SUB-PLENARY 2-1

Aesthetics, Affect and the Good Organization

When:
Friday, July 7, 16:00-17:30

Where:
SP 201

In ‘aesthetic capitalism’, organized life is increasingly shaped by processes of affective ordering and aesthetic value creation. Corresponding to the aesthetic and affective ‘turns’ in social and cultural theory, recent work in the study of organization, work and entrepreneurship addresses the forces that govern, modulate and change sensory experience and human bodies. Inquiring into what might constitute ‘good’ or ‘bad’ organization thus needs to engage with such forces -- both in the sense of organizing and controlling what can be felt and expressed and as the prerequisite for transforming social praxis. This sub-plenary takes the form of a conversation and collective reflection on contemporary organizing as primarily aesthetic, affective and atmospheric. To start and frame the conversation, Melissa Gregg will reflect on the management of affect at work; Charles Spinosa will dwell on experience-based entrepreneurship; and Chris Steyaert will discuss the affective and atmospheric performativity of organizing.

Chair: Timon Beyes is Professor of Sociology of Organisation and Culture at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany, and Professor of Design, Innovation and Aesthetics at CBS’ Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy. His research focuses on the processes, aesthetics and spaces of organization in the contexts of urban and digital cultures, education and art.

Speaker: Melissa Gregg is a Principal Engineer at Intel Corporation researching the future of work. Before joining Intel, she was at the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. Melissa has published pioneering work on affect theory and contemporary work relations. Her recent research traces the history of time management self-help and tracks the rise of the personal enterprise – a world in which individuals take responsibility for their life’s work assisted by technical infrastructure.

Speaker: Charles Spinosa is a consultant and researcher. Charles taught English literature at Miami University in Ohio, philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, and published widely in both fields. He earned his Ph.D. from U. C. Berkeley. The Financial Times described his research as “a brave attempt to reformulate the relationship between democratic rights and economic progress in an age when the triumphalism of technological advance masks an unconfident vision of the future”.

Speaker: Chris Steyaert is Professor of Organizational Psychology and Director of the Research Institute for Organizational Psychology at the University of St Gallen, Switzerland. Key areas of inquiry have been entrepreneurial start-ups and social-entrepreneurial change, urban creativity and new museums, diversity and cosmopolitanism, creative pedagogies and dialogical intervention and language and translation. Currently, he is interested in conceiving performative, conceptual approaches to language, affect, space and method.
Politics shapes key aspects of professional work and our identities as researchers and educators. Political contexts frame funding and the intellectual priorities for the research we develop and also have a powerful influence on the wider context of higher education through quality assurance and audit. Yet the analytical profile of politics in organization studies remains relatively low. To address these silences and silencing, and the few voices, three speakers make their cases for the importance of politics in relation to professions, professional work, and organizational change. First, Yvonne Benschop reflects on the presence of personal politics in her professional practice as a feminist scholar, teaching, researching, writing and advising various audiences about feminist theorizing and perspectives on organizations. Second, Martin Parker revisits his (auto)ethnographic work on the implications of organizational change in universities for professional and personal practice, to draw out its implications for organization theory and collective resistance. Third, Craig Prichard explores the politics of working as a business activist (agribusiness in his case) in an effort to have an impact, through the university, on industry practice. He explores the implications of such a politics for the university (as potentially a fiscal and reputational good), for professional academics (as a new way of having impact) and for the academic profession (as a further contradiction in academic identity formation).

**Chair:** Sarah Gilmore is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter Business School, UK. Her ethnographic research in elite sports explores the ‘professional project’ of sports science and the institutionalisation of sports science knowledges/practices.

**Speaker:** Yvonne Benschop is Professor of Organisational Behaviour at Radboud University, Netherlands. Her research focuses on the functioning of gender and diversity in organizations, specifically on informal organization processes that play a crucial role in the success or failure of gender and diversity management.

**Speaker:** Martin Parker is Professor of Organisation and Culture at Leicester School of Management, UK. His recent writing has been about ‘alternative’ organisation in two senses. One is work on co-operatives, worker self-management, alternative finance and so on. The other is on different ways of thinking about what ‘organisation’ means.

**Speaker:** Craig Prichard is Assistant Professor at Massey University’s School of Management, New Zealand. He is currently involved in work on the publishing industry, the computer visualization industry, as well as the NZ sheep dairy industry. He is particularly concerned with recognising distinctive and implicit forms of management knowledge that resonate with management practice in Aotearoa/New Zealand.
The contribution of contemporary organization research to better organizations is hardly obvious. The field is often accused of being inward-looking, full of people mainly doing research for publication reasons and promotion, having limited concerns for and little to say to a larger audience. This sub-plenary discusses this critique, the causes behind the present state of affairs and possible ways to improve the situation. How can we accomplish research that has something to say, beyond footnote-adding work ‘contributing to the literature’? The sub-plenary includes a broader overview of the state of the art, and some experiences and ideas on efforts to make organization studies relevant for practitioners as well as on how to reach an educated public. There will also be some comments on how to move from an intra-academic journal focus to doing something meaningful for other groups (than one’s own sub-tribe of fellow academics) and thus actively contribute to ‘good organizations’.

Chair: Mats Alvesson is Professor at Lund University. He has done research on a broad range of topics, including organizational culture, ‘leadership’, identity, critical theory, reflexive methodology, and gender.

Speaker: Laura Empson, Professor and Director of the Centre for Professional Service Firms at Cass Business School. Her research focuses on themes such as leadership dynamics, governance, mergers and acquisitions, professionalisation of management, organisational and identity change, knowledge management, and diversity management, all in the context of professional service firms. She is Senior Research Fellow at Harvard Law School and, until recently, was the Senior Independent Non-executive serving on the Board of KPMG UK.

Speaker: Yiannis Gabriel is Professor of Organizational Theory at the University of Bath. His research interests include storytelling and narratives, psychoanalytic approaches and the interface between the world of work and the world of consumption.

Speaker: Andre Spicer is Professor of Organisational Behaviour at Cass Business School. He frequently comments on business issues in the international media. He is interested in politics and control in organizations. He is currently working on self optimisation.
Can ecologically and socially “good” organizations and markets actually be turned into social reality? Organizational scholars interested in phenomena such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), responsible investing or sustainable technologies have only started to explore how the concept of performativity can help address this question. This sub-plenary will explore whether and how distinct approaches to performativity can renew our understanding of the potentialities, struggles and limitations of empirical attempts at “bringing into being” “good” organizations and “good” markets. The panel will confront multiple perspectives on performativity and discuss lessons from a variety of CSR and sustainability-related contexts to assess potential and limitations of a performativity approach to “good” organizations and markets.

Chair: Jean-Pascal Gond is Professor of Corporate Social Responsibility at Cass Business School, City, University of London. His research mobilizes organization theory and economic sociology to investigate corporate social responsibility. His research in economic sociology is concerned with the influence of theory on managerial practice (performativity), the governance of self-regulation, and the interplay of society’s commodification and markets’ socialization.

Speaker: Mette Morsing is Professor at Copenhagen Business School, and MISTRA Chair of Sustainable Markets and Scientific Director at Misum, Stockholm School of Economics. Her research focuses on how identity is governed in the interplay of internal and external stakeholders, in particular in the context of CSR and sustainability. She has also studied the performatve properties of CSR communication.

Speaker: Peter Karnøe is Professor at the Department of Planning and Development, Aalborg University Copenhagen. His current research work involves innovation as distributed sociomaterial action and takes a valuation approach to how cleantech innovation involves re-framing markets.

Speaker: Laure Cabantous is Professor of Strategy and Organization at Cass Business School, City, University of London. Her research focuses on the performative power of theories - that is their ability to shape the world and business practices, decision making processes in contexts of Knightian uncertainty, and the critical performativity of alternative organizational models.
The past has never been as present in organization studies as it is now. Historical approaches to management and organization research have been flourishing in recent years. Management and organization scholars have shown interest in time and history as a phenomenon, and historians and business historians have found interest in organizations as an empirical field. This has led to a development characterized by plurality in both the conceptualization of organizations in historical time and in how history is researched. Among the historical approach, which has attracted the attention of organization researchers and business historians, "uses of the past" focuses on how the past is transformed into history and how managers, organizations, and industries use it in the present. But what are the mechanisms used by corporate historians to use history as a social-symbolic resource in constructing legitimacy, authenticity and identity? Can a strong history not be a burden as well? Does the assertion that "history matters" help us answer the question of in which way it matters to different groups of researchers, who hold different implicit theories of history and its relevance to organizational research?

Chair: Mads Mordhorst is Associate Professor and head of the Center for Business History at Copenhagen Business School. He is currently in charge of the CBS initiative 'Rethinking history at Business Schools 2015-2018', which asks the questions 'Why should Business School invest in historians?' and 'How do history at a Business School differ from history at a university?'

Speaker: Stephanie Decker is Professor of History and Organization Studies at Aston Business School. Her research spans organization studies and organizational history, and she currently works on how organizations use the past as well as historical research on the legitimization of business activities in Africa in the second half of the twentieth century.

Speaker: Roy Suddaby is Professor at Newcastle University Business School and Winspear Chair at Peter B. Gustavson School of Business University of Victoria. He is an internationally recognized and very highly cited scholar of organizational theory and institutional change. His work has contributed to our understanding of the critical role of symbolic resources – legitimacy, authenticity, identity and history – in improving an organization's competitive position. His current research examines the changing social and symbolic role of the modern corporation.

Speaker: Anders Ravn Sørensen is Assistant Professor in history at Copenhagen Business School. In his research, Anders focuses on business education in historical perspective, monetary history and the ways that companies and organizations use history to increase legitimacy, build their brands and reinforce their identities. Currently is Anders writing CBS history as a part of CBS 100-year anniversary, and as such engaged in a historical analysis of how CBS has been balancing between academic rigor and business relevance over the past century.