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<title>Management, organizations and contemporary social theory: an index of possibilities¹

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<text>Organization theory can now be described as a disciplinary field with a venerable history: with robust theories (Miner, 1984), paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), even heroes (including ‘Nobel’ prizes awarded by the Sveriges Riksbank to laureates such as Herbert Simon) and myths (Cummings et al., 2017) in the sense of unfounded stories whose constant repetition ‘proves’ their supposed truth. As a result, its development often occurs within well-defined conceptual and empirical boundaries. This can be considered normal (Kuhn, 1962). Yet in a world in flux, with the constant arrival of new technologies, paradigmatic normalcy can pose serious questions, such as the incapacity of dominant organization theories to explain changes in the organizational world, including the demise of the corporation (Davis, 2016), the advent of the social enterprise (Saebi, Foss & Linder, 2018), the rise of post-bureaucratic forms (Josserand, Teo & Clegg, 2006), digitalization (Westerman, Bonnet & McAfee, 2014), Uberization (Fleming, 2017), etc.

We organize this final chapter in three parts. First, we explore four major change trends that may matter for social and organizational theorists. Next, we present an

index of possibilities raised by the discussion in the volume. We conclude with a brief final note.

<head1>What is changing?

<text>A number of trends are propelling the need to revise our theories of organization substantially. We briefly consider four: the decline of traditional forms, digitalization with its utopian and dystopian sides, the grand challenges facing humanity and changing workers' expectations.

<head2>The decline of traditional forms

<text>Traditional forms of organizations have been challenged by emergent designs. They have been variously called post-bureaucratic (Josserand, Teo & Clegg, 2006), holacratic (Robertson, 2015), flat (Carzo & Yanouzas, 1969), amongst many other suggestions. Regardless of name, empirical evidence shows that organizations are flatter than they used to be. These forms all share a motivation to depart from the dysfunctions of bureaucracy: they aim to be more agile, more participative, less pyramidal. New forms may reflect changing currents in society.

People raised in social democratic societies may aspire to work in more transparent organizations (Birkinshaw & Cable, 2017), more open to scrutiny and more open to

their members' agency, wondering why, in many cases, despite the growth of new organizational forms, they must still park the individual liberty to have **contrary** opinions and give voice outside the workplace.² Yet this movement in the direction of flatter organizations coexists with a decline in the democratic ethos in many societies. As elements of a liberal political economy in which individualism is paramount are promulgated in association with the digital platform economy, leading to Uberization (Fleming, 2017), social, democratically and collectively achieved rights are under threat. The broader patterns of social, political and economic ordering are a contested domain in which the frontiers of power and control, resistance and rights, are the markers. Social theories are necessary to explore these relations between society and organizations. We need to know more about, for example, how political regimes influence the diffusion of organizational forms. Extant work, namely on the varieties of capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001) can be helpful in this regard but more work is needed to analyse the mutual constitution of networks, social movements, political regimes, organizational forms and functions.

<head2>The promise and threat of digitalization

<text>Current developments in the emergence of digital technologies constitute an important field for social theorists. The current debate is almost dualistic, with some analysts extolling the utopian features of a digital world, where intelligent machines do the boring bits of work, smart tools communicate with equally smart object-peers, humans see their competencies augmented and so on. On the other side of the debate,

commentators refer to increasing probabilities of unemployment, the world dominated by artificial intelligence, even a ‘robotcalypse’.

For social and organizational theorists alike, the emergence of digitalization offers numerous opportunities for research. Social theory, with its attention to the large and deep societal aspects of this change potentially challenges the more functional focus of organization theorists on what works, how and why. The critical perspective of social theory is central to informing debates in this field, which promises to revolutionize the way human societies are designed, controlled and organized.

