

Performative Interplay:
Contemporary art as role model to anti-model of corporate management

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. While the content describes my own research, any work of others has been referenced throughout.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sandra Lourenço".

Sandra Lourenço,
21 September, 2017

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Abstract

This doctoral research enquires into the ways contemporary art has become a model for corporate management. Two entwined questions are essential: what kind of mechanisms should be enacted by contemporary art as a means to challenge the idea of model and how could these potentially alter the way corporate actors/authors think about artistic practices? As a means to understand how these two fields are being affected by each other in neoliberal ideology, an investigation is required from the standpoints of both art and management. This comprises of three stages: a historical review of artistic modes of production and their relationship with corporations in the 1960s through the case studies of Experiments in Art and Technology and the Artists Placement Group; a closer look at how art manifests in the imaginative economy of managerial writings; and the analysis of recent artistic practices, in which the performative takes a central role through the use of language.

By looking at cultural theory, management literature, corporate projects (Deloitte, Quickborner Team and Xerox PARC), management conferences (Daved Barry), and artworks of artists (Alicia Herrero, Burak Delier, Carey Young, Jan Peter Hammer, Joel Slatton, Harun Farocki, Nicoline Van Harskamp, Pilvi Takala, and Pamela Z), this research discloses contrasting positions and ironic inversion as an artistic strategy of differentiation. Performativity is understood herein as the vehicle through which corporate actors/authors extract the necessary inspiration to reproduce artistic expressions and methods. Conversely, it is also the means of expression that contemporary practices often employ as a way to challenge corporate interests. This is achieved by deploying the theoretical interdisciplinarity of performativity and examining the linguistic standpoints of both corporate management and post-conceptual artistic practices. What changes today in contemporary art is not so much the meaning of parody or irony, but the nature of the artworks – implicated yet critical of capitalist structures – and the circumstances to which they are attached – the growing complicity of art institutions with corporations.

By delineating a situation in which artists-as-curators are paradoxically placed as critics of corporate institutional structures and participants of those same structures, this research puts forward performativity as a disruptive device of a model of work idealised by corporate management that has been redefined in artistic practices in the past two decades.

Keywords: contemporary art, corporate culture, curating, entrepreneurship, management, model, performativity, disruptive, irony, speech, skill

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Introduction

Presentation of research argument

This research is motivated by the increasing attentiveness of corporate management towards an artistic model to be followed. For ‘model’ I mean the appropriation and simulation of artistic expressions and methods by corporate actors. This also means that contemporary art practices have been targeted as potential assets for assisting corporate processes and seen as potentially successful in fostering the dialogue between artists, corporate employees and managers. I argue that the corporate view fails to understand the heterogeneity of contemporary art, which finds itself re-searching for different modes of education, production and display, and above all, it seems to construct an erroneous idea of what is (or should be) artistic work. This research questions and upsets this corporate perception by putting forward art projects that have the possibility to disrupt the artistic efficacy within the corporate framework.

If a new attitude is obvious on the side of corporate management, one that perceives art as a field of inspiration, a tendency supported herein by a bevy of business articles and management books that make the connection clear – Austin and Devin (2003); Barry and Hansen (2008); Darso (2004); de Monthoux (2004); Davis and McIntosh (2005); Reckenrich, Kupp and Anderson (2011) – the receptiveness to this proximity from an artistic point of view is much more difficult to define. This is not to say that artists are not attentive to the corporate world, nor that they do not wish to collaborate with them; on the contrary, at least in the past three decades, artists have been taking corporations as their subject material. For instance, mixed-media artist Aleksandra Mir (2003), who testified to the expansion of corporate culture in New York in the 1980s, compiled an archive of artistic projects that take corporations as their material of work. The archive presents a diverse spectrum of artists, such as Bernadette Corporation, Henrik Schrat, and Superflex, amongst others. However, the renewed corporate interest in the arts has brought a new level of complexity to possible artistic responses. Artists have developed multiple ways of approaching corporate influence, exposing various questions and processing results.

The plurality of the case-studies

This complexity is intentionally reflected in the case studies chosen to be examined in the dissertation. I present two groups of case-studies: first, historical examples, such as Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) and the Artists Placements Group (APG), whose works mark a new level of collaboration with corporate and industrial economies, and are precedents of subsequent changes in the workplace; and second, recent examples of artists who attempt to operate critically through performative modalities.

In relation to recent examples, not all art projects take place inside a corporation, not all corporations are based on consulting, and not all artists have an active presence in their projects. I put forward a variety of artists whose interests in corporate management are shared by the desire to disturb a certain corporate behaviour instated inside corporations but also in other places, such as talks or conferences. In other words, I focus on the theoretical specificities raised by the examples rather than using them as illustrations of theory. Artists Alicia Herrero, Burak Delier and Carey Young, who have clearly concentrated their efforts on the individual (the artist often emerges as being the piece) following the 1960s ‘dematerialization’ of artwork, are seen as post-conceptual artists. But not all of them build their entire work on corporate issues. Artists Harun Farocki, Jan Peter Hammer, Nicoline Van Harskamp and Pilvi Takala often embrace corporate and managerial topics, but their artistic approach is more heterogeneous. Less renowned artists in the visual arts, such as Pamela Z and Joel Slayton, are more interested in technological processes. Likewise, not all of them disclose the same level of critical pertinence when it comes to criticising corporate modes of behaviour. With this artistic plurality, I intend to avoid categories, such as ‘institutional critique’, an umbrella term to describe artists that somehow criticise both art institutions and corporations.

This research focuses on eleven case studies that give different interpretations of artistic interplay with corporations. In four cases – Deloitte (Pilvi Takala), Quickborner Team (Harun Farocki) and Xerox PARC (Pamela Z and Joel Slayton) – this entails cooperating directly with employees and managers in the corporate setting, where projects result from partnerships between artists, art institutions and corporations. In the other four cases – Carey Young’s *I am a revolutionary*, Jan Peter Hammer’s *The Anarchist Banker*, Burak Delier’s *Crisis and Control* and Nicoline van Harskamp’s *Any*

Other Business – the corporate setting is used by artists and corporate actors as a background scenario for fictitious performative presentations. Finally, Alicia Herrero's *The Museum of Political Economy* and Carey Young's *Welcome to the Museum* and *Follow the Protest*, question the artists' relationship with art institutions and corporations through the exhibition site. These eleven projects are distinct in terms of approach, but they all exceed the possible benefits of a mere collaboration. Daved Barry's conference is examined as an example of managements increasing interest on artistic skills.

Methodology

This research consists of three central steps: a re-examination of the changes at the level of the corporate workplace since the 1960s, which in my view led to a change of paradigm both in art and in corporate management; a rereading of managerial writings; and the reinforcement of the performative highly centred in the linguistic component since the 2000s. These aspects are entwined and cannot be analysed separately. The term corporate management cannot be understood without a clear definition of what corporate culture and its actors mean and how they relate to art; likewise the term performativity cannot be rethought without taking into consideration how this relationship evolved historically.

Accordingly, I adopt a constellational approach, in which ideas and individuals are related, affecting and being affected by each other. The term 'constellational' was developed by German philosopher Theodore Adorno in *Negative Dialectics* (1966) to define a type of thinking that attempts to find unexpected relations between a constellation of concepts. Adorno's reading is built critically in contradiction to Walter Benjamin's early account of the constellational in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), where the metaphor 'ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars' is depicted to accentuate the difference between ideas and concepts. Simon Jarvis identifies two major differences between Benjamin's notion of the constellation and Adorno's view of this notion. The first is precisely the distinction that Benjamin makes of concepts, which allow the classification of particular phenomena, and ideas, which are above positive knowledge. For Adorno, notes Jarvis, in 'Benjamin's work the concepts have an authoritarian tendency to conceal their own conceptuality' (1998: p. 176). The second difference is that Adorno's constellations are nothing in themselves

but a relation between particulars. Adorno criticises Benjamin's position of the constellational as metaphysical by appealing to Max Weber's refusal to give summary definitions for concepts which were historical, in the sense that such concepts must be gradually composed out of component parts' (Jarvis, p. 176). In this way, the constellational not only allows thinking what is specific in the object, but also strengthens the mediation of subject and object through concepts. As Adorno asserts, 'cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. As a constellation, theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal, hoping that it may fly open like the lock of a well-guarded safe-deposit box' (2004: p. 163). Adorno's notion of the constellation involves various elements in juxtaposition, rather than in hierarchical or classified order. Although distant from Adorno's thematic, thinking in constellations serves our purpose as it opens the space for related concepts and individuals that interpret each other mutually, and then unfold a specific meaning in their own 'constellation'.

To make choices about what should be included or not in terms of references is a fundamental step in any doctoral investigation. This is unquestionably necessary given the amount of information circulating today about any subject. Such choices concerning the field of management were more difficult to make for the reason that it is not our field of study. A series of management texts were selected with specific linguistic characteristics or rhetoric that focus on the organisation of the corporate workplace and that look for a proximity to the arts.

This leads to the possible target(s) of this research. From the standpoint of the art researcher, whose background is history, art history and contemporary art theory, my aim is to make evident to management authors and consultants art's propensity for destabilising normative gestures, stimulating speeches and creative thinking; from the standpoint of the 'outsider', of someone that looks into managerial texts and Ted Talks, my aim is to make evident to artists, curators and cultural theorists how a new corporate mindset is being shaped in relation to art's alleged creative role for assisting managerial work. This inevitably brings to the surface an overlapping ground, attuned with mutual yet conflicting aspects of art and management discourses. I intend to show that there is an artistic drive for upending basic managerial assumptions concerning art's creative potential as *a function*. To make this evident requires understanding exactly what performativity means in each field that reclaims it. This objective takes us beyond

the realm of patronage in which the relationship of art and corporate management is usually discussed to a realm in which the performative is taken as the main device.

Performativity: The operative device of this research

To understand how performativity is put into use in art and corporate management, two steps are necessary. The first step is to make clear why one thinks performativity is the device in use instead of performance. The reason has more to do with the theoretical basis of performativity and the nature of the case studies included here rather than with structural differences between performance and performativity. Both terms share the same semantic root (n. *action*, v. to *perform*) and make up part of performance studies, as such it is impossible to establish clear boundaries between them. However, as we shall see, the term performance conveys a historical weight deeply attached to sociopolitical circumstances already included and theorised upon in canonical art histories. The act of performing was always consciously enacted in the various avant-garde movements with two main goals in mind: to experience radicalism and, with this revolutionary stance, to agitate the public. It meant a public presentation of the individual/artist – performance as spectacle or theatricalisation of life – and required a reaction to it. On the other hand, the performative emerged in the humanities and social sciences, more specifically through anthropology and the philosophy of language around the late 1950s. In the 1990s, it was introduced in art and economics with the same mechanisms but with different goals. I have opted for the second strand, namely the philosophy of language, for the reason that J.L. Austin's theory of language is in part constructive for examining the strategies of language communication used by both artists and corporate authors/actors. In the framework of Austin's study originally published in 1962, performativity makes up part of everyday life; it is related to human behaviour and to a practice of *being*, *saying* and *doing* (performative utterances). The everyday factor, the linguistic element and the question of gender explored by gender theorist Judith Butler provide to performativity theoretical characteristics that are absent from the traditional meaning of performance. Then again, it is difficult to put strict limits between performance and performativity. In fact, within the art field, both concepts share irony or parody as linguistic mechanisms of inversion, which led cultural theorist Linda Hutcheon (2000, 2005) to explore a variety of cultural and artistic practices where these components are present.

Bearing in mind the transversality of performativity, the second step comprises a reading of Austin's performative utterances. I intend to maintain Austin's key principle for speech: the subject who speaks precedes the speech in question, implying that there is intention behind the type of vocabulary in use. Accordingly, it is important to clear up that the case studies examined in the research give another signification to discourse/speech as defined in gender studies by Butler. Contrary to Butler's (1997) view in which speech in relation to identity construction is not a question of context but a question of linguistic vulnerability, the reliability of the statement in the examples given cannot be dissociated from the context, historical or situational, focusing on the appropriateness of a form (stylistic device) to achieve a particular communicative purpose. It can be said that it is a type of speech in which both form and function are brought together. In this framework, there is also a linkage between written and spoken language – a link that I shall examine in relation to management authors, whose texts not only indicate a performative trend but also materialise this style in public lectures; and also in relation to some artists, whose approaches consider the liaison between script and act.

Background constraints

A constraint found during the investigation has to do with my original background of Portugal. The influence of corporate culture in all spheres of society is a tendency felt more or less all over the world, however manifesting itself with different intensities depending on each socioeconomic and cultural context. Throughout my investigation, I have sensed a difference with regards to Portugal, for example in the absence of artistic practices that engage so deeply with corporations as a way of questioning them. One of the reasons for this could be that the influence of corporate structures in art is still a recent phenomenon in Portugal. Here, the connection between the two fields has been occurring through art patronage on the level of acquisitions, the sponsorship of exhibitions and awards encouraged mostly by banks and company services. This likely has to do with the characteristics of the art community in general, whose critical attention to the neoliberal influence is more directed to the effects of the recent financial crisis. But it also has to do with the internal specificities of the corporations in each country. For instance, contrary to Deloitte in New York or in Helsinki, which have developed partnerships with artists in the past six years, at Deloitte in Portugal there is

an absence of this type of connection. Despite that, we can sense the same pressure in relation to entrepreneurship as in other countries, namely at Portuguese universities where post-graduate programmes of cultural entrepreneurship are being developed in cooperation with institutions external to academia with the objective to create and stimulate new models of business behaviour for younger generations.

