers of amateur visual artists' is Betty Edwards. Her book, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (2001) provides a range of techniques which those hoping to improve their drawing ability can practice. Many of them aim to increase perceptual acuity by really seeing what is present, rather than one's 'story' of what is seen. A common difficulty in drawing portraits, for instance, is that in observing a face features such as the nose or eyes are readily identified. It is very easy to jump to a concept about what a 'nose' looks like, and draw that idea rather than staying with the actual sensory data of the actual bumps, colouration and contours of *this* nose. One of the practices Edwards recommends is to turn any picture one wants to copy upside down, and draw it from this perspective. In upturning a face, a 'nose' is no longer recognised as a 'nose', but as a collection of contoured relationships. It is much easier to pay attention to this unrecognisable form and 'see' it clearly to copy it accurately.

A second aspect of drawing accurately is attending to the spaces 'between' obvious objects, as much as to the objects themselves. Students of her technique are encouraged to draw the 'invisible spaces', rather than the objects, and to attend to nuances of light and shade which contribute to the materiality of that which is in central focus. This attention to the way light – a seemingly immaterial quality -- forms that which we see and how we see it has long been the focus of visual artists. One need only look at the multiple images of water lilies depicted by Monet in the later years of his life to understand how light alters what is seen. Paradoxically, sometimes an 'unreal' rendition of an object can provide a more 'truthful' experience of it. For instance, writing of van Gogh's *Portrait of Patience Escalier (1889)* Johnson suggests:

(it) could violate accepted rules for the realistic use of color by painting eyes with red irises and beard and hair of a bluish green cast, yet what he gives us rings true to our experience, reshapes it, and reveals hitherto hidden dimensions not captured by our received aesthetic canons. In painting after painting he undermines any canonical presentation of color (e.g. the green faces of his self-portraits, the blue tree trunks in an olive grove) only to create an intensity of color that holds us captive and convinces us utterly of the rightness of what he has seen and done – not according to any set of rules for making art, but according to the flexible logic of our imaginative understanding of things. (1993, p. 213).

In other words, by seeing deeply into the way in which light creates what is seen and staying with that rather than collapsing into set ideas of what a face looks like, van Gogh reveals a truth about Patience Escalier that might otherwise have been overlooked.

The practice of attending deeply to relationships and subtleties which are not available through our habitual ways of noticing is also used by musicians wanting to perfect their ability to hear nuances of compositions. In his autobiographical account of learning to play the piano, T.E. Carhart writes about lessons with his teacher, Anna. The foundation of his practice became understanding the underlying chord progressions upon which any composition is built. He writes:

Much of her time was spent developing my ear, which she said was particularly sensitive. She would have me sing the melody voicings as I played harmony and vice versa, and even in the simple pieces she continually exhorted me to hear subtle harmonies and dissonances. ...From my very first lessons with Anna I experienced a satisfaction and a kind of pleasure that I had not expected. Even the simplest figuration in those first pieces – a change of key, an unexpected chord – could fill me with joy as I grasped with my ear and my mind what was intended, however straightforward.(2000 , p. 103).

Carhart's experience here speaks to the way in which an understanding of the underlying structure of a piece of music enabled him to 'hear' it properly. In both the practices suggested by Edwards and those offered to Carhart by his teacher, the

student is encouraged to carefully attend to what is 'there' but potentially overlooked. In Edward's case this is achieved by 'upsetting' students' habitual ways of seeing, and in Carhart's case by attending to the underlying structure and the way in which it informs what is heard. The ways in which these practices might be transferred into the organisational realm will be explored later. For now, let us consider the second capacity artists develop in order to create excellent work, that of 'engaged detachment'.

Perceiving like an artist: Engaged Detachment

In particular, one had to practice a form of alert detachment in order to give expression to one's art. 'Stop thinking about relaxation!' cried the master to the student. 'It's only because you not really detached that you feel tension. And yet everything is so simple!'(T.E. Carhart, 2000, p. 105).

Being able to take a detached standpoint from one's work is a critical aspect of being able to perceive accurately. Artists especially need to be able to judge the extent to which their performances or creations approach the standard to which they are striving. In order to do this, they need to be able to step back and appraise their work with a dispassionate, but interested gaze.