Organizations do not change simply because of individual proclivities; they change in concert with the changing times and to focus too unduly on what is happening in specific organizations is to risk missing the larger currents that social theory can highlight. Digitalization is not just a matter of making the material immaterial; it is the spearhead of new ways of being at work; of new ways of contesting the frontiers of work and play, work and non-work; of new ways of consuming as well as producing; of new positioning of old subjectivities such as the identity of the employee, the customer, the retail experience; of new ways of conceptualizing old categories such as the transaction, competition, taxation, network, capitalism and so on. These are not necessarily the characteristics that organization theories will attend to most obviously but they are all aspects of broader social change having major implications for the identity and practice of organizing – putting in question even the category of the organization itself as society becomes more liquid and some established forms of organization dissolve.

<head2>Grand challenges

<text>The UN's grand challenges have attracted important research attention (George et al., 2016). These grand challenges are often wicked to tackle and extremely difficult to resolve. Yet they need a share of the attention and energy of social and organizational theorists. In a discipline that is incremental and inward-looking, more attention is needed to explore how organizations can contribute to tackling major problems confronting humanity. These include global problems such as climate change, human exploitation, social inequality in general and gender and ethnic inequality in particular, increasingly autocratic forms of social control in totalitarian regimes, the sources and consequences of involuntary and voluntary human migrations, the impact of new forms of communication and so on.

As we elaborate next, organizational scholars have not been as attentive as one might expect about most of these and other issues. The public seems more attentive to these themes (consider, for example, the success of Harari's books *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*), and it is imperative that organizational researchers should zoom out of their narrow fields to communicate with society at large, framing some of their work as directed to the wider public. One might well ask, where are the public intellectuals in organization theory? There is, we believe, a necessity to reorient organization theory from its narrow academic concerns to meaningful social contributions. In doing so we echo earlier contribution of Hinings and Greenwood (2002) and Clegg and Starbuck (2011) and would urge the field to draw on some of the insights from cognate areas, such as sociology, and the growth of a renewed concern with the role of public intellectuals (Burawoy, 2005; see Braithwaite, 2005 for some counterpoints). Indeed,



Zygmunt Bauman, one of our cast of characters, has been mooted as providing pointers for this role (Aidnik, 2015). There are so many public domain debates that represent grand challenges in which organization theorists could and should be intervening – Brexit, austerity and its organizational impact, the organizational chaos of political office run as a family and nepotistic business on the basis of patrimonialism, the erosion of collective rights of labor and so on.

<head2>Changing workers' expectations

<text>People's expectations seem also to be changing. Younger generations pay more attention to the social consequences of commerce and organizations than did previous ones. Some of the questions being raised include: are organizations sustainable in their practices? Do they discriminate on the basis of identity attributes or not? What kinds of security and rights do their supply chains afford? Are human and animal rights respected and advanced? What do they invest in the future of humanity and the planet? Young workers seem to be less interested in working in traditional corporate settings such as those populated by the 'organizational man' (Whyte, 1956) of the past. These expectations have resulted in some palpable changes. Some organizations are trying to become more inclusive, more socially inclined, which gives rise to the notion of the social enterprise, more interested in reaching out to those at the base of global political economy and the economic markets that are constructed in their name. Of course, in some cases, noble ideas such as that of the organization focused on the base of the pyramid the espoused purposes

are countered by exploitative practices masquerading as something other than what they are. Nonetheless, the trend seems evident: organizations need to consider and accommodate the motivations of generations that do not feel a commitment to traditional organizations and their environments.

These trends give rise to more concrete research avenues, as we explore next.

<head1>An index of possibilities

<text>New times require new concepts and a new organizational language (Eisenhardt, 2000). This book offers a rich menu of possibilities for refreshing the theorizing of organizations. In this concluding note we strive to identify some common themes and to open possibilities for advancing management and organization theory through the contributions of general social theorists, as Loscher, Splitter and Seidl aptly call them. These general social theorists advance many powerful ideas that may easily change the way we imagine theories of organization.

Such theories tend to look less at organizations with the mechanistic, rationalist lenses that have dominated in the past; instead favouring the view of organizations as ‘the condensation of local cultures of values, power, rules, discretion and paradox’ (Clegg, 1994, p. 172). This representation of organization beyond the mechanistic-cognitivist offers a menu of possibilities. With no intention of being exhaustive we explore ten: becoming, bodies, boundaries, digital, flatness, hyperagency, inequality, (non)human, paradox, power, practice and violence.

<head2>Becoming

<text>As many organizations gain more liquid characteristics (see Clegg & Cunha, this volume), organization scholars need to heed becoming. Instead of seeing organizations as mechanistic, scholars are exploring the relation between agency and structure as mutually constituting (Chaterjee, Kunwar & den Hond, this volume) and in permanent flux. Therefore, instead of studying structures as they are, it is critical to consider how structures and agents engage in mutual shape-shifting. Seeing change as the natural state means that even resistance to change needs to be reframed from a becoming lens: change and resistance as one and the same need to be conceived as attempts to manage the duality of stability and change as parts of the same process. For example, attempts at stability may actually propel change in force. What is especially interesting now is the impact of social media in the triggering and diffusion of change.

Some examples exist at the articulation of organizations, leadership and society. For example, how did Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire on December 17, 2010, ignite the sequence of revolution and reaction known as the Arab Spring? How did the military junta in Myanmar neutralize change by bringing its major opponent Aung San Suu Kyi to office and limit her capabilities for change in so doing?

A too narrow focus on corporate leadership is also stifling the capacity to understand the relation between political and corporate regimes beyond cooptation. What are the

boundaries of appropriate forms of organization in contemporary times? Where are the many organization theorists reminding the public once again of the ethos and values of liberal bureaucracy once promulgated by Weber and defended in contemporary times by a few, such as du Gay (2000), in the face of its corruption in the highest offices in so many countries, not least the most powerful? What does it mean for the theory of organizations when association with rumours of corruption taints political office and its public administration? Is it possible that transactional leadership in the highest office in the world can become transformational, merely by hingeing on the art of the deal? What has organization theory, as distinct from communication theory (Ott, 2017), to offer?

Other more analytical research questions might include:

- <list_bulleted1>When and how does an excess of stability produce change?
- When and how does an excess of change produce stability?
- How are the previous processes influenced by other societal factors, such as political regimes?
- How does digital media change the process of change?

<head2>Bodies

<text>The role of the body and the understanding of the world by embodied individuals features importantly in several chapters (see chapters by Kenny, Mutch



and van Krieken, this volume). Yet with few exceptions, the biology of people is still absent from research. Most research topics look at people as cognitive entities, as ‘brains’: rational decision-makers. We now know that decisions are highly emotional (Schwarz, 2000); that sensemaking involves the body (Cunha et al., 2015); that sexual drives are not neutralized in the workplace (Hearn, 1989); that the workforce is aging and will live longer (Gratton, 2016); that metaphors fuse neural pathways (Castells, 2015). In other words, and in spite of recent efforts in this direction, much more needs to be known about the presence of embodied being in organizations.

Emerging organizational vocabularies such as those brought by the logic of performativity (see Kenny, this volume) may help to illuminate the role of biology and the body in organizations but this is at the early stage of research.

Possible research questions:

- How do organizations deal with bodies? Are there specific types of bodies required by specific professions?
- How has the food industry produced the obesity epidemic that other industries try to tackle?
- Can AI help to overcome prejudice regarding some bodies?
- How do organizations deal with diversely gendered, aged and ethnic bodies?
- Why do some organizations manage to approach bodily differences (such as in the case of people with disabilities) differently?

<head2>Boundaries

<text>Social theorists may also inform organization theories by considering boundaries. As Luhmann theorized, ‘Differentiating itself, each social system constructs its environment’ (quoting Deroy, in this volume). What is especially interesting is that in our liquid societies, boundaries are becoming blurred (see Clegg & Cunha, this volume). The drawing of boundaries is challenging: where are the boundaries between home and work in a society of smartphones and portable computers (Mazmanian, Orlikowski & Yates, 2013)? (Part of this chapter was written by one of the authors away from work and home, in the Algarve, southern Portugal, while on vacation, early in the mornings; the whole book was edited by two authors whose mobilities spanned the globe during the process of writing.) What are the boundaries between digital and non-digital, between human and artificial intelligence, when cyborg bodies are no longer science fiction but science fact? What are the boundaries between the human and the non-human? What are the boundaries between being an insider and an outsider in an economy of gig work?

In the field of politics boundaries are especially complicated as they define identity. The advent of the politics of identity seems particularly troubling in the world of globalization. The definition of politics around identity in a binary and dichotomous way premised on various sorts of ‘othering’ constitutes a major fact in current world politics. Organizations are sometimes caught in these geopolitical conflicts, such as multinationals in Catalonia, faced with the decision of maintaining their Spanish centres in Barcelona or moving them to Madrid, and in either case being associated with the political consequences of their decisions. The politics of Brexit are another

example: ‘Should I stay or should I go’ (Strummer & Jones, 1982) is an old song that must lurk in the subconsciousness of many CEOs whose organizations and enterprises are presently located in the UK.

Possible research questions:

- How can boundaries be defined?
- How do new digital businesses blur boundaries?
- How should boundaries include and exclude?

Digital

Social theorists need to interpellate the digital. As witnessed by many chapters in this book, they are already doing it. Digital technologies have changed the way societies work and they will certainly continue to do so. Digital technologies are touching and challenging the very core of organization and management: they offer new business models; redesign communication networks; offer new possibilities for redesigning organizational processes. Moreover, they replace old certainties such as the stable employment relation by the ‘self-employed’ gig worker. Recent evidence shows that states are trying to regain control of their capacity to regulate the economy (*Financial Times*, 2018).

In this context, activities that were fundamentally internal, such as innovation, can now open up and be translated in ideas such as those of the crowd, open innovation in recognition that the sources of innovation are not necessarily inside organizations and that innovations need to be opened rather than protected and hidden (Svahn, Mathiassen & Lindgren, 2017). What happens to the industry associated with patenting in a world of more open innovation? Enormous changes in organizational processes are occurring not only in areas such as innovation but also in routine work, decision-making based on AI, or augmented reality with all its operational implications.

Possible research questions:

- How will AI technologies change human work?
- How will people accept co-working with robots?
- What will the meaning of work be in societies that are increasingly roboticized?
- Will robots and AI aggravate inequality?

Flatness

Some social theory and most of that of management has been marked by the logic of levels of analysis. Levels are so useful as conceptual categorizations that they have become naturalized as normal; yet, they constitute artificial layers. As discussed

in this volume, people embrace social reality with no layers. Or as Luhmann observed, there is ‘only one single level of social reality’ (Loscher, Splitter & Seidl, this volume; see also O’Doherty). This points to the need to consider communication networks as ‘the advent of flat ontologies’ (see Deroy, this volume).

Organization scholars have defended the need for flatter and taller ontologies (Seidl & Whittington, 2014) and this idea is echoed in several chapters in this book. Flatter ontologies collapse a number of themes considered in several chapters. From a performative perspective, people participate in human–non-human networks in which the separation of the social and the material is useful but ultimately false. As Law (1986) explained in his study of the Portuguese maritime journeys of discovery, people embody knowledge much as tools do. Therefore, to introduce a chasm between the human and the material is just another expression of dualism so pervasive in the social sciences.

Possible research questions:

- How does ordinary materiality render the extraordinary banal?
- How can organizational scholars overcome the logic of layers?
- How does flatness articulate real and empirical domains?

Hyperagency

<text>In a world with fewer corporations some successful entrepreneurs gain the status of hyperagents (Maclean & Harvey, this volume). The role of hyperagents deserves a central position in social theory. Long gone are the times of the faceless executive who was a mere employee (Whyte, 1956). Before organization man, entrepreneurs, the ‘robber barons’ of early American capitalism, were major identities globally and in their national society. Today, techpreneurs, such as Steve Jobs or Elon Musk, carve out a very special niche in societies, much as the entrepreneurially charismatic figures from the turn of the 20th century. Some of them have amassed incredible amounts of capital (Maclean & Harvey, this volume) and project their power accordingly. The organizations that they create often transcend and confuse boundaries, legal, tax and otherwise, and are some of world’s biggest and most global businesses.

States and their representatives court these hyperagents. These hyperagents promulgate rules and practices that challenge the legal rules of national states and that create globally united states of virtuality that minimize tax liabilities and maximize profits in financial operations whose contributions to society are dubious, legitimated through the prevailing ideology of shareholder value (Davis, 2016) that has ruled since the 1980s. Given their liquid nature they are often difficult to scrutinize. As such they pose very real questions at the boundary of (hyper)agency and governance structures for the digital age.

Possible research questions:

- How does the hyperagency of the new elites contribute to reshaping the global powers?
- How do hyperagents interact with nation-states and their representatives?
- What are the impacts of the new, digital hyperagents over systems of governance – in organizations and societies?
- What types of reactions do these hyperagents stimulate? How does digital whistle-blowing play out in the digital age?

Inequality

Inequality is a major threat to stability. Bourdieu's work on the formation of elites (see Chatterjee, Kunwar & den Hond, this volume) offers an important glimpse of the way the privileged manage to protect their condition. The rise of organizations based on digital capabilities poses new problems in terms of control. On the one hand, they can grow rapidly to become imperial behemoths, such as Google or Microsoft.



Being fundamentally immaterial, these companies create problems previously unknown. Inequality is a major social issue globally and the digital divide real socially, in terms of access to and capabilities with digital platforms. Not much is known about the way digitalization is shaping and having an impact on equality issues in organizations. For instance, in cases where routine and programmable jobs become automated, what will happen to the people who used to perform them? Current discussions around robot taxes, a universal basic minimum income and related issues

are clearly of relevance for organization and management theory but are also areas in which the reflections of social theory have been prescient.

In addition to inequality, the fact that organizations are becoming adiaphoric (see Clegg & Cunha, this volume) poses even more stringent challenges to organizations:

<extract>*adiaphorization* will especially characterize the top management team: while each member may ontologically be a moral subject, the organization cannot be. This is the essence of leaderly strategies ... Leadership may well be formulated within governance structures, rules, guidelines and policies but it is essentially ethically blank in its representations.

<text>Adiaphorization offers a window on a theme for a social theory of organization: how can organizations, their owners and managers rebuild their social contracts? The crisis of confidence in organizations (Child, 2002) has eroded the gap between people and the corporate world and increased inequality in some of its most visible expressions between the many and the few, to coin a phrase. Picketty's book and its impact are indicators of how serious the matter is; the concerns of *Capital* (Marx, 1976) are, once again, salient.

Possible research questions:

- How will digitalization have a future impact on inequality within human societies as AI gathers pace?
- How will digitalization have an impact on inequality between human societies?
- How will moral accountability and tendencies to adiaphorization have an impact on issues such as business ethics and inequality?

(Non-)human

A central theme in social theory refers to the meaning of being human (see Pierides & Sewell, this volume). Another refers to the role of individuals in integrated networks or wholes; they are ‘finitely connected into an integrated whole’. A main challenge for social theory refers to the redefinition of the meaning of being human in a society which is increasingly blurring the boundaries of human–non-human. Cobots, artificial intelligence and other digital possibilities are mixing the worlds of human and digital. Possibilities arise for technology to replace parts of human bodies including the brain (Oliveira, 2018). How in this context can being ‘human’ be defined? Actors are becoming actants as chips are implanted and actants are increasingly central to action as AI and digital devices organize ever more organizational practice. Actor networks and digital networks will be of increasing salience for future organizations (see O’Doherty as well as Costa, Quintanilha & Mendonça, this volume).

The human–non-human nexus also leads to other themes. Organizational scholars have paid fundamental attention to humans as the subjects of organizational research, as if matter did not matter. As the authors in this volume stress, understanding the role of matter is critical for understanding how humans construct their societies and organizations. The new technological developments just mentioned are normalizing the cyborgization of organizational life.

Possible research questions:

- <list_bulleted1>How will the collaboration between people and machines redefine human societies?
- If people incorporate artificial organs and are assisted by intelligent machines, how will the boundaries of the human and non-human, and vice versa, be determined? Is *Blade Runner* the future?
- How will human–non-human systems collaborate in the definition of the organizations of the future?

<head2>Paradox

<text>A theme that has gained notoriety in organizations recently is that of paradox. Paradox refers to opposites that define one another and that persist over time in an exercise of constant tension (Clegg, Cunha & Cunha, 2002; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Paradox featured in many occasions throughout this volume. As Deroy summarized,



‘Organizations contain their opposite, its own paradox’. Social theory may inform organization studies by contributing to the debate on the paradoxes at the very core of organizing. Organizations are part of society and should strive for the social good, yet they are moved by their own interests that are often at odds with some of those of society as a whole, such as a strong tax base – a tension that is leading some organizations to consider the responsibility of organizations as good citizens (Abbatiello et al., 2018).

A paradox lens may also help to explore the tensions opposing inclusion and exclusion, diversity and homogeneity, identity as fixed and as malleable. A paradox lens can contribute to exploring grand challenges such as those related to environmental sustainability (Hahn et al., 2010) from a both/and perspective (Smith, Lewis & Tushman, 2006). Paradox stretches the way we think by countering dualisms/dichotomies and showing that tensions can indeed be generative and a source of social progress, when framed as dualities (Farjoun, 2010). A major limitation of current debates resides in polarizations that limit the quality of conversations (Jay & Grant, 2017).

Possible research questions:

- How can paradox contribute to the quality of conversations?
- How and when do social actors transform dualisms into dualities?
- How do paradoxical choices confront social actors and decision-makers?

<head2>Power



<text>Power is the omnipresent theme throughout the volume. Ultimately the organization of business firms and all other organizations, as well as of society in general, is a matter of the architectonics and arrangements of power relations (Clegg, 1989; Clegg, Courpasson & Phillips, 2006). At the intersection of several themes discussed in this volume, the representation of power is sometimes presented as undergoing a major change: the end of traditional power (Naím, 2013) and the emergence of a ‘new power’ (Heimans & Timmins, 2017) is said to be on the rise, which is more fluid, more dispersed, more transparent, symbolized by post-hierarchical organizations, flat designs and holacracies (Robertson, 2015). The nemesis of these forms is the traditional bureaucracy and its organization of societies and citizens (Hamel & Zanini, 2016).

Some authors, on the contrary, maintain that we are still the same (Pfeffer, 2013) or that the new power is possibly more concertative and transparent but no less panoptical. Power relations will continue to attract the imagination of organizational and social theorists alike as new technologies create the conditions for entirely new methods of control. These are sustained in a new dualism: institutions such as the state need to control people for the sake of overall security, but paradoxically, in the name of security, societies will be stripped of civil freedoms as is happening in the ‘surveillance state of China’, namely in the Xinjiang region. As they put it, there ‘the people have sharp eyes’ (Lucas & Fang, 2018, p. 16). Sharp eyes can cut like a knife.

Possible research questions:

- `<list_bulleted1>`Is there really an end of power/new power?
- What are the further adventures of ‘veillance’ in the contemporary post-panopticon era?
- How do digital possibilities contribute to imposing new forms of power, more transparent but no less intense?

`<head2>`Practice

`<text>`Organizations are often viewed as reified ‘things’ independent of people. This volume foregrounded the importance of practice in making organization happen and thus studying organization through the lens of those whose doings enact it (see Whittle & Mueller, this volume) through their everyday practices, discourse and especially conversation. Practices come in bundles, amalgams (Loscher et al., this volume). Yet we tend to separate bundles in order to render them more visible and empirically accessible. Consider paradox: paradox scholars tend to focus on two contradictory demands (e.g. change–stability). This is understandable, but real-world tensions are entangled in complex webs of oppositions (Raisch, Hargrave & Van de Ven, 2018). Therefore, putting practice at the core of organization analysis enables the study of them as they are actually socially organized rather than assuming that they are modelled according to some meta-rationality.

Possible research questions:

- How do the new digital vocabularies influence the happening of new forms of organization?
- How may practices collapse a micro-macro understanding of organizations?
- How can practices inform the design of more inclusive and dignified forms of organization – for example by indicating the tactics people use to protect their dignity as members of hierarchies?

Violence

The interplay of organization and violence has been insufficiently studied. Yet organizations can impose violence, either symbolically (see Chatterjee, Kunwar & den Hond, this volume) or materially (Bauman, 2008). Organization studies has mostly remained silent on this propensity for violence. At one extreme, however, organizations and the supply chains they compose have been associated with necrocapitalist practices (Banerjee, 2008). These practices reach public awareness in episodes such as the disaster at Rana Plaza (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015) or the waves of suicides in companies such as Foxconn and France Telecom (Clegg, Cunha & Rego, 2016) but such events are the tip of an iceberg that involves exploitation, slavery and workplace violence (e.g. Crane, 2013). Bauman's work on the modern dimension of the Holocaust offers an extreme case of a process that deserves more attention than it has received. As Clegg (2006) pointed out, organization studies have been fundamentally ignorant about genocide. Yet genocide most often involves

sophisticated forms of organization and is, ethically, the most evil that organization can achieve. We should not neglect the wrongs and the evil that organization makes possible.

Possible research questions:

- How are the conceptual tools of everyday organization used to produce violence?
- How does such violence escape public scrutiny?
- What is the relationship between utopia and dystopia?

Closing the curtain

In this chapter we offered, without any pretense at completeness, an index of possibilities for research at the intersection of social theory and organization studies. The volume can be read as an invitation for organizational scholars to think more often in engagement with social theorists and to zoom out of their narrow fields of specialization. Of course, the challenge goes against some of the professional rules of the discipline with its pressure for zooming in over narrow issues, but a measure of resistance against pressures for conformity will contribute to refreshing the discipline and to increasing its appeal beyond disciplinary frontiers. If the price of specialization is practical irrelevance in terms of the big issues and grand questions of the day, then we, as authors and editors, and our contributors, would want no part of such a

prognosis. Once again, we invoke not only the major social theorists analysed herein but a tradition that stretches back to the giants of the 19th century on whose shoulders we stand. We hope the volume stimulates the imagination and the curiosity of our readers. The ideas expressed herein are rich enough to fertilize research in numerous sub-disciplinary fields. In this sense, we see the book as an homage to some intellectual giants of modernity and as an invitation to follow in their footsteps and to stretch the boundaries of our thinking in the pursuit of an engaged social science aimed at the creation of more inclusive and humane societies.

Let us close with a couple of remarks that we extract directly from Pierides and Sewell: first, the book is not intended to offer a series of précis on central authors of social theory; second, the books and the authors discussed herein should be ‘consulted directly’. In fact, we hope that the book serves as an aperitif, an invitation for something of more substance than what is on offer here: the rich oeuvres of the authors explored. We are sure all the authors in this volume will be aligned with this invitation. As such, as we close we invite you to continue your exploration, perhaps starting the project with the mapping offered here. Bon voyage.

<head1>Notes

<note>¹ The subtitle borrows from David Sylvian, an artist in constant transformation himself.

² In the autocracies, such as the People's Republic of China, these aspirations are more brutally repressed.

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