Considering the lack of Portuguese artistic practices that could functioning as performative examples in this research, I cover two types of talks that not only establish a connection with Portugal but also give a sense of universality to the themes discussed. The first is a fictional talk show recorded in video by artist Jan Peter Hammer (2010) inspired by the Portuguese text *O Banqueiro Anarquista* from 1922 (*The Anarchist Banker*) of poet and writer Fernando Pessoa. A banker's discourse with anarchist ambitions that took place in the early 20th century in the midst of Portuguese society is adapted to the present through a banker's speech about the financial practices of neoliberalism. Despite the time interval between the two speeches, we can find resemblances in a certain way of thinking and behaving. The second is a conference organised by and held at Serralves Foundation in 2011 about the ways in which contemporary art has been useful for the managing of the work and place of corporations. The conference took place within a broader programme of conferences entitled *O Imaterial: Os Novos Paradigmas da Contemporaneidade* (*The Immaterial: New Paradigms of Contemporaneity*), which aimed to debate the role of economics in different spheres of contemporary society.

Chapter outlines

In **Chapter One**, I expound on the concept of corporate culture and its actors and how their influence is coupled with changes of the term culture. I intersect three readings which are vital for identifying the main changes of culture during the course of four decades: Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Frederic Jameson, and George Yúdice. From Adorno's 'commodification of culture' to Yúdice's 'culture as a resource', these authors take different paths of analysis, which are concomitant with their time. Through their readings, it is possible to perceive that culture has been shaped according to economic and social changes of neoliberal societies. These views on culture are complemented in the second section with additional references about the changing character of the entrepreneur by providing strategic readings of Joseph

Schumpeter, Robert Hébert and Albert Link, Michel Foucault, Maurizio Lazzarato, Michel Feher and Paolo Virno. Because most of these references relate to political economy, and in order to avoid a simplistic reading of them, the main objective here is to provide a mosaic of readings that show how entrepreneurs' diversified roles became part of neoliberal ideology. The influence of corporate culture is not uncritically accepted by some management authors. After a brief introduction to Critical Management Studies, a pluralistic side of management that is critical of management's wide-ranging modus operandi, the third section of the chapter focuses on Stefano Harney's critical insight about the role of cultural studies in relation to the rise of the creative industries, and more importantly for this research, on the movement between art and management that Harney briefly mentions. This movement implies that art becomes an appealing target of management, which inevitably begs for an artistic response. This research is centred on this movement and on the contradictions that emanate from it; an analysis of individuals and structures, as well as of behaviours and vocabulary, needs to take place. Ultimately, the analysis of this interplay aims to make evident artist's intentions to expose a way of thinking and behaving that is profoundly entrenched in (neoliberal) everyday actions.

The movement between art and corporate management would not have been possible without increasing interest in the notion of performativity all through the 1990s. In **Chapter Two**, after an introductory note about the motives for taking performativity as the operative term, I begin to schematise the basis of performativity in J. L. Austin's speech act theory and its adaption by Judith Butler in her theory of gender construction. This allows a clarification of what aspects of performativity change when applied to the idiosyncrasies of the case studies that incorporate performativity as an approach. This means that opposing sides commonly attributed to performativity may converge in the given examples. At this stage, it will be important to dwell on performativity as a device in use across various fields. Despite this common interest, each field of knowledge develops specific traits through performativity. Irony has made up part of philosophical and literary structures for a long time, but it has also been widespread in the field of art as an effect of performative stances driven by various types of ironies that allow the overturning of an action, a statement or an idea, epitomizing what Linda Hutcheon designates as 'different meaning-makers' (1994, p. 56). After looking to Hutcheon's examples, a consideration of how the term performativity was introduced in economics is also important to perceive not only the

points in common between economics and corporate management in terms of the validity of the statement and its enactment, but most importantly, to make known an internal discussion about the performative characteristics of economics, and by extension, about performativity as a form of capitalistic investment outside economics. These readings will allow us to corroborate that, despite the use of performativity as a simulation technique by corporate groups, language plays an important role in the process of redefining positions, especially those in the artistic field. To better understand this redefinition in terms of practice, it is crucial to go back in time and to examine the changes in artistic practices and their liaison with the corporate/managerial sector.

In **Chapter Three**, I focus on artistic practices of the 1960s-1970s, when the concept of corporate culture emerged as a conscious reality along with the expansion of multinationals. This period marks a turning point in the relationship between artists and corporations, exemplified here by the historical case of Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT), a non-profit organisation that promoted interaction between artists, engineers and industry. I look at EAT as a precedent for a flexible mode of working with corporate-technological structures. This period is also marked by a turning point of artists' modes of production in relation to their work, modes that cannot be detached from the broader changes in the American post-industrial economy. In that way, the second section of the chapter makes more visible the significance of artists and curators incorporating other roles commonly applied to corporate management. Whereas EAT pragmatically exchanged expertise and knowledge, the artists analysed in the second section had a critical responsiveness to their roles as administrators. Artists, such as Hans Haacke and Robert Morris, are decisive to subsequent artistic practices that recuperate managerial trends from the late 1990s onwards, but also for their critical repositioning in relation to management.

Chapter Four is entirely dedicated to corporate management. More precisely, I deliberate on a performative force that was engendered when changes on the managerial level were taking place in the economy at large throughout the 1990s. I begin by defining a performative side of management writing – a trend also applied in the visual arts – that uses stylistic devices for hypothetically altering the reality it describes. This requires a re-reading of Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiappello's publication *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1998), where the differences between management texts of the 1960s and 1990s are scrutinised with regards to the transformation of firms. My aim is to go

beyond the scope of these authors by showing how the techniques of managerial jargon became a channel for advising an innovative way of behaving and for inducing the empowerment of individuals both inside and outside firms. This is exemplified by looking closely at the works of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Tom Peters, and ultimately, John Kao, who makes available a different technique for a better assimilation of creativity and consequently a better appropriation of artistic procedures.

While the previous chapter prepares the background of a new corporate mode of thinking the arts, in **Chapter Five**, this reality is made visible with an overview of a number of publications, in which the increasing attentiveness to artistic processes regarded as creative potentials to be followed and adapted in corporations is perceptible. These changes in terms of corporate mentality and workplace become even more perceptible in the second section through the analysis of a comparative report on European artistic programmes taking place inside corporations. These art programmes are specifically conceived to improve corporate issues and strengthen the bonds with corporations. Arts-based learning is an approach that uses art as a pathway to explore issues such as creativity, innovation and leadership inside corporations. These programmes are paradigmatic in sectors of the field of art that are orientated towards the arts and business research, and often driven by a method that aims to comprehend the success of artistic interventions in corporations. The analysis of a report titled, *Managing artistic interventions in organizations: A comparative study of programmes in Europe*, has two purposes: first, to make evident a form of evaluation of art projects already institutionalised as a research procedure, and second, to contrast this current corporate interest in art with the scepticism of corporate managers in the late 1960s. These sceptical postures are exemplified in the third section by using as a point of comparison the Artists Placement Group (APG) and their relationship with industry. Eventually, the analysis of the report also opens the path for questioning the methods of evaluation to which artistic practices are subjected.

The receptiveness of corporations toward art has considerably altered the circumstances of the artist placements. In **Chapter Six**, these alterations come to be more obvious through examples that take on performativity at a practical level. The scrutiny of four projects with different strategies chosen as case studies aims to unveil a less neutral form of artistic intervention in the workplace. Through them, the variants of the performative will be observable between artists whose practices intend to disrupt the corporate environment and corporate actors mimicking/performing artistically – the

latter including techniques for the simulation of artistic expressions and methods to be transplanted into the corporate setting. That disruptiveness can be translated into an artistic motivation for upending the expectations of corporate consultants concerning the role of artists inside corporations. This may occur by challenging the predisposition of corporate actors for reproducing words commonly used by artists or to install the reasonable doubt about what is seen (Pamela Z and Joel Slayton); other ways may be through the inversion of expected behaviour or the ordinary way of approaching managerial work (Pilvi Takala); to make known the vulnerability of corporate empowered speeches (Harun Farocki); or to contradict real situations and feelings (Burak Delier). This inevitably brings to the surface conflicting aspects of art and management discourses.

In **Chapter Seven**, I continue to deliberate on performative strategies of communication, this time at public talks. In two of the case studies, the artists give particular attention to the relationship between text/script and public speech. Peter Hammer and Nicoline van Harskamp adapt fictional and real texts staged not for the theatre setting but for conference rooms. Hammer produces a fake talk show adapted from a Portuguese story and interpreted by real actors that discuss the effects of the financial crisis. Nicoline van Harskamp produces a series of talks also interpreted by real actors trapped between business and socio-political conventions and the difficulty to express them. In the other two case studies, Carey Young's performative utterance and Daved Barry's talk, there is no script. Barry directs the conversation to the importance of artistic experience within corporations by playing with the order and meaning of some terms. Young's training session, although fictional, could bear a resemblance to a real training in which employees are stimulated or forced to retain information and apply it to their work, but sometimes the effort is not as effective as it is expected to be. Young plays with this effort by repeating a word – revolutionary – that seems to have lost its real meaning. In the process, she incorporates a different *persona* which is somehow incompatible with her artistic condition. These talks show, some of them inadvertently, the ways in which language is capitalised upon to persuade and how this can become purposeless and ineffective. By comparing them with previous examples in which corporate vocabulary misses its intended meaning, the chapter ends with a reading that identifies these failures as symptoms of management's dispersion in the social milieu.

The investigation of how art manifests in managerial texts culminates in **Chapter Eight** with artists' creativity being appropriated by corporate management and the artistic critique of it. The chapter begins with the question left without response in Chapter Four: to what extent is creativity as a valuable tool in corporate management coincident with an artistic view of the creative process? Joseph Beuys' practice is discussed here, led by management's interest in Beuys' personality as a model to foster creativity. In so doing, the chapter discloses inconsistencies related to this appropriation not only based on the contextual differences in which Beuys' ideas were formulated and practiced, but also on the entrepreneurial/managerial spirit that guides the delineation of creativity as a measurable skill and prerequisite for obtaining success. The chapter continues to look at this tendency in management for appropriating an aesthetic dimension of work, which sociologist Antonio Strati (2010) named an 'artistic approach'. This approach attempts to make use of artistic skills to grasp the dynamics of managerial development, and it will be discussed through the works of Daved Barry and John Kao, and in this chapter through the work of Pierre Guillet de Monthoux. These approaches have a common understanding of what is now required of workers, managers, and entrepreneurs, who must draw on artistic creativity to innovate and improve organisational processes. For Monthoux, and others, the very point of aesthetic organising is to turn art into one of several agents, largely through performative skills. Contrariwise, I put forward a number of thoughts that have been targeting creativity as an object of critical revision inside and outside the artistic field. These thoughts in their diversity situate the impetus on creativity between 'populist impulses', 'cultural entrepreneurs' and 'creative bohemians' (Gene Ray, Gerald Raunig, Ulf Wuggenig, 2011), 'entrepreneurialism and individualism' (Angela McRobbie, 2011), and also between 'compulsory individualism' and 'compulsory performativity' (Thomas Osborne, 2003), 'winners and losers' (Martha Rosler, 2011), neutralisation and normalisation (Maurizio Lazzarato, 2010).

In the previous chapters, the interplay of art and corporate management has been analysed at the level of discourse in different settings. Without discarding the linguistic component, in **Chapter Nine**, I focus on a more structural level by taking into consideration the increasing complicity of art institutions in corporate interests, as well as the artistic/curatorial capacity to question and reinvent institutions as sites of experience. I begin with an introductory section on how the transdisciplinary nature of curatorial practice has played a significant part in the redefinition of the artist's liaison

with art institutions within neoliberal ideology. This means not only to rethink the posture of the artist *performing as curator* and the exhibition site as an art project, but also the positionality of art institutions in the face of the discursive and organisational tendencies of the curatorial. The terms ‘new institutionalism’ and ‘institutional critique’ – the first questions the traditional role of art institutions, the second epitomises a diversified category that criticises art institutions – are briefly discussed to make clear the linkage between the structural changes of the curatorial and the internal restructuring of art institutions. Even though the recent case studies proposed share some of the characteristics of institutional critique, the plurality of their strategies are more difficult to categorise. For this reason, instead of departing from specific categories such as those, in the second section the analysis is led by artistic/curatorial projects that critically engage with the three-way liaison of the art institution, the corporation and the viewer. In this framework, in which the usual dichotomy between artists and institutions is surpassed, a comparison with conceptual approaches of the 1960s-1970s and the institutional responses to them will make evident how institutions became more open to artists critical posture. By problematising the very meaning of artistic skills, the third section of this chapter unveils an idea of artistic work that, despite using managerial methods, is divergent from the one envisioned by corporate management.