One of the most helpful treatises about the role of this kind of engaged detachment in aesthetic judgement is offered by the Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790/2005). Kant stresses that in order to judge whether or not something is beautiful, the onlooker must be able to approach that which is being assessed through a 'disinterested' gaze. The term 'disinterest' here is not meant in its colloquial sense, suggesting that aesthetic judgement is not 'concerned' or 'engaged'. Instead, 'disinterest' means that in aesthetic judgement – and particularly aesthetic judgements of the beautiful -- one is concerned not with how that which one is observing relates to the self, but rather with that which is being observed on its own merits.

Kant's idea about 'disinterest' is related to his notion of 'lack of purposiveness'. 'Purposiveness' relates to a thing's 'utility'. According to Kant, a thing's 'aesthetic', particularly in terms of its quality of 'beauty' should be judged separately from its usefulness. This emphasis on disinterest suggests a clear distinction between that which brings us 'pleasure', and that which is 'beautiful'. Something is considered to be 'beautiful' because it stands on its own merits as a thing of beauty, rather than because of its relation to the observer in terms of the pleasure it brings. For instance, I might enjoy great pleasure from eating chocolate fudge brownies, but that does not mean that chocolate fudge brownies are beautiful. In making aesthetic judgements, the observer must stand back and observe that which is being perceived without reference to how it might be of use to the self. Similarly, 'engaged detachment' is vital to those aspiring to perceive the ethical components of situations. In order to recognise the impact of an action on others, it is critical to be able to detach from the way in which the self might be affected. How do artists foster this capacity?

Practices of detachment

Visual artists and musicians are often reminded of the importance of disinterest when judging their own work. In his book, *Beyond the Music Lesson* (2003) the musician (cellist, conductor and composer) Riki Gerardy extols the importance of detachment in developing the judgement required in order to critique and improve one's playing. 'The way forward,' he writes, 'is to become a bit more detached, so as to see things clearly. Not impersonal – just enough to allow understanding and control, to prepare the way for more complete involvement. Then it is possible to rediscover missing qualities.' (3). Of note here is the balance required between standing back, and still maintaining interest.

Gerardy (2003) is very clear about the kinds of habits which foster creative detachment. Firstly, he suggests, one should always put space between themselves and their playing. Whenever possible, musicians should listen to recordings of their playing a little while after the performance has taken place. When listening, performers should always do so as a critical member of the audience. It is essential to always put oneself in the shoes of the audience – how will the person at the very back of a crowded auditorium hear what has been played? What about the person in the front seat?

A key practice advocated by the visual artist and writer Alan Bleakley is the development of an identity as a 'connoisseur' (2003). In a consulting project which involved visual artists working with doctors to help them increase their aptitude at diagnosing diseases, Bleakley found that encouraging doctors to think of themselves as 'connoisseurs of perception' enabled them to develop detachment from their habitual ways of seeing. Rather than being overly attached to 'being right' about the way in which they were diagnosing illnesses, this identity encouraged them to take a broader, more eclectic view. One of the outcomes of this expansion of attention was that they began to seek out alternative interpretations of what they were seeing, rather than relying on their first insights.

Both 'staying with the senses' and 'engaged detachment' are underpinned by a third critical capacity, one recognised in literatures concerning both artistic and ethical excellence; that of 'imaginative free play'.

Perceiving like an artist: Imaginative Free Play

In order to utilise 'staying with the senses' and 'engaged detachment' in ways that lead to creating excellent art, musicians and visual artists must allow their imaginations to play. Sensory perception can only lead to new ways of perceiving if the imagination is encouraged to fly towards new interpretations and possibilities for that which is sensed. Johnson (1993) writes extensively on the ways in which artistic imaginative processes could inform the moral imagination. In particular he notes how creativity is central to both – and how within creative processes established 'rules' are often broken in order to illuminate other aspects of an experience which can paradoxically enable us to see it more 'truly'.

As previously illustrated, van Gogh's *Portrait of Patience Escalier* revealed something more 'essential' about the sitter than a seemingly more truthful rendition. However, being able to perceive that truth relies on our ability to imagine what van Gogh is representing with his use of bold colours and lines of paint. In fact, any artistic representation relies on the imaginative capacity of an audience to see – to 'make' something of what the artist has portrayed. Similarly, perceiving the link between the surface layer of a composition's rendering and its underlying harmonic structure requires the imagination to weave the two together.

Being able to engage the imagination also requires detachment – the person imagining must be able to let go of assumptions about how something 'should be' in order to perceive something different. The world-wide financial market crash of 2008 provides a clear example of how the inability to 'detach' from what one wants to see in order to imagine the potential impact of actions on others can have far-reaching, moral consequences. Noting the collective lack of perception in recognising the systemic nature of the situation, Lord Turner, head of the UK's Financial Services Authority said:

With hindsight, the FSA, like other authorities throughout the world, was focused too much on individual institutions, and the processes and procedures within them, and not adequately focused on the totality of the systemic risks across the whole system, and whether there were entire business models, entire ways of operating, that were risky (Lord Turner, 2009).

Turner's statement highlights the critical role of imaginative free play in identifying possible outcomes which could result from interactions which are not readily apparent. Similar reflections could be made about the lack of imagination on the part of those responsible for BP's oil spill in Louisiana. With a bit of imagination, such disasters could have been recognised as being possible, if not probable.

Practicing imaginative free play

In her book, *Learning How Not to Paint*, (1965) the visual artist Teah Lealand describes a process of learning to draw which is different but complementary to that advocated by Betty Edwards. Her method seems clearly indicative of utilising 'free play of the imagination', in that it is largely improvisational. Using her technique the painter just begins to make lines and shapes on the paper, and while doing so, attends to both the inner impulse of 'what to do next' as well as the emerging image being created. She suggests that the job of the artist is to be sensitive to the dialogue which occurs between the artist's impulse and that which 'wants to emerge'. Imaginative free play is at the heart of this process, involving 'in the moment' experimentation as well as on-going responses to the question, 'what if?'

This kind of imaginative free play is nowhere more apparent than within the realm of jazz improvisation. The jazz pianist and Organization Studies scholar Frank Barrett has written extensively about the practices jazz musicians hone in order to cultivate imaginative fluency (1998; 2001). That of 'continually negotiating and dialoguing towards dynamic synchronization' (Barrett 2001, p. 154) is perhaps most apt to the argument here. This involves developing a keen sensitivity to the unexpected and emergent ways in which fellow musicians alter set chord or rhythmic patterns. Improvisational jazz musicians must be nimble at responding to emerging musical sound-worlds without being overly attached to their own ideas of where the music might go. This ability requires both an extremely sensitive awareness of the present moment, while simultaneously being open to the possibilities imaginative engagement enables. This quality of awareness was apparent in the Dartington concert described at the beginning of this article. Entering into dialogue between the sensory fullness of the present moment and possible 'lines of flight' to which it might extend is at the heart of imaginative free play. Such a capability could also inform moral awareness by fostering the acuity required to attend both to a given situation's nuances and undercurrents as well as to its nascent possibilities.

CULTIVATING ARTISTIC PERCEPTION WITH ORGANIZATIONS

In order to explore the implications of these ideas for those working within organizations, I will draw from an account offered to me by a fellow academic. 'Jordon' (a pseudonym) agreed to keep a journal of 'ethical dilemmas' he encountered in his role as Director of a Masters Level degree programme as part of a small co-operative inquiry group I established to conduct exploratory

work into this area. Here his edited account is presented, along with parts of a reflective conversation we had together to analyse the situation.

I had just returned to the University from a week's holiday. Within five minutes of entering my office, the Programme Manager for the Masters Programme for which I am Academic Director knocked on my door. He seemed to be in a state of agitation. Two of the students on the programme had failed a resit of an exam which they had taken while I was away. According to the University regulations for this course, registration for students who failed retaken exams had to be terminated. It was up to me to contact the students and to tell them the news and to begin the termination procedure.

In retrospect I am amazed that at this point I hardly asked any questions. One of the students had only failed the resit by 3%, but I never questioned the rules governing the decision. As suggested by the Programme Manager, I contacted the students and arranged meetings that day with each of them in which I conveyed the news. They were both shocked and at one point I became aware that I had no idea about their stability and the impact this news would have on them. However, the wheels were clearly in motion and I dismissed these concerns.

That night I mulled over what was happening. I thought that there must be a better way of handling the situation, however, I never really pursued these questions with anyone else, but instead kept moving forward with the 'rules' of the University. Although I did have one-to-one discussions with the students' supervisors and other University officials, interestingly we never gathered together to consider these cases. I proceeded to prepare a case in support of the terminations. The University required that the terminations be ratified within a meeting of Faculty Board. It became clear that it would be very difficult to convene a meeting with a quorum of Board members present.

At this point a colleague somewhat removed from the situation suggested there was another way forward. The students could be allowed to continue on the programme and their marks discussed at the upcoming Examiners' Meeting. That body could indeed decide to condone the failures. We decided to proceed in this way. However, by this point both students had decided to withdraw from the Programme.

The analysis of this case focuses the extent to which moral awareness was invoked, rather than whether the outcome was ethically 'right' or 'wrong'. Let us first consider the extent to which Jordan 'stayed with his senses' in order to perceive the situation correctly. According to his account, Jordan seemed not to acknowledge his sense-making of the situation at all. He reports to have move directly to action, rather than in any way interrogating what he was perceiving. He noted this himself in our further discussion of the incident:

Once I was told what needed to happen, I started moving in that direction without really questioning the impact of this action on the two students or other students on the course. I actually consider myself to be someone who is both morally aware but I never questioned whether or not this situation had a moral component.

In other words, it seems that Jordan barely paid attention to his sense-making in this situation at all—whether he was falling into the trap of 'yesterday's sense-making' or actually attending to his present set of awarenesses. When asked why he believed this happened, Jordon responded:

It is interesting to me that this occurred so soon after my return from holiday. I can remember walking up the stairs to my office worrying about all of the email that would be waiting for me. This instance became another thing to 'clear', so that instead of stepping back and taking more time to really see what was happening, I sprang into action, in an effort to 'close it down' as soon as possible.

This response suggests two factors at work; firstly, Jordon was bringing a pre-set agenda into the day; i.e. to 'clear the email' and get things done as quickly as possible. Rather than really seeing this situation 'for itself', he immediately responded to it as a 'task' to be cleared. He failed 'to stay with' the particular characters involved, to consider their performance in a wider context.

He also failed to see any other responsibility he might have to these students other than to fulfil the requirements of the larger system.

Neither did Jordan apply the second of the two practices offered here, 'engaged detachment'. Jordan acted promptly, without stepping back to gain a different perspective on its many aspects. It can also be seen how the two –using 'yesterday's sense-making', and not giving himself time to 'detach' from this preset perspective – exacerbated each other. The more this issue was seen as another thing on his list to 'clear', the less likely it would be for him to take time to engage with it from a different perspective.

Some reading this account might at this point be raising their hands in protest – 'but he was only following the University's Regulations – why is this even a case to which Jordan should have brought moral awareness?' Scholars such as Tenbrunsel and Messick (1999; 2004) have examined the ways in which sanctioning systems within organisations can hinder organisational members from doing the work involved with being morally aware. Such systems can act as 'schemas' through which individuals view their responsibilities and decisions and thus discourage them from attending to the deeper moral aspects of situations. Certainly, with hindsight Jordan believed he should have at least tested the rigidity of the regulations before acting to uphold them. In our conversation he remarked:

Usually I am of the view that 'rules are there to be broken' – but this time I acquiesced to what my perception of the rules were...I never explored 'why' the rules were in place, or anything about their historic legacy.

In other words, Jordan did not try to discover either the underlying patterns informing the regulatory system, or the underlying patterns relating to the poor exam performance on the part of his students. He made no attempt to see the situation differently, but instead took 'the facts as presented' at face value.

Without taking time to detach himself from the situation and consider it from a different perspective, there was never going to be the opportunity to engage in 'free play' of the imagination. In fact, this case shows the inter-relations and dependency of these three perceptual skills. Without taking time out to see a situation differently, no space is afforded to extend one's imagination into it. In this case, Jordan didn't spend any time putting himself into the shoes of the students; wondering what might be going on for them. He failed to appreciate the way in which their cultural backgrounds would prohibit them from telling him important information about why their performance slipped. (Weeks after the event, Jordan learned that over the period of the examinations the mother of one of the students had been seriously ill and in hospital. Although he had asked at the time about the presence of any 'extenuating circumstances', the student had been reluctant to share this information as it was not seen as appropriate to do so from his cultural background.)

Exacerbating this lack of imaginal play was the fact that he acted largely on his own, without gathering those colleagues together who might have brought additional insight to the situation. In the language of this article, he and his colleagues never 'jammed' together in an improvisatory way to play with different interpretations of the situations, or imagine together different options for moving forward. Talking a situation over with others can be critical in providing new ways of interpreting what is happening. By labelling this incident as a task to complete (even at an unconscious level) Jordan limited the possibility that he would spend the time required to gather colleagues together to 'play' at developing a different understanding of it. When time is at a premium creating the space to engage in imaginative free play can seem like an indulgence, rather than a moral necessity.

Finally, the case also shows the interplay between moral awareness and engaging moral consideration. Because Jordan did not perceive the situation as one in which there was a moral component, he consequently failed to consider his relational duty towards the students as individuals worthy of deeper moral consideration. In particular, he failed to reflect on questions concerning his duty of care to these students and to consider ways in which his role might have extended beyond 'maintainer of the Academy's rules, to 'advisor' or even 'friend'.

APPLYING ARTISTIC PRACTICES IN EVERY DAY SITUATIONS

Let us return to the concert with which this paper began. There we saw five musicians engaged in a performance which I experienced as embodying a high degree of perceptual acuity. They were attentive both to their individual parts and to the playing of others – and to the whole they were simultaneously creating. Their 'in the moment' improvisations demonstrated they could engage imaginatively with one another even within the stressful environment of a concert performance. Each seemed able to work with detached engagement in the way in which they fluidly exchanged 'leading' roles; offering and letting go of musical ideas as new possibilities arose.

Something more seemed to be at work here as well. There was an intentional quality about the way they played as an ensemble. The way in which they watched one another, how they took cues from one another, the way in which they moved together – indicated that really ‘seeing one another’ was critical to their understanding of how they would create the performance together. In other words, from my perspective in the audience the musicians framed the event as one requiring a high degree of perceptual, as well as musical, engagement.

In contrast, Jordan never seemed to frame the situation with his students as one requiring a particular kind of perceptual orientation. Instead, dealing with their exam failures was seen as another task among many to which he had to attend on returning from holiday. As the story unfolded, Jordan never stopped to question this framing or to consider whether he should pursue a different way of relating to the two students involved. In her paper about how artists can inform the ethical practice of architecture Collier (2006) asserts: ‘Those of us who are not artists know that our artistic friends notice what we do not see, imagine in ways we had not thought of, and sense the deficiencies in our own approach to artworks, situations or experiences’ (315). Perhaps the difference Collier is noticing is not so much about non-artist’s inability to notice or imagine – but of a lack of an orientation tilted towards such noticing and imagining. Once we begin to frame the quotidian, day to day ways in which we relate to one another as being situations for seeing, noticing and imagining, we may find we are as good as artists at perceiving in these ways.

This speaks of a particular kind of intentionality – not the general intentionality of ‘wanting to do good’, but an intention to actively look for and frame situations as having potential moral ramifications. Such perceptual orientation is critical if we are to heighten our moral sensitivity and through that enhanced awareness, to increase the likelihood of acting in ways aligned to our best ethical intent.

What the musicians showed us at the beginning of the article is that such attention is possible – and that the intention to attend in this way enables it to happen. However, such attentional excellence does not arise from happenstance. Many hours of background practice which will have enabled that quality of perception to be present in the moment of the concert. Similarly, the practices of ‘staying with the senses’, ‘detached engagement’ and ‘free play of the imagination’ can be practiced by managers in ‘off-line’ contexts in order to bring them to bear more fluidly within the every day performance of their roles.

Finally, perhaps the most important insight managers and organisational leaders can learn from artists about developing perceptual acuity is the importance of framing situations as ones worthy of such attention. Just as artists challenge us to see the world differently through their own intention to consider the familiar, the quotidian, in new ways; so managers and organisational leaders might develop the capacity to view the many tasks and requirements of their roles as rich spaces for the enactment of moral perception.

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ⁱ Within this paper the terms 'ethics/ethical' will be used interchangeably with 'moral'