Chapter One - On corporate culture

Culture as resource is more than a commodity; it is the lynchpin of a new epistemic framework in which ideology and much of what Foucault called disciplinary society are absorbed into an economic or ecological rationality, such that management, distribution and investment – in ‘culture’ – take priority.

Jorge Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, 2003

The fact that this new entrepreneur uses communication as a strategic mode of command and organization can only lead us to understand that we have entered into a new paradigm, in which the relationship between the economic, the social and the political is turned upside down.

Maurizio Lazzarato, *Strategies of the Political Entrepreneur*, 2007

1.1. Defining corporate culture

1.1.1. Corporate culture: Its concepts and actors

I perceive corporate culture as a set of practices instated into neoliberal societies by organisational structures. My aim is to bring those practices to light and how they reflect expectations within corporate management’s field of interests, and how this is intentionally expanded outside its comfort zone. The practices that I am referring to might be a text, a discourse given at the corporate workplace, in a conference or museum, in other words, wherever a specific type of language is being constructed and certain behaviours are taking shape. To be precise, the intention is to give a critical analysis of how the ‘culture’ of a corporation, a management text, a business or banker consultant speech aim to influence audiences at the same time as they utilise this culture to interrelate with other domains, such as the field of art. Likewise, it is essential to examine the artistic responses to this proximity.

The term corporate culture, also named ‘organisational culture’, has been included in management theory since the 1970s, and by extension in the jargon of bankers, business consultants, managers, and entrepreneurs. In general, it is defined by management experts as a pattern of shared meanings – concepts, beliefs, expectations – that guides the thoughts and behaviours of individuals in organisations, thus affecting the way people interact with each other:

When people talk of the ‘corporate culture’, they usually mean values and practices that are shared across groups in a firm, at least within senior management [...] Solutions that repeatedly appear to solve the problems they encounter tend to become a part of their culture. The longer the solutions seem to work, the more deeply they tend to become embedded in the culture (Kotter and Heskett, 1992: p.6).

Corporate culture can also represent the collective principles of organisational members to achieve specific strategic ends:

In this article, we broadly define organizational culture as a set of shared mental assumptions that guide interpretation and action in organizations by defining appropriate behavior for various situations. These largely tacit assumptions and beliefs are expressed and manifested in a web of formal and informal practices and of visual, verbal, and material artifacts, which represent the most visible, tangible, and audible elements of the culture of an organization (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006: p.437).

What type of culture might that be and how is it managed? These two entwined questions suggest that the use of the term culture in management is by some means problematic: first, because the term ‘culture’ is in itself extremely broad and complex, and second, the way it is reclaimed by management authors and consultants has led to a growing criticism of it. This problematic use is discussed in this section through Frederic Jameson’s (1991) description of the ‘cultural logic under capitalism’ and Jorge Yúdice’s (2003) diagnosis of ‘culture as resource’ as a new epistemic framework, in which economic and management investment in culture is a priority – a perspective that Yúdice claims to be detached from Theodor Adorno’s commodification of culture industry (1947). The problematic use of the term culture is also exemplified in the staff meetings of Quickborner Team filmed by artist and filmmaker Harun Farocki, entitled *Ein neues Produkt*, 2012 (*A New Product*), examined in Chapter Four. We can perceive

through the dialogues that Quickbouner Team consultants attempt desperately to determine the significance of corporate culture in their projects.

Although corporate culture is a recent term in management theory, the concepts of management and entrepreneurship, which make up part of it, are older. They overlap frequently but they are different in terms of the defining tasks and objectives of their actors: the manager and the entrepreneur. Some authors agree that '[...] the entrepreneur attracted the attention of management, which was forced to ferret out the distinctions between entrepreneurs and managers' (Hébert and Link, 2009: p. xvii). The role of the entrepreneur goes well beyond the world of corporations, whereas the role of the manager is often coupled to and reliant on the development of the company. In the corporate world, the entrepreneur is perceived as someone whose tasks are much broader and less normative than the manager. The entrepreneur bears all the risks and uncertainties involved in setting up a business or running an organisation; his objective is to take an opportunity to innovate, create and to act as an agent or a leader. An entrepreneur deals with faults and failures as a part of a learning experience, whereas the manager makes every effort to avoid mistakes concerning the organisation he manages.

These differences are historically discernible, even before an economic theory of entrepreneurship. The historical significance of entrepreneurship and the role of the entrepreneur are examined by Hébert and Link (2009). According to the authors,

An early manifestation of entrepreneurship involving risk-bearing and individual initiative existed in the medieval practice of tax farming. In medieval society, a tax farmer was one who successfully bid for the exclusive right to collect taxes in the name of the Crown. The amount of each bid is related in a predictable way to the bidder's evaluation of the amount of taxes he can collect (Hébert and Link, 2009: p. 4).

Another angle of the entrepreneur is the 19th century 'entrepreneurial art dealer' which established a bridge between the bourgeois marketplace and the artist's career. The entrepreneurial art dealer adopted the mediator position of the patron while maintaining the basic characteristics of a business man. In the early 20th century, the entrepreneur emerged as an economic agent coupled with markets. For instance, Michel Foucault (2008) placed the entrepreneur as a key figure at the centre of the transition from a liberal economy of exchange to a neoliberal idea of competition. In a period of transition, economics is the grid adopted to manage the behaviour of the individual, one

that becomes governmentalised through entrepreneurial power. More recently, however, the entrepreneur may incorporate several roles in society, i.e. artist, banker, financial consultant, politician, student, and so on.

On the other hand, the figure of the manager is intertwined with the development of the modern corporation between the 1920s up until the 1960s, the so-called golden period of managers, when firms began to be detached from the name of a particular family. But a change between business enterprises and their cultural and political environments began to take place after the 1970s. And after the 1990s, the managers whose power derived from hierarchical status saw their prestige being shared with entrepreneurs. Terms such as creativity, empowerment, and innovation became recurrent in management vocabulary, usually coupled to the qualities of individuals. These transformations are examined subsequently via two seminal works: Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (2009), and Eve Chiapello's and Luc Boltanski's, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005).

1.1.2. Culture as resource

The corporate influence under which culture finds itself today is part of a process that has taken place over the past 30 years. This increasing influence finds its success in the transformation of culture itself. The social and artistic sides of culture have developed specific characteristics, including a passion for market consumerism, innovation and mass entertainment that became truly appealing for other sectors, like business and management. This is indeed an ongoing process that already began in the early 1970s, perceived in many ways as a ‘cultural turn’. This process describes how the role of culture became the subject of intense debate in the realm of social sciences (post-structuralism, cultural studies and linguistic analysis).

In the seminal work, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Jameson attempts to characterise the nature of cultural production in the second half of the 20th century (what he calls the ‘era of late capitalism’), and to distinguish it from other forms of cultural production of preceding capitalist eras. He observes that the sphere of culture has significantly expanded beyond its earlier traditional forms, becoming contaminated by market production and consumerism with profound effects on society and human subjectivity. Jameson’s view of capitalist influence on culture is corroborated by the analysis of diverse examples of cultural production – literature,

experimental and commercial films, visual arts, and especially architecture – that correspond to the terms high modernism and postmodern works. The reference to the notions of modernism and postmodernism immediately raises the question of periodization and if it is possible to establish clear temporal boundaries between the two periods. More than a ‘moment’ or a ‘style’, postmodernism for Jameson is the conflation of cultural and economic characteristics that began with the end of modernism. Due to its complexity, this is not the place to continue the debate concerning the relationship that modernism has with postmodernism and vice versa – that of break and/or continuation¹ – which Jameson cherishes throughout his book. Not only are these notions difficult to define within the realm of the various disciplines that are dedicated to their study, but most importantly, the manifestation of new forms of artistic production leads inevitably to the emergence of new notions recently proposed, which somehow better define the artistic practices today but exceed the scope of this research.² The fundamental point to retain here is that Jameson believes that it is possible to speak of cultural modes within a defined timeline. He restricts this postmodern timeline to the notion of ‘cultural dominant’ a flexible historical conception that allows various cultural forms to coexist at the same time.

Already in the 1940s, more specifically in 1947, critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1997), proposed that the popular

¹The ongoing debate on modernism and postmodernism has been taking place in the academic sphere in the past 40 years, when postmodernist critics claimed that ‘newness was exhausted’ after modernism. For postmodernist academics, the postmodernist artist should take a different artistic posture in relation to the changes in society. In this sense, the artist’s should not create the ‘new’, since it is not possible, rather they must imitate, combine, investigate and reinterpret previous artistic forms. Contrary to modernism, another premise defended by postmodernist theorists is that creativity emerges as a natural feature of the artist. We should not forget that notions such as ‘deconstruction’ and ‘post- structuralism’ emerged under the umbrella of post-modernism. The first notion proposed by Jacques Derrida in relation to philosophy, textual analysis and literary criticism has as its major concern to question the format of a text in terms of presuppositions, hierarchical values and frames of reference; the second notion emerged as a counter reaction to modern structuralism, and it is concerned with various aspects of a particular culture, its everyday materials, abstractions, rituals and beliefs, and how these influence each other. Post-modernist or post-structuralist theorists include Frederic Jameson, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Jean-François Lyotard, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, among others.

²For instance, the notions of ‘postproduction’ and ‘altermodern’ coined by curator Nicolas Bourriaud reflect the intention to rethink the artistic and cultural jargon in the age of globalisation. The notion of ‘post-production’ which emerged in the format of a book, *Culture as Screenplay: How Art Repograms the World* (2002), examines specific artworks made of preexisting works, and how these new practices gave a new artistic configuration to both contemporary culture and to the material that has been remixed. The notion of ‘altermodern’ attempts to recontextualise artistic practices in the current global context by arguing that post-modernism no longer serves to define the world today. It was also the title of Tate Britain’s fourth triennial in 2009, in which themes such as migration, borders, exile, and communication were explored. The term ‘altermodern’ eventually led to a public debate in the artistic sphere, questioning whether this notion was in fact the symptom of a new movement or mere marketing propaganda. See Lambrianou (2009).

culture industry produces standardised cultural goods (films and radio programmes). The author's work, which was written in the US with a pessimist tone towards cultural media entertainment, should be seen within specific historical circumstances, namely the aftermath of the Second World War. Despite the end of the terror instated by Nazism, for Adorno and Horkheimer, culture is threatened by a renewed rise of state totalitarianism and dominated by capitalist forms of commodification. This convergence generated a move in the old dialectic of Western Enlightenment. As they state in the chapter 'Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception';

The essay on culture industry demonstrates the regression of enlightenment to ideology which finds its typical expression in cinema and radio. Here enlightenment consists above all in the calculation of effectiveness and of the techniques of production and distribution; in accordance with its content, ideology expends itself in the idolization of given existence and of the power which controls technology (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1997: p. xvi).

According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the growing commodification of culture as an entertainment industry within the capitalist system confined certain factions of society (particularly the lower middle class) to an endless need for media products used to manipulate the audiences into passive consumers. Because the authors believed that society and culture form a historical totality, the influence of the cultural corporate apparatus would have direct consequences both for the loss of autonomy of artistic forms and its consumers.

The distinction between the 1940s and 2000s with reference to mass culture is due not so much to a shift in the structural dynamics of capitalism, which actually occurred, but rather to a change in the cultural and social fabric of societies. As art theorist Gerald Raunig observes in an article online titled 'Creative Industries as Mass Deception':

When Horkheimer and Adorno still lamented the fact that the subjects of culture industry as employees lost their opportunities to become freelance entrepreneurs, it seems that in the present situation this problem has been completely reversed. The freelance entrepreneur has become mainstream, no matter whether s/he is floating as a part-time worker from project to project or building up one micro-enterprise after another [...] Somewhat cynically one could say that Adorno's melancholy over the loss of autonomy has now been perversely realized in the working conditions of the creative industries: the creatives are released into a specific sphere of freedom, of independence and self-government (Raunig, 2007).

Jorge Yúdice (2003) examines the changes in the cultural fabric beyond mere commodity. According to Yúdice, he does not intend to reprise Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the cultural commodity and its instrumentalisation, but rather to expose the growing expansion of culture in the past three decades as a resource for economic purposes (2003: pp. 1-2). Contrary to Adorno who perceived mass-produced culture as a threat to the more intellectual high arts,³ Yúdice attempts to show how the expediency of culture in the global era revokes the prevailing distinctions, like those between high and low culture. Yúdice makes a revision of the ways in which culture is invested in, used as an attraction for capital development, tourism and corporate investment. He discusses culture in a general sense, which includes contemporary art practices, music, oral narratives, social and urban citizenship, and other symbolic practices. Perhaps this is the weakest point of his study, namely an overgeneralised view of cultural practices, whose idiosyncrasies most certainly convey different degrees of expediency. Also, his argument that expediency revokes the distinctions between high and low culture should not be seen as a given fact. For Angela McRobbie, this division still exists in the UK, but with different contours and less strength of previous decades. As she states, '[...] at some point we may wish to have a discussion about how new micro-distinctions are produced in regard to hierarchies of art and culture in response to the creation of new more fluid and unstable positions in cultural labor markets' (2011: p.120). Thus, this matter is highly dependent of the cultural specificities of each context.

Nevertheless, after more than ten years, Yúdice study continues to be quite pertinent in current neoliberal societies. His main argument is grounded on the fact that 'the role of culture has expanded in an unprecedented way into the political and economic at the same time that traditional notions of culture have been emptied out' (2003: p.9). This

³The binary opposition between these two forms of culture has been the major point of criticism of postmodernist theorists to Adorno's view, which apparently was too reliant for a (German) elitist conception of culture. It seems almost a truism to suggest that Adorno's hostility towards mass culture entirely forgets, or fails, to do justice to the dissident role that popular culture has played in the 1960s. One of the reasons might be that Adorno did not live longer to re-evaluate the significance of popular culture. Another reason may be that, in the post-war period, he decided to devote himself almost exclusively to aesthetic issues of the modernist German context. In one way or another, the most interesting critics of Adorno's writings on mass culture, according to cultural theorist and film historian Miriam Hansen (1992, 2012), are the ones that do not neutralise the historical distance between Adorno's thought and more recent notions of entertainment culture, at the same time as they assemble disjunctions and contradictions in the texts themselves. The misreading of Adorno's writings was the focus of Hansen's studies until her death in 2011, and for her the neutralisation of the historical distance mentioned above is a recurrent fault on the part of his critics. Hansen focused on the negative valence that the terms 'writing' and 'reading' had for Adorno in the context of mass-culture in the relationship between subject and object. But Hansen also focused on the question of what kind of reading we can make of postmodern, or post-Fordist, media culture through Adorno's analysis of mass culture. See Hansen (1992: pp.43-73).

means that various types of cultural practices, including symbolic practices, such as folktales and rituals, have been destitute or deprived of their meaning while being mobilised as recourses in various sectors of society, i.e. economy, cultural tourism, commerce, and so on. Yúdice recognises that the central role of culture in solving social problems is not new, but as he notes, this ‘took different forms in the past, such as the ideological (re)production of proper citizens (whether bourgeois, proletariat, or national)’ (2003: p.11). In his view, this expanded role of culture has to do partially with the reduction of financial assistance to social services by the state, and also with the way globalisation has facilitated contact between people and their circulation.

Even though Yúdice’s layered analysis focuses mostly on the United States and Latin America contexts, the characteristics pointed out of the uses of culture are seen as a general tendency all over the world, including in Europe. This is particularly true in relation to the role that public and private institutions play in bridging the cultural and business sectors. Yúdice gives as an example of this effort the keynote address by the president of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, at the international conference ‘Culture Counts: Financing, Resources, and the Economics of Culture in Sustainable Development’ (October 1999) in which, according to Yúdice, Wolfensohn ‘folds culture into the bank’s policies as an instrument for human development’ (2003: p. 13). The notion of culture as resource is highly complex in the sense that it not only circulates with increasing velocity, but most importantly, it is managed in various layers both locally and internationally by governments, corporations, non-governmental foundations, and so on. As Yúdice observes,

Artistic trends such as multiculturalism that emphasize social justice and initiatives to promote sociopolitical and economic utility have been fused into the notion of what I call the ‘cultural economy’ [...] This premise is quite widespread, with U.S. rhetoric of a ‘new economy’ and British hype about the ‘creative economy’ echoed in New Zealand’s ‘Hot Nation’, Scotland’s ‘Create in Scotland’, and Canada’s ‘A Sense of Place, a Sense of Being’. Similar projects have been developed in a spate of Latin American cities (Yúdice, 2003: p.16).

Likewise, it is difficult to define the expediency of culture as it becomes extremely diverse in terms of characteristics, motivations and conditions. This form of using and dealing with culture, according to Yúdice, is the outcome of intertwined situations, such as the decline of the nation state, the increasingly global nature of economic and

corporate interests, and the ascendancy of neoliberal doctrine. There has been a weakening of the articulation of national discourse and state apparatuses. But this does not mean that the state itself has been weakened; on the contrary, it has rather reorganised itself to accommodate new forms of organisation and capital accumulation. In fact, looking to the recent situation of the European Union, namely its possible fragmentation and the rhetoric about immigration, the idea of nation state is more alive than ever.

Thus one can say that the expediency of culture as a resource is understood by Yúdice as a performative characteristic of contemporary life. Overall, there is an imperative to ‘perform’ culture as an active source of empowerment to achieve specific goals in contrasting realms: artistic/community projects, market/tourism, economy/management and local citizenship. This means that there is growing attention and emphasis on civil society by oppositional movements: managers of neoliberalism turn to civil society in order to release the state of its obligations, but those that attempt to resist neoliberalism also seek in society alternatives for their activities. Contrasting aspects are reinforced by the social dimension of the examples that he examines.⁴ However, given that societies are differently structured according to local needs and synergies, reactions to the inequalities generated by neoliberalism will constantly take different contours. Besides the specific historical circumstances, what changes in Yúdice’s understanding of culture when compared to previous understandings of culture within capitalist system is the contexts in which these cultures are analysed. Ultimately, expediency is always a type of commodity.

1.1.3. The modern corporation

Along with theories on entrepreneurship, the organisation of the modern corporation became a subject of intense debate since the 1920s up until the 1960s. The question of who legitimately exercises the force inside the corporation turned out to be central amongst economists and political theorists. A fundamental perspective on the modern development of corporations is given by Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means (2009) in *The*

⁴One example given is the urban artistic tendency called ‘aesthetic of Rio funk’, a music style strongly associated with urban class and racial conflict in the Brazilian context of *favelas* (slums). Yúdice relates this artistic tendency turned into a ‘resource’ to the city politics and to the role played by international NGOs that, although manage services and funding, which the state fails to provide, many times adopt a paternalistic position by taking up these kinds of artistic collectives as their ‘pet projects’ (Yúdice, 2003: pp.109-132).

Modern Corporation and Private Property, originally published in 1932. Although the focus of their analysis is mainly the expansion of the power of corporations in the United States, many agree that the theory proposed might be a turning point in the way we look at the relationship between owners (those who own but do not work) and managers (those who work as directors but do not own).

The general thesis of the book is centred on the rise of the modern corporation as a quasi-public organisation concentrating influence or power that can be measured on equal terms with the modern state. Complementing this idea, the authors argue that those who legally own corporations have been separated from their control; instead it is the manager that now controls it. Berle and Means observed that corporate control was assured by a group of experts that shared a common background in management. From the moment these firms began to develop, it became more difficult for the original owners to maintain their majority stockholdings, whilst stocks became dispersed among a large number of small shareholders. The outcome of this dispersion led to the appropriation of corporate governance by managers, in fact those who needed to deal with the firm on a daily basis. In this regard, the legitimate right to administer the corporation passed from the owner to a group of professional managers that could better understand the technical details of the corporate organization. In this way, management began being considered the proper source of inspiration for capitalist spirit. The separation of ownership and control was envisioned by Berle and Means with some speculation, as for them, it could lead to the rise of a managerial model in capitalism with an impact on the size and future of corporations. However, some authors alert us that in Berle and Means' theory, 'the dispersion of ownership was merely an aggravating circumstance, not an independent explanation for new governance and certainly not its defining characteristic' (Gomez and Korine, 2008: p. 122).

We know today that Berle and Means' prediction concerning management as one of the pillars of capitalist development was quite accurate. But as mentioned by Murray Weidenbaum and Mark Jensen in the introduction of a recent edition, Berle and Means were mistaken when stating that power and control would be totally and persistently in the hands of managers (Weidenbaum and Jensen, 2009: p. xi). The reality of the world of corporations and multinational enterprises would become more complex than the polarity between managers and owners that Berle and Means described in a specific context, as well as the relationship between corporation and state. For reasons that are not of interest to this research, in diverse Western contexts and in different ways, the

unions and social organisations would play a significant role in the Post-War period as an external counterweight to the growing managerial power. Moreover, another aspect that Berle and Means did not predict is the use by institutional investors of the latent powers they possess, and the growing interest of these investors in corporate decision-making (Weidenbaum and Jensen, 2009: pp. xi-xii).

It is essential to understand the managerial model in the larger context of society between the 1920s and 1960s. We cannot forget that managerialism was closely tied to Fordism, an industrialised and standardised form of mass production, which changed considerably after the 1970s. Indeed, there is a substantial difference concerning corporate governance between the first half and the second half of the 20th century, when large diversified firms were replaced in part by new markets and networks. A change of interaction between business enterprises and their cultural and political environments began to take place after the 1960s, with managerial governance being targeted with growing criticism. Consequently, the managerial model began to lose its own equilibrium in that new reality. These changes turn out to be particularly intense during the 1970s, commonly named the post-Fordist period,⁵ when capitalist societies start to develop new network-based forms of organization, which considerably altered the working conditions of employees in corporations. Management expertise was severely challenged by the consequential change in the balance of power between management and shareholders. At the same time that ‘shareholders fragmented into multiple poles of interest, corporate governance also underwent a major change, and the function of the entrepreneur was reinterpreted to accord a significant role to investors in financial markets’ (Gomez and Korine, 2008: p. 122). Nevertheless, some ideas around management did not lose their vitality. We cannot ignore Peter Drucker’s (1996) visionary contribution to the foundations of the modern corporation with his timely concept ‘knowledge worker’ developed in the 1950s, in which managers and workers are seen as key figures in solving problems but outside of what is usually called routine service. This would involve a balance between short-term needs and long-term sustainability, between independence and responsibility. Drucker was more interested in a human dimension of corporate management, in the way relationships among human beings are established through knowledge and creative thinking rather than statistical

⁵Post-Fordism was subsequently mentioned by various social theorists to describe a system that differs from Fordism in the sense that it proclaims a more flexible posture in terms of performance by employees in the corporate workplace. This period has been extensively examined by sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello since the 1990s.

figures. He was particularly interested on how this ‘mind factor’ could challenge the common thinking of organisations. Since then, knowledge-based work has become increasingly important in businesses worldwide, and has been recuperated in some spheres of academia.

1.2. The changing condition of the entrepreneur

1.2.1. Between will and economic purpose

The figure of the entrepreneur embodies the paradoxes of capitalism: this individual incorporates a lifestyle, a possible venture to guarantee his/her own merit and will, but given his/her plastic capacity to adjust to various circumstances, the entrepreneur is gradually subsumed into an economic way of thinking that obfuscates his individualistic nature. As we shall see, in capitalist societies, or more precisely in neoliberal societies, the entrepreneur is caught between a purely economic logic and the contradiction of being something different.

First and foremost, the paradoxes intrinsic to this figure have been intensified by different interpretations of his character. For instance, according to philosopher and sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato (2012), neoliberal societies generate a hybrid figure capable of simultaneously embodying the essence of corporate enterprise, the capacity of self-management, but also the burdens, benefits and risks of a more flexible market economy. From another perspective, philosopher Paolo Virno (2008) considers the figure of the entrepreneur within what he names ‘entrepreneurial innovation’. Although Virno sees creativity as inherent to human nature, he specifies that entrepreneurial innovation is intermittent. In so doing, he separates the entrepreneur from the capitalist context and uncovers an entrepreneurial figure that is eccentric, resourceful, and capable of transforming common situations by challenging established grammar norms. Following what he believes to be Joseph Schumpeter’s point of view, the entrepreneur is not to be confused with a CEO, manager or owner of an enterprise; on the contrary, the entrepreneur has the capacity to move from old (capitalist) rules to new forms of being. In Virno’s perspective, this movement is undertaken discontinuously; we are all potential entrepreneurs, but we only occasionally activate this capacity. Even if it is true that entrepreneurs are the promoters of innovation within the Schumpeterian perspective, as we shall see ahead, they also embrace the contractions of the capitalist system described by Schumpeter. These interpretations somehow corroborate the argument of sociologist Tomas Marttila, that the entrepreneur is an object of continuous redefinition. Marttila’s focus is the Swedish context, but he also observes the reinforcement on entrepreneurship as an overall tendency in Europe. As Martilla states, ‘the most fascinating thing about the recent constructions of the entrepreneur is not the

fact that its meaning and range of social applications has changed, but rather that the more extended meaning of the entrepreneur as a role model of social subjectivity has become the normal way of thinking about the entrepreneur' (Martilla, 2013: p. 4).

The first academic use of the word was introduced in 1750 by Irish-French economist Richard Cantillon (2009), who in his book, *Essai sur la Nature du Commerce au General* from 1755 (*Essay on the Nature of Commerce in General*), defines entrepreneur as the individual who perceives business as a form of market venture. The term became more common during the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century, when the idea of business itself was becoming part of a new way of living, particularly in Europe. Political economists, such as John Stuart Mill (2004) and Alfred Marshall (1997), included entrepreneurship into the principles of political economy by defining the various skills and features of an entrepreneur, along with the ideas of economies of scale (individual markets and industries), opportunity cost and comparative advantage in trade. German economist and sociologist Max Weber (2002) did not assembled a theory on entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, he was obliquely interested in the role of the entrepreneur in the capitalist economy as the figure that makes the central decisions in the firm. For that, he introduces Protestant ethic as an important force that influenced the development of capitalism. Weber saw the entrepreneur as a key figure establishing a connection between mentality and behaviour with religious ideas (in particular Protestantism)⁶ and social relations in the development of modern capitalist attitudes, a theory that he develops in his seminal work, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* from 1905. Weber's analysis of the spirit of capitalism contends that the traditional way of conceptualising the motivations of the early capitalist entrepreneurs was no longer adequate. Within the new logic of capitalism, the ideal type of bourgeois entrepreneur acquires a more complex subjectivity beyond selfishness. What is crucial in this framework is an individual willingness to put one's own moral standing to the test of economic success.

Hébert and Link (2009) give particular attention to the historical role of the entrepreneur, various schools of economic thought and the influence of Joseph Schumpeter's theories on subsequent political economy literature, along with the conviction that the entrepreneur is a difficult figure to pin down. As they state, 'the

⁶Walter Benjamin in the work *Capitalism as Religion* (written in 1921 and published several decades later after his death in his complete works) goes further than Weber by characterising capitalism not only as a phenomenon that is influenced by religion, but as one of 'essentially religious' character. See Jennings, Smith and Eiland (2003).

fractured nature of entrepreneurship is a striking anomaly that accompanies dramatic growth of interest in the subject, both academic and practical' (Hébert and Link, 2009: p. xvii). Indeed, a fundamental contribution comes from Schumpeter (1994) who provides a cyclical perspective on how entrepreneurship evolved in capitalist societies. Schumpeter exposed the paradox of progress by proposing the concept of 'creative destruction',⁷ which is an inherent part of the economic growth system. Adapted from the Marxist economic theory about the processes of accumulation and annihilation of wealth, Schumpeter's creative destruction, an oxymoron, reflects the economic benefits of new industries and the development of societies, but at the same time, it reflects the obliteration of established companies, labourers and citizens that enjoyed some degree of power.

The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers' goods, the new methods of production and transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise create [...] The opening of new markets, foreign or domestic, and the organizational development from the craft shop and factory [...] that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from *within*, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of creative destruction is the essential fact about capitalism (Schumpeter, 2003: pp. 82-83).

For Schumpeter, within the model of creative destruction, society cannot expect the benefits of the constant fluidity of free enterprise without recognising that consequences will emerge for individuals. At the same time, any attempt to reduce the negative aspects of this model by attempting to protect industries will eventually lead to the stagnation and decline of its development. In this sense, capitalism is fated to be a victim of its own success. Entrepreneurs emerged in this context as the radical force that introduced new products, services and new forms of organisation. Within the Schumpeterian perspective the entrepreneur is more than a figure of equilibrium; he is the creator and promoter of innovation in the capitalist system, a real force capable of sustaining economic growth. '[...] though entrepreneurs do not *per se* form a social class, the bourgeois class absorbs them and their families and connections [...] the

⁷The roots of the term creative destruction can be traced back to Indian philosophy, from where the idea entered German philosophy and literature. In the late 19th century it was discussed by Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) through the mythical figure of Dionysius, a figure that was for Nietzsche simultaneously 'destructively creative' and 'creatively destructive'. According to authors H. Reinert and E. S. Reinert (2006), it was brought to economics by German economist Werner Sombart in *War and Capitalism* (1913) before Schumpeter's theory.

bourgeoisie therefore depends on the entrepreneur and, as a class, lives and will die with him' (Schumpeter, 2003: p. 134). Schumpeter's analysis was written in relation to and for a specific historical context – that of the Great Depression after the stock market crash – which reinforces the contractions of his analysis.

In his lectures *The Birth of Biopolitics* dated from 1978-79, Michel Foucault (2008) examines the changing condition of the entrepreneur from classical liberalism to neoliberalism with a focus on the subjective transformation of the individual.⁸ Over the course of the lectures at the College de France, Foucault rethought entrepreneurial power and the social condition of subjects by exploring the historical genealogy of political governmentality in both liberal and neoliberal regimes. Whereas liberalism constructs a line between political government on the one side and the economy and civil society on the other, neoliberalism transgresses this line for the benefit of economic markets within societies. In this regard, neoliberal government replaces social relations of exchange with economic competition. But to narrow down the differences between those regimes to this division would be overly simplistic. As observed by German sociologist Thomas Lemke (2016), Foucault shows that well into the 18th century, the problem of government was placed in a more general context. Government was a term discussed not only in political contents but also in philosophical, religious, and pedagogic texts. For this reason, Foucault defines government as conduct and thus as a term which ranges from governing the self to governing others.

By comparing the classic liberalism of the 18th century and early 20th century in terms of the market economy, Foucault discloses a major shift from a society of exchange to a society of competition. From this major distinction, Foucault unfolds a series of differences between the two economic theories, including the manner in which each of the regimes perceived governmentality and the role of society. Contrary to classical liberalism that departed from the *laissez-faire* perspective (self-regulation free from government restrictions) and embraced a negative point of view of governmental institutions, the principles of German Ordoliberalism claim that political government and the market economy are not juxtaposed. As noticed by Foucault, the Ordoliberalists propose that the market should maintain its own internal logic, with positive effects

⁸Classical liberalism is a political philosophy founded on the principles of liberty and equality. Even though social subjects were believed to be naturally free and autonomous agents, liberalism bound their freedom to a specific subset of ethical and moral principles. On the other hand, German Ordoliberalism is a variant between social liberalism and neoliberalism that defends the role of the state in the development of the economic free market. This theory was proposed and developed by German economists, such as Eucken, Böhm, Grossmann-Doerth, and Miksch, from the 1930s to 1950s. See Foucault (2008).

produced only when this logic is respected. In this regard, economic competition is not a natural phenomenon but rather a coherent idea that must be realised and sustained by the state.

Moreover, they attempt to show that capitalism makes up part of a broader economic institutional entity, which is historically open and can be changed by political events. As Foucault recognises, what is being proposed by the Ordoliberalists is an enterprise society subject to the dynamics of competition. Foucault focuses his attention on the nature of this enterprise and on the Ordoliberalists' political strategy to expand entrepreneurial forms within the social body. In so doing, he notices a generalisation of forms of enterprise grounded in diffusion and multiplication (Foucault, 2008: pp.147-148). This generalisation first generates a model for social relations from the economic mechanisms of demand and competition, then it translates what Alexander Rüstow has called a 'Vitalpolitik' ('politics of life') defined as

[...] a policy of life, which is not essentially orientated to increased earnings and reduced hours of work, like traditional social policy, but which takes cognizance of the worker's whole vital situation, his real, concrete situation, from morning to night and from night to morning (Foucault, 2008: p. 157).

What Foucault attempts to show in his analysis of Ordoliberalism in his final lectures is the way in which the German model was able to spread its influence on contemporary French economic policy and in the United States. However, some variants are detectable between the German (and French) model and the neoliberalism of the United States. Foucault proposes that the key element in the Chicago School approach is a consistent expansion of the economic form to apply to the social sphere, thus omitting any difference between the economic and the social. In this sense, neoliberalism in the United States is much more a form of being and thinking grounded on the relationship between the governors and the governed than a technique of governors with regards to the governed.

The figure of the entrepreneur emerges throughout the lectures as a point of intersection for a whole series of new ideas exposed by Foucault, including subjective transformation. This figure is at the centre of the transition from a liberal economic conceptualisation of exchange to a neoliberal idea of competition. Whereas classical liberalism departs from the capacity of individuals to identify and fulfil their individual interests, neoliberalism conceives of interests as something that individuals must be

taught to identify, revise, and reconsider simultaneously. Economics is the grid adopted to manage the behaviour of the individual, one that becomes governmentalised through entrepreneurial power. If the individual has the capacity of governing himself by making use of his consciousness, freedom and free will, he is capable also of governing others by influencing their actions. In this scenario, the universalisation of entrepreneurship form starts to emerge.

1.2.2. The social meaning of the entrepreneur

Seen from the present, according to Lazzarato, Foucault's perspective is somehow limited. The reason for this limitation is obvious: neoliberalism as a theoretical compound ideology has changed geopolitically since the 1970s. But we should also not forget Foucault's premature death in 1984, which prevented him witnessing those changes. He was indeed a kind of visionary in the way he perceived history – from the past to the present and from the present to the future – and we will never know how he would have rewritten history on neoliberalism if he had had the chance to. Economic logic continues to shape societies as described by Foucault, but there was a change in the meanings of what are described as entrepreneurial vocabulary, characteristics and objectives. Lazzarato noticed that Foucault's description of the neoliberal practices implemented in order to transform the individual into a 'sort of permanent and complex enterprise' took place within a context entirely different from that described by Foucault. As Lazzarato argues,

[...] the perspective of *The Birth of Biopolitics* is thus still that of the German Ordoliberalists for whom the industrial firm and entrepreneur were at the heart of the social market economy. Foucault remained attached to this 'industrial' view of postwar neoliberalism at a time when, throughout the 1970s, a logic of business became the norm. With it came a capitalism whose collective interest is represented by financial entrepreneurs who have imposed a new 'government conduct' and a new kind of individualization, which have little to do with postwar Ordoliberal politics (Lazzarato, 2012: pp.91-92).

Lazzarato emphasises that the entrepreneur is set in motion today in a reality quite different from the economy of the 1980s and 1990s, besides that described by Foucault. Indeed, the increase of entrepreneurial activity and financialisation of society has gained another dimension in the last two decades. This has also implicated a gradual

transformation of the concept of entrepreneur, which presently can be at once a single individual in a particular place and, in a more abstract way, an entire corporation.

A useful description of this reality is portrayed also by Lazzarato in the article ‘Strategies of the Political Entrepreneur’ (a 2007 revision of an article written in 1994), where he observes the manner in which entrepreneurship has become the soul of communication, society, politics and governability all together. In the last version of the article, Lazzarato present two examples of different entrepreneurial experiences: Silvio Berlusconi and Benetton Group. In the figure embodied by Berlusconi, one can no longer distinguish the entrepreneur, the media boss and the politician. Lazzarato argues that the erasure of the distinction between the economic and the political gives rise to a new capitalist figure that does not merely manipulate the media but also controls various aspects of consumption, communication and labour (Lazzarato, 2007: pp.87-88). In relation to Benetton Group, Lazzarato finds the company a perfect example of a brand entrepreneurial experience operating simultaneously in a new economic public sphere, in which the production of the material is intrinsically tied to the publicity of their brand and the discussions around their image. The company does not function within the traditional modes of a factory with direct control of their production and distribution; rather it is managed through franchising and highly dependent of the impact their image has on local societies. For Lazzarato, advertisement is Benetton’s strongest point, a type of ‘politics’ that helps to maintain a comfortable market niche for its citizen-consumers.

A further reading through Lazzarato’s work reveals an intensification of the neoliberal policies of the 1980s and 1990s concerning the deregulation of markets, the dismantling of the welfare state, and the excessive privatisation of state corporations. But at the same time, we are currently experiencing another economic mutation that became more perceptible in the context of the global financial crisis that began in 2007-2008. The global crisis has increased the attention on entrepreneurship leading to a conjecture among economic experts as to whether entrepreneurship may be one of the solutions to resolve the crisis given entrepreneurs’ innovative capacity for generating wealth. On the contrary, it may have been one of the causes of the crisis given entrepreneurs’ propensity for change and experimentation with market structures. One way or another, the current economic mutation called ‘debt economy’⁹ is shaped on a

⁹In relation to debt, we should not forget the work of David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, published in 2011. Here Graeber traces the long history of the phenomenon of debt from ancient

power basis where society finds itself under the rules of market finance, and where ethical values and political goals can easily be manipulated by financial power relations.

Multifaceted in its characterisation, this economy establishes a new connection between capital and individual in the sense that, as Lazzarato puts it, the actions of the latter become its own form of capitalisation (Lazzarato, 2012: p.91). To be clear, current neoliberal policies, which include the roles of institutions like the IMF, rating agencies and financial investors, produce a new kind of entrepreneur that does not necessarily own his enterprise, rather he manages according to the flow of financial markets, goods and services, and the speculation around their value. In this sense, it has become commonplace to think about the entrepreneur as a model of social subjectivity in neoliberal societies, whether positively or negatively. In Lazzarato's view, this form of economy also reshapes the figure of the indebt man that now occupies a great percentage of the public space, also affecting entrepreneurs' performativity. This means that the entrepreneur will assume the benefits, costs and risks of a flexible and financialised economy as well as other symptoms of a system in collapse – unemployment, uncertainty and precariousness.

One can find some parallels on the entrepreneurs' changing condition between Lazzarato's perspective and cultural theorist Michel Feher (2009, 2014). Feher's analysis rests on the premise that neoliberalism has brought with it a certain representation of the human condition. This neoliberal condition, according to Feher, carries new polarities between self-investment and self-appreciation, meaning the individual/entrepreneur embodies the standards of competitiveness and self-esteem. This emergent condition also presupposes the rise of human capital as a prevailing form of neoliberalism.

[...] the return on human capital no longer manifests solely in calculations about whether to work or to receive more training. It now refers to all that is produced by the skill set that defines me. Such that everything I earn – be it salary, returns on investments, booty, or favours I may have incurred – can be understood as the return on the human capital that constitutes me (Feher, 2009: p. 26).

civilisations to the present, in the context of successive economic crises. The main argument presented by Graeber is that, as a source of discontent, debt has often led to social and political changes, and consequently to revolutions. Another argument defended by Graeber is that we should detach ourselves from the sense of moral obligation to pay financial debts to financial institutions.

Another aspect distinguishes the present notion of human capital from previous definitions: neoliberal subjects do not exactly own their human capital, they invest in it. In the words of Feher, ‘they can alter it by modifying their social behavior but they can never sell it. And as investors in their own human capital, the subjects that are presupposed and targeted by neoliberalism can thus be conceived as the managers of a portfolio of conducts pertaining to all aspects of their life’ (Feher, 2009: p. 30). Within this logic, Feher goes further in his analysis. With the transformation brought about by financialisation, the subjective form of the ‘entrepreneur of the self’ proposed by Foucault becomes somewhat obsolete and ought to be replaced by what Feher calls ‘portfolio manager’, a statement made in the context of a series of lectures at Goldsmiths College in 2014 in London. A portfolio manager is the individual who makes investment decisions in behalf of others or the individual who manages the portfolio of a financial institution. These are individuals whose job it is to make decisions about investment policy, matching investments to objectives and balancing risk against performance. In this context, the portfolio manager is also the individual who values himself, his own capital and behavior (2014). For now, we can only identify the entrepreneur as a contradictory figure whose communications skills show us that s/he is capable of embracing different realities at the same time.

1.3. Critique of corporate management: An inside perspective

1.3.1. Art as the object and the objective of management

The environment instated by corporate culture, either in relation to its internal specificities or in a more generalised context, is not passively accepted by some authors. There is a field of research termed Critical Management Studies (CMS), which as the name indicates, is critical of the negative aspects of corporate management and organisation, namely the tendency for sectional interests and formulas, the demand for adaptability all masked by a sense of belonging, job satisfaction and personal development. As Mats Alvesson notices, Critical Management Studies goes back to the 1970s within a Marxist line of thinking on labour processes¹⁰, and continues throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s with a solid criticism of corporate culture (i.e. Harry Braverman, 1974; Gibson Burrel and Gareth Morgan, 1979; Stewart Clegg and David Dunkerley, 1980; David Knights and Hugh C. Willmott, 1987; Mats Alvesson, 1992, and Valérie Fournier and Chris Grey, 2000). According to Alvesson, the ‘amount of work that may be included in the CMS umbrella has increased rapidly and became quite pluralistic in the sense that various groups perceive what is critical differently’ (2008: p. 16).

Although not directly related to these critical branches, Stefano Harney’s work owes much of his theoretical affinities to the Marxist tradition via Italian workerists’ perspectives. In the book, *The Culture of Management* (2008), Harney analyses how the principles of management deeply shape our lives today in the global context, focusing specifically on the divergence between the ‘older’ and ‘newer’ worker in the corporate world. In the article, ‘Why is Management a Cliché’ (2005), which I shall discuss further in Chapter Seven in relation to management linguistic truisms, Harney departs from the term ‘demotics of management’ to expose an intricate form of working and thinking that is intrinsic to management. And in the article ‘Creative Industries Debate:

¹⁰The notion of labour is usually considered within a social category. It relates to physical and mental effort, and to the way workers produce both collectively and individually. It has an economic dimension in terms of wage demand and supply, and a socio-political inference in terms of class struggle. In Marxist theory, labour is thought of as the ‘act of working’ and labour power as a ‘work force’ that only exists in the personality of the worker.

Unfinished Business: Labour, Management, and the Creative Industries’ (2010), Harney claims that the rise of the creative industries has been understood too narrowly.

Let me focus on this last article. Here Harney briefly refers two movements of the entanglement of art and management in the creative industries: one is the movement of management into the arts and seeing the arts as its objective; the other is the movement of art seeing itself as management’s target. The two movements are in fact one seen from different angles. In Harney’s view, the alleged benefits of the arts as an object of management and the benefits of management aimed at art are largely the same, namely economic growth, expanded circulation, distribution, and profit. The risks are the same for both movements as well, notes Harney, namely the degradation of the working conditions of the artist (2010: p. 434).

Harney turns back then to cultural studies to understand why creative industries have come to prominence in the past years. At the core of Harvey’s argument is a critical revision of the role of cultural studies in relation to the rise of the creative industries. In Harney’s view, besides deepening the value latent in popular culture – a value that would be rapidly appreciated in the creative industries – cultural studies brought into focus the raw material that would form the basis of the creative industries. Cultural studies and the creative industries are both a response to this new value in society (Harney, 2010: pp. 435-436). But when Harney claims that the rise of the creative industries has been understood too narrowly, he is referring to the fact that cultural studies still do not explain us how the creative industries managed to capitalise on this value. And in so doing, he suggests an unfinished approach:

While we owe a debt to cultural studies for seeing the value in all this activity, for investing in it and bringing theory to bear on it, we can also see now with the rise of the creative industries that, if anything, cultural studies did not value this activity enough. Or rather perhaps we should say cultural studies did not value it accurately because cultural studies, despite its investment, tended to focus on this massive daily activity in the population as matters of circulation, consumption and distribution (2010: pp. 435-436).

The value that Harney is constantly referring has to do with the two meanings of value, to be exact value as wealth – created through exploitation and expansion – and value as norm – its regulation – that seem to co-exist in cultural commodities. For him, the two senses of value did not just open up both senses to critique, somehow they became unfinished in the process of commodification, a condition that cultural studies seems to

recognise. Harney's concluding remarks are that the real call of the creative industries is not the movement of management into the arts, nor the movement of arts into management, not even the artist but society as a whole (2010: pp. 442-444).

Harney's view of cultural studies in this particular article makes up part of a broader academic study about the relationship between creative economy and governmental policies. The study also includes the debate of how the 'creative' considerably changed the traditional aspects of culture to be reinvented as a form of resource and how it displaced the imaginary of the cultural industries by that of the 'creative industries'. The creative industries stripped many practices of collective meaning and reduced cultural value to economic competitiveness and innovation. Thus, we need to perceive the faults pointed out by Harney in the article within these compound changes and the contradictions that arose from there. Most importantly for our research, the article shows us is the possibility of different angles to approach the movement of art and corporate management. Harney takes a different path than ours, a path that is related to society at large and the circulation of cultural products that make up part of it, and ultimately with the focus of cultural studies research. Our sphere of interest is precisely the one that Harney concisely mentions in his article, namely management's attention to the arts potential role in the corporate workplace and beyond it, which is not recent but has risen in interest considerably in the past years along with a body of literature on creativity. One can say that the movement detected by Harney on a larger scale in which society itself becomes the target, has also been happening in smaller spheres where the artist is in fact the object and objective of management. In other words, Harney's vast umbrella of the society is substituted in our analysis for the field of art, more specifically the visual arts. This is not to say that there are no points in common with the context described by Harney, in fact it is not possible to evade them. The artist has become the 'creative worker', whose artistic work, essential for the welfare of society, must not only intersect with entrepreneurship and management, but preferably should constitute part of them. This is defended by a large sector of art and business and management schools that use art as a platform to assess the issues of innovation and creativity in the development of entrepreneurship. Equally, there is an interest in how artists can learn from applying a managerial and/or an entrepreneurial perspective to their work. While attempting to find more similarities than differences between both fields, in the framework of art and business, the notion of 'art entrepreneurship' is introduced as comparable to entrepreneurial processes detected in the business world

and ‘artistic creativity’ seen as useful for entrepreneurial ventures. These debatable points inevitably will lead us to authors mentioned by Harney, such as cultural theorists Angela McRobbie (2007, 2011) and Andrew Ross (2004), whose investigations have been focusing on the widening of interdependencies of the artist’s work within the creative industries and the corporate workplace. These include McRobbie’s series of articles on artistic creativity, fashion and entrepreneurship in the United Kingdom and Ross’ study of the Silicon Alley firms in New York.

1.4. Toward a critical perspective of neoliberalism

1.4.1. Everyday neoliberalism and everyday language

The movement between art and corporate management is full of contradictions. To speak about contradictions in this relationship means speaking about the individuals and structures that make up part of neoliberal societies, and as the three last sections have showed us, it also means to speak about the changes in terms of behaviour, mentality and vocabulary. In the publication, *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (2013), Philip Mirowski termed ‘everyday neoliberalism’ to describe the way neoliberalism is embedded in contemporary societies beyond economy. This everyday neoliberal factor embedded in austerity and privatization intersects corporations, ideas, individuals, governmental actions, institutions, and promotes entrepreneurship as a core social trait. Mirowski’s argument has two central ideas: first, that neoliberalism was able to resist the world financial meltdown of 2007-2008, partly because it is deeply rooted in everyday life; and second, that mainstream economics has played a key role in this endurance. Mirowski traces the origins of the Neoliberal Thought Collective (NTC), one of his targets, to the foundations of the Mont Pelerin Society in 1946, a neoliberal institution founded by Frederick Hayek that Mirowski describes as ‘the premier site of the construction of neoliberalism’ (2013: p. 29). He uses the metaphor of the ‘Russian doll’ to disclose the NTC as a compound structure with relations of power in all places. In the course of his analysis, Mirowski is far from having a moderate voice when he also critically targets the leftists’ tendency (some of them economists) of accepting neoliberal ideas as timeless, and for ignoring and underestimating the real scope of NTC.

To a historian, it is striking the extent to which the neoliberals have repeatedly taken ideas from the left over the last half of the twentieth century and twisted them to their own purposes [...] The nostrum of regulation drags with it a raft of unexamined impediments concerning the nature of markets, a dichotomy between markets and governmentality [...] This, I believe, has been one major symptom of the endemic failure of economic imagination on the left [...]. The left unconsciously accepts the key notion of the populist right and the neoclassical orthodoxy, ‘that nothing is substantially different between then and now’. Markets are timeless entities with timeless laws, they insist (Mirowski, 2013: pp.7-17).

Mirowski's publication as a whole exceeds our research interests, as well as the criticism of which it was a target – the incompleteness of some ideas, the excessive use of metaphors and overstatement, which interferes with a clear sense of the ideas, and so on. However, the term 'everyday neoliberalism' is worthy of our attention. Mirowski uses it in a thought-provoking way to 'explore the accretion of neoliberal attitudes, imaginaries, and practices that have come to inform everyday life in the first few decades of the new millennium' (2013: p. 92). The omnipresence of neoliberalism which he refers to is personified by the entrepreneurial self, the multifaceted individual portrayed by Foucault as the 'producer of subjectivity' reliant on multiple enterprises, risks, and skills. However, for Mirowski, Foucault placed too much emphasis on the neoliberal doctrine to deliberate on power and governmentality. As Mirowski states:

[...] he was not teasing out the operation of power on the ground and under the skin, so to speak; instead, he was extrapolating certain trends from the theoretical writings of some of the most prominent members of the Neoliberal Thought Collective [...] It seems that a few scholars are coming around to the position that Foucault managed to be so very prescient with regard to everyday neoliberalism precisely because he took on board such a large amount of the neoliberal doctrine as a font of deep insight into the nature of governmentality [...] to be clear, I am not accusing Foucault of being a member of the Neoliberal Thought Collective – an absurd counterfactual – but rather, suggesting that he shared quite a bit of common ground with their doctrines (2013: p. 97).

The point in common between the later phase of Foucault's work and the neoliberals is the attitude toward economics as the 'site of truth', argues Mirowski. In the process, the market plays a fundamental role as 'the boundary condition for governmentality and an information processor'... 'the sole legitimate site for the production of indubitable knowledge of the whole' that 'offers nonstop cogent critique of the pretensions of the state' (2013: p. 98). For Mirowski, Foucault has reproduced an imbalance between the state and the market by identifying the latter as a monolithic entity. Furthermore, Foucault was wrong when claiming that the market would foster some type of auto-limitation of state power, or act as 'the backstop of the state by keeping it in check'. Consequently, for Mirowski, Foucault's followers fail to see how the entrepreneurial self has been recruited into all sorts of innovations on the level of the markets, altering

completely the understanding that Foucault had of market power (Mirowski, 2013: p. 101).

Also highly critical of social media networks, Mirowski argues that popular movements, such as Occupy, despite their social activism, have failed in challenging the way neoliberalism is embedded in societies because they succumbed to the same mechanisms that characterise the neoliberal environment. ‘The fascination with Twitter, Facebook, and other social media components of neoliberal technologies of the self revealed their lack of acquaintance with the ideas of their nominal opponents’ (2013: p. 328). Although accurate on Foucault’s partial insight about the role of the market and the entrepreneurial self in the expansion of neoliberalism in everyday life – Lazzarato and others already discussed this incompleteness – Mirowski is not clear about the connection between the history of NTC, the neoliberalisation of the self, and the incapacity of the left’s movements in the face of everyday neoliberalism. There is a lack of cohesiveness in the way he attempts to explain the causes and meanings of these processes in everyday neoliberalism, and above all, his critical pessimism does not seem to leave much space to look for other possibilities that could undermine neoliberal assumptions. It is not necessarily a disadvantage to use the same mechanisms of the object which is to be criticised. To a certain extent, using the same mechanisms also means to better understand and recognise the common ground in which neoliberal ways of thinking, measuring, and evaluating are put into practice.

The notion of everyday comprises all sort of routinised actions. As a common denominator between individuals, language is embedded in everyday actions and it is shaped according to the desires of each person or each group. If we detect the omnipresence of neoliberalism in everyday life, we also need to recognise the role of language as a fundamental device in the construction of a neoliberal rhetoric that is highly reliant on technical and performative modes of communication. A set of ideas are structured in order to persuade, influence or convince in a way that seems ‘normal’. One of the perils of everyday rhetoric is that its routinised existence is seldom questioned; this is both the cause and symptom of its power. Corporate management’s discourse can be described as rhetorical, and this might be detected in a conference, a text or in the workplace. Their discourse often conceals more than it clarifies. The artists proposed in this research aim to understand, first of all, what kind of rhetoric is practiced in corporate management, more precisely what level of ‘normality’ is put into use on a daily basis; secondly, they aim to catch and intercept the techniques of

communication that enable corporate actors to make connections, to induce and prescribe; and finally, they engage with this world both as ‘accomplices’ and detractors of a conduct. More than a question of language, these artists intend to critically uncover or expose a neoliberal way of behaving and thinking that is often imperceptible to many people precisely because it is profoundly entrenched in the everyday. In most of the cases, this is done obliquely with a consciousness that there is enough ambiguity in the art system to consider it as making up part of the same neoliberal ideology. In these artistic processes, there are no radical postures, activist stances, independent positions, nor even the belief that bureaucratised ways of living will fade away; and yet, there is enough critical awareness for denouncing the misleading rhetoric and enough proximity for weakening the creative output so often appropriated by corporate actors. This state of affairs is highly centred on a notion that has been appreciated in the art field and also adopted by corporate actors: performativity.

Chapter Two – Recontextualising performativity

Generally speaking, it is always necessary that the *circumstances* in which the words are uttered should be in some way, or ways, *appropriate*, and it is very commonly necessary that either the speaker himself or other persons should *also* perform certain *other* actions, whether ‘physical’ or ‘mental’ actions [...]

J.L. Austin, *How to do things with words*, 1975

Power is not only good performativity, but also effective verification and good verdicts...It is self-legitimating, in the same way a system organized around performance maximization seems to be.

J. F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 1984

Irony is a relational strategy in the sense that it operates not only between meanings (said, unsaid) but between people. Ironic meaning comes into being as the consequence of a performative relationship, bringing together of different meaning-makers, but also of different meanings [...]

Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge*, 1994

2.1. Performance and Performativity

2.1.1. Performativity instead of performance

Performativity is assumed here as a device in the interplay between art and corporate management instead of performance. As stated by expert of performance theory Richard Schechner, ‘performativity is a term very difficult to pin down. The terms performative and performativity are often used loosely to indicate something that is like a performance without actually being a performance in the orthodox or formal sense’ (Schechner, 2002: p.110). Even so, while covering a range of possibilities from

the artistic, the social, and the personal, the concept of performativity can be applied more precisely in this research than the concept of performance whose compound history within artistic movements made its meaning broader. Although performance and performativity share an etymological association to the noun *action* (verb to *perform*), it can be said that performativity is predominantly a process of invoking *a subject*, not a mere performance *by the subject*. Taking this into consideration, herein performativity specifically relates to language and human behaviour, to a practice of *being, saying* and *doing*, as J.L. Austin (1975) reclaimed it. However, because there are no fixed boundaries between the two terms in the sense that performativity works as an alternative narrative emerging from and intersecting with performance, both terms may intersect in the following chapters.

This is not to say that performativity is easy to define. The difficulty emerges first and foremost from the paradoxical characteristics of the term which are put into practice for contrasting purposes. Scholars Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1995) make use of Michael Fried's (1980) opposition between theatricality and absorption to explain one of the paradoxes about performativity: 'in its deconstructive sense, performativity signals absorption; in the vicinity of the stage, the performative is the theatrical' (Parker and Sedgwick, 1995: p. 2). This is further emphasised by Parker and Sedgwick in the following paragraph:

For while philosophy and theatre now share 'performative' as a common lexical item, the term has hardly come to mean 'the same thing' for each. Indeed, the stretch between theatrical and deconstructive of 'performative' seems to span the polarities of, at either extreme, the *extroversion* of the actor, the *introversion* of the signifier (Parker and Sedgwick, 1995: p.2).

The concepts of theatricality and absorption are crucial to Fried's interpretation of French painting and criticism in the age of Diderot as well as of the philosophy of that time, a distant thematic of the recent foundations of performativity in linguistic philosophy. In this sense, it is only useful for Parker and Sedgwick to illustrate the cross-purposes of performativity, in particular the distinction between external and internal inferences given to the term in the two fields – philosophy and theatre. But the difficulty of performativity also emerges from the different connotations the term conveys in postmodernist studies. From the moment that Austin expounded performativity within the philosophy of language in the late 1950s, the term has been

adapted in postmodern theories, such as structuralism and gender studies, as a practical device in art and appropriated more recently by business.

The theoretical broadness of performativity does not complicate my interpretation of it in the interplay of art and corporate management. As we shall see throughout this research, it is quite clear that performativity is put into use in both fields with different purposes. But the theoretical broadness of performativity does complicate the steps I must take to such interpretation. To be precise, after Austin, performativity has been systematically explored by Foucault (1969), Searle (1979), de Man (1979), Lyotard (1984), Derrida (1988), Butler (1988, 1990, 1997), just to name a few. Concurrently, it has been associated with artistic practices that aimed to challenge capitalist structures, and it was introduced in the world of economics by sociologist Michel Callon (1998, 2008).

2.2. Performativity: From its foundations to other contexts

2.2.1. From J.L. Austin to economics

The term performativity was expanded by Austin in his most influential work, *How to Do Things with Words*, published posthumously in 1962.¹¹ Austin's theory of speech-acts emerged first and foremost from his suspicions about a philosophical tendency to overlook the nuances involved in everyday claims and judgments. The suspicions gave way to a more explicit resistance on his part concerning a positivist philosophical claim in which it is defended that utterances are always 'descriptive' and 'constative', thus constantly either true or false. For Austin, however, language in its layered complexity cannot be reduced to a matter of true or false – to dismiss the complexity of language in general means to ignore its ordinary usage. Therefore, Austin proposes a detailed examination of language, specifically of its practical side and everyday use. This allows Austin to pay attention to the richness of linguistic details, but also to tackle philosophical problems from a more neutral perspective.

Given the compound structure of Austin's analysis, I shall make an outline of what he calls 'performative utterance'. A short overview may comprise some risks, especially because Austin's examination is extremely meticulous about the specificity of his claims which can be related to other works.¹² However, we should bear in mind that this dissertation is neither about linguistics nor philosophy. For this reason, our analysis is centred on how Austin defines 'performative utterances'.

In the philosophy of language, performative utterances are sentences that not only describe a given reality but also aim to change the reality they are describing; the action which is performed when a performative utterance is assigned belongs to what Austin calls a speech-act – frequently it includes acts of promising, ordering, greeting, warning, inviting and congratulating. We ought to see Austin's theory on *How to do Things with Words* in two parts that complement each other: firstly, his rejection of any simple account of the assessment of utterances as true or false – recently revived by theorists to discuss the role of truth-conditions in philosophy and linguistic meaning – and

¹¹This publication is the result of Austin's lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955 and later assembled by his colleagues.

¹²Excluded from our research analysis are Austin's discussions on 'knowledge' and 'perception' developed in *Other Minds* (1946) and *Sense and Sensibilia* (1962). Another component of his work about 'action', 'freedom' and 'determinism' is also left aside for the reason that these concepts make part of Austin's critical position towards a way of practicing philosophy.

secondly, his revision of the former, and subsequently the proposal of a new model focused on the distinction of speech-acts, a central theme of his study.

Let me begin with his rejection of utterances as true or false. For Austin, a sentence can be used to make different statements on different occasions. The way those statements depend on the facts for their truth or falsehood can vary according to the specific features of the occasion, in particular with variations in intentions and purposes. This is based on the fact that any sentence can be used in performing a variety of linguistic acts, which means that a statement is dependent on more than just what it means. In following this line of argument, Austin proposes the distinction between constatives (indicative sentences that are used to make statements) and performatives (sentences that are useable in the performance of some act). The distinction between the two forms is an issue that he pursues throughout the book. For Austin, not all utterances (statements) are assertions concerning the general state of things. This is demonstrated in his renowned examples:

I take this man as my lawfully wedded husband
I name this ship the ‘Queen Elisabeth’
I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow (Austin, 1975: p.5).

The three examples presuppose a concrete action (*doing*) and not a mere description, which will intersect with the social reality, norms and institutions they are describing. In contrast to the philosophical positivist view of truth or falsehood, performatives as suggested by Austin are evaluated in conjunction with the dimensions of ‘*happiness*’ and ‘*unhappiness*’ or ‘*felicity*’ and ‘*infelicity*’; the first in the case of a promise fulfilled in the context of marriage for example, the second in the case of failing that promise (Austin, 1975: pp. 6-9).

However, Austin’s theory on the performative is far from being conclusive, and here we enter into his revision of the former. Already in the footnote of page 4 of *How to do Things with Words*, he states that ‘everything said in these sections is provisional, and subject to revision in the light of later sections’ (Austin, 1975: p.4). This is particularly true in relation to the distinction between constatives and performatives. Austin recognises eventually from Lecture V onwards that this distinction is inadequate. He argues that the same forms of appraisal are applicable to both constatives and performatives, that is to say constatives may be assessed as happy or unhappy, at the same time as performatives may be assessed in terms of truth and falsehood. The

grounds of this change are to be found in the subsequent stage of his study to better define the ‘performative’ in relation to speech. For some authors that have been following Austin’s theory, it is still not clear whether Austin was incapable of portraying such a distinction, or on the contrary, that he deliberately wanted to emphasise the failures of the various attempts to draw the distinction in order to demonstrate that such a distinction is not possible (Bach, 1975, 1979; Sinnott-Armstrong, 1994; Garvey, 2004).

The impossibility of that distinction led Austin to propose a new model founded on the distinction between 1) *locutionary acts*, 2) *illocutionary acts*, and 3) *perlocutionary acts*. The first refers to the act of saying (meaning) something; the second refers to the act of saying something characterised not only by its content but also by its force (stating, warning, ordering, persuading, undertaking, and so on); and the third refers to the consequential effects generated from that force in the audience, the speaker, or other persons.

Austin’s main goal is to accentuate the importance of the illocutionary act and to contrast it with the other two. This is because there has been a tendency to neglect this study in philosophy and to treat all problems in the framework of ‘locutionary usage’, but most importantly, this tendency does not recognise the boundaries between the illocutionary and perlocutionary. In what way are these two different? The first aspect presented by Austin relates to the production of effects in certain senses, meaning unless a certain effect is achieved, the illocutionary act will not have been happily or successfully performed. The second aspect relates to the conventional side of the illocutionary act, a conventionality that is validated by society. Strictly speaking, there is a conventional side in illocutionary acts and a non-conventional side in perlocutionary acts. Austin excludes from his analysis all utterances that do not fall under the notion of ‘ordinary speech’, which he calls ‘non-serious’ uses of language. This involves establishing a division between ‘serious’ and ‘non-serious’ uses of language, which is to say between ordinary assertions and mock assertions usually used in fiction or on the stage (Austin, 1975: pp. 94-112). This exclusion provoked scepticism amongst post-modernist theorists, including Derrida. Although supportive of Austin’s first level of analysis of language from something literal (locutionary acts) to another level that comprised force (illocutionary acts), Derrida (1988) is sceptical about Austin’s normative view of certain types of language, which included a division between serious (real) and non-serious or parasitic (fictional) uses of language. For

Derrida, the very condition for the success of the performative language is found on its own contamination, a controversy to which I shall return in a moment.

Austin's theory of language in general and the division of speech-acts in particular were extremely prolific amongst postmodern theorists, occupying since then an important role in what was to become the study of speech-acts in relation to different areas of social life. As stated formerly, it is beyond the scope of this section to assess various responses to Austin's work, either the objections to the incompleteness of his arguments, or on the contrary, the receptiveness to his meticulous analysis. However, shared by some theorists is the impression that Austin's performative speech-acts require much more unpacking than he himself expected.

Butler, whose work defines the concept of performativity as a study of the discourse used in identity construction and law-making, described it as follows:

Gender reality is performative, which means, quite simply, that is real only to the extent that it is performed. It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way. That expectation, in turn, is based upon the perception of sex, where sex is understood to be the discrete and factic datum of primary sexual characteristics. (Butler, 1988: pp. 527-528).

Her consideration of performativity involves investigating how certain characteristics of language can be used to subvert the *constrained condition in which* subjects find themselves. In works such as *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution* (1988) and *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler is primarily interested in the conditioning of human subjects as an expression of some sort of innate gender. Departing from the assumption that there is no sex that is not already gender, for Butler gender is not something one *is*, rather it is something one *does*, or more precisely, a sequence of acts gendered from the beginning of their social existence. Because there is no *body* preceding cultural inscription, gender can be performatively re-inscribed in ways that accentuate its formation rather than its mere existence. Such reinscriptions constitute the subject's agency within the law, or in other words, the possibilities of subverting the law against itself. And this is a question that she brings from Foucault's notion of 'discursive formations' as a set of discursive statements and events that have been taking place historically.

It is quite clear from the beginning that linguistic theories have a considerable importance for Butler's formulations of gender identity. Butler repeatedly contests the idea of a pre-linguistic essence by arguing that gender acts are not performed by the subject, rather they performatively constitute a subject that is the effect of discourse rather than the cause of it. She expands on this in subsequent works, such as *Bodies That Matter* (1993) and *Excitable Speech: A politics of the performative* (1997), where linguistic acts acquire more significance in relation to gender via Derrida's reformulation of Austin's notion of the performative speech-act. As observed formerly, according to Austin, in order for a statement to have performative force it must be stated by the person designated to do so in an appropriate context. Derrida's essay 'Signature Event Context' is a response to Austin's argument that performative utterances are only successful if they remain within the constraints of context and authorial intention. For Derrida, what Austin sees as a weakness or failure is in fact a quality of all linguistic signs that are susceptible to appropriation, reiteration, and ultimately re-citation (Derrida, 1988: pp. 1-23). Thus, Butler's interpretation of Austin's speech-acts theory is largely made via Derrida's ideas. As observed by Professor of French and comparative literature Carrie Noland, Derrida's concept of iterability 'allows Butler to assume the necessity of reiteration, the repetition of speech-acts that constitute the subject over time, and this, in turn, allows her to develop a notion of subversive re-citation through parody as a form of politics' (Noland, 2009: pp.187-189). However, in the final chapters of *Gender Trouble* ('Subversive Bodily Acts' and From 'Parody to Politics') Butler simultaneously employs two distinct vocabularies, which according to Noland expose serious fractures instead of productive continuities between different types of discourse. In so doing, Butler fails to account the difference between body gestures and speech-acts. As Noland states, 'paradoxically, the richness of Butler's work lies precisely here, at the point where the fracture between the performed gesture and the performative speech-act, opens wider' (Noland, 2009: p.190). Indeed, the richness of Butler's theory on gender performativity is at once its fragility.¹³ This is due to the fact that she works

¹³Other important contradictions remain. The question as to what constitutes 'subversive' as opposed to 'ordinary' gender parody is left open in the conclusion to *Gender Trouble*, 'From Parody to Politics', where Butler asserts that it is possible to disrupt what are taken to be the foundations of gender without suggesting exactly how this can take place. Also, sociologists John Hood Williams and Wendy Cealy Harrison question the theoretical option of combining speech-act theory and psychoanalytic theory, as they argue that there is nothing citational about psychoanalytic accounts of identity. They find the assertion that there is no 'I' behind discourse curious for a theorist who is so interested in psychoanalysis (Williams and Harrison, 1998: pp. 73-94).

with intricate concepts, such as subjectivation and agency, referring to various authors' theories that often enter into conflict with one another.

The theoretical layers of performativity are indeed challenging to the task of recontextualising performativity. Because there are no pure concepts, clean and uncontaminated ideas to shape according to our designs, the reading of performativity that I propose is built upon its transversality, and most importantly, it is shaped by the specificities of the case studies that shall be given subsequently.

That being said, not all of Austin's arguments about performative utterances are suitable for reflecting upon the characteristics of the case studies, both corporate speeches and artistic projects. One certainly detects the presence of illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts in the terminology of both fields – respectively the act of saying something characterised not only by its content but also by its force (stating, warning, ordering, persuading, undertaking, and so on), and the consequential effects generated by that force in audiences. Nevertheless, in some of the examples I examine, namely Young's *I am a Revolutionary*, Hammer's *The Anarchist Banker*, Farocki's work on Quickbourner Team, Takala's project *The Trainee* for Deloitte, or even Nicoline Van Harskamp piece *Any other Business*, there is no division between serious and non-serious uses of language. In other words, there is no incompatibility between everyday uses of language and assertions more adequate for fictional scenarios, thus contradicting Austin's interpretation. A certain degree of mockery or irony might occur in ordinary speech, either in the workplace or in a conference, although sometimes veiled by the circumstances in which occurs. Moreover, the two opposing sides of performativity identified by Parker and Sedgwick, namely absorption and theatricality, can indeed conflate in the case studies. A text or a speech can reveal as much as it can hide; this flexibility of performativity is what makes it such a manageable practice in various fields.

Likewise, our approach to performativity within the interplay of art and corporate management aims to give a different interpretation of discourse/speech than the one proposed by Butler. In this sense, it does not correspond to a sociological discussion about gender construction in the line of what she defended. This immediately excludes questions (and theories) related to body engendering potentially being constrained by cultural habits. What changes in relation to Butler's view is not so much the construction of identities – which in our analysis comprises of discursive processes of self-empowerment and the fabrication of fictional identities – but the relationship

between discourse and context. In Butler's view there is no subject identity and context behind discourse. Speech situation is not a question of context, 'one that might be defined by spatial and temporal boundaries, but a question of being injured by speech, which is to say to suffer a loss of context' (Butler, 1997: p. 4). This happens in the framework of body engendering where, according to Butler, linguistic vulnerability or linguistic injuring is a reality. I do not refute this in the structure of Butler's performative gender, even if, as seen before, there are some inconsistencies in the juxtaposition that she makes of Foucault's and Derrida's theories. Instead my interpretation of discourse reinforces the connection between form and function, assigning to performativity a different register of signification and experience. This is the type of speech that bridges the formalist and functionalist elements of the spoken and written language, which is to say it is the type of speech that links speech usage with specific contexts. It needs a specific site to come into existence, either a text, a corporation or a conference, but then it has the capacity to be repeatable in different contexts.

For the moment, I focus on a possible interpretation of how performativity manifests in art and its recent awaking in economics. As mentioned previously, Austin excludes from his analysis all utterances that do not fall under the idea of ordinary speech, the so-called non-serious uses of language. Ironically, the unifying element between performativity and its use in contemporary culture has been irony. In examining various modernist and postmodernist practices, cultural theorist Linda Hutcheon (1994, 2000) identified an artistic tendency that resorts to irony and parody as a way to challenge capitalist modes of production. According to Hutcheon, the difference between early modernist and postmodernist uses of parody rests on the ability of the later to surpass it as a mere radical act of critique and reassessment.

[...] modern artists seem to have recognized that change entails continuity, and have offered us a model for the process of transfer and reorganization of that past [...] today's turning to parody reflects what European theorists see as a crisis in the entire notion of the subject as a coherent and continuous source of signification' (Hutcheon, 2000: p. 4).

She aims to exceed the limitations imposed by standard dictionaries when it comes to define parody. The uses of parody should be analysed instead within historical relationships.

Let us look briefly to some of the modern examples proposed by Hutcheon. With reference to literature she brings, for instance, Ezra Pound's poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) as an ironic inversion of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: 'Here the parody lies in the differences between the personal, aesthetic, and moral journeys of two exiles in which Dante's dignity is replaced by Mauberley's self-pity' (Hutcheon, 2000: p. 6). She continues, 'in Pound's poem, the imagery (of eyes, mouth, and so on) is the same as in Dante's, but the context is inverted. The same characters are mentioned, but the relations to them are ironically different' (Hutcheon, 2000: p. 6). In relation to the visual arts, Hutcheon refers to Shusaku Arakawa's *Next to the Last* (1967-1971), an allusion in the form of a sketch to the last preparatory drawing of Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. For Hutcheon, such parody is not meant to be disrespectful; in fact it could be 'almost considered self-parodic in that it calls into question not only its relation to other art but its own identity' (Hutcheon, 2000: p. 10). She also includes René Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (1928-29) as an example of parodic transgression of iconic norms that moves beyond mere quotation, where according to her, there is a parody of the medieval and baroque emblem forms. Hutcheon's examples are extendable to film (Peter Greenaway's *The Draughtsman's Contract*, 1982; Woody Allen's *Zelig*, 1983), to music (Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Hymnen*, 1966-67), to literature (James Joyce's *Ulysses*, 1922), and so on.

The examples show that performative parody is not attached to a single form of art, nor to a single temporality. Although different, the examples share a form of imitation of past works characterised by the inversion of parody, or 'a repetition with critical distance' (Hutcheon, 2000: p. 6). The same can be said in relation to irony. Hutcheon sees parody and irony as complementary terms, suggesting that irony is a 'semantically complex process of relating, differentiating, and combining said and unsaid meanings at the same time as it gives parody its "critical" dimension' (Hutcheon, 1994: p. 85). Both terms reflect, in part, the need to rethink the notion of the subject in relation to the external conditions brought by capitalist modes of production. The performative certainly acquires different levels of intensity in the various examples proposed by Hutcheon. There is a vital relationship between the individual that performs the parody or irony and the cultural context in which it takes place, which in the analysis of Hutcheon covers a wider temporal scope and various artistic forms. In this sense, the question of how irony comes into being in the artistic practices that I examine is crucial. The historical circumstances to which they are attached are distant from those examined

by Hutcheon. In recent self-reflexive practices, particularly in the visual arts, it is not only a question of appropriating and imitating past artworks to criticise capitalist ideology, but acting upon capitalist structures. This means to literally be inside the place which is to be criticised. This form of engagement inevitably calls for different responses and different types of ironies.

By the time that Hutcheon wrote *Irony's Edge* in 1994, a fair amount of management texts were emerging, reflecting upon the internal changes of corporations. Also in the 1990s, as notice by Schechner the techniques of performativity – simulation especially – began to be used by the most powerful groups in society to enhance their power and control over knowledge (Schechner, 2002: p. 124). It was also in the 1990s that Michel Callon, whose work is grounded in science studies and sociology of economics, started to unveil the performative tendency of economics by arguing that both the natural and life sciences along with social sciences contribute to enacting the realities described by the world of economics. He aimed to understand the extent to which the concept of performativity applies to science in general and to economics in particular. For Callon, ‘economics performs, shapes and formats the economy, rather than observing how it functions’ (Callon, 1998: p. 2). Callon’s main argument is that economics *does* things. For him, economics does not merely describe real circumstances but rather it enables a set of instruments and practices that contribute to the encounter of economic actors and institutions. This establishes a relationship between description and action, in which the statement describes a singular course of action still to happen. In the framework of Callon’s analysis, an economic actor is not a mere individual but also algorithms, objects, tools, or what he names socio-technical *agencements*, that is an arrangement or configuration of things.

Callon’s argument became an ongoing debate amongst scholars for whom the idea of these economic actors (*agencements*) having a changeable ontology in a performative way and contributing for the construction, enactment or maintenance of (economic) things raises suspicion. The critique of Callon’s theory has been studied by Fabien Muniesa, a researcher from Centre de Sociologie de l’Innovation Mines ParisTech. For Muniesa, scholars such as Daniel Miller and Philip Mirowski are worried by a hypothesis that seems reasonable but can become a threat to the critique of economics. In the words of Muniesa:

For Miller, if the market that is envisioned by economists can have a real impact in economic reality, it is more as an ideological model than as an empirically operational tool. Economists produce views, models and doctrines which remain essentially abstract. These may hold as viewpoints in order to justify action. But they cannot form a durable world. The reason why is that economic reality is not like economists posit it, but is constituted instead by social bonds and power relations, i.e. it is socially constituted. These are phenomena that only a proper economic sociology can analyze. For Mirowski, Callon's notion of performativity suggests that, even being false, an economic theory may pretend to veracity just because of its pragmatic success. Again, this is the same as siding with the economists. Because economists can impose their economic machines they can also aim, with the help of Michel Callon, at being scientifically right: this is probably what most infuriates Mirowski [...] It is, above all, a matter of power and economic interests. It is not economists who perform, it is the powerful (Muniesa, 2010: pp. 15-16).

As observed by Muniesa, the question that remains for these scholars is whether economics is in fact performative – or whether, in some cases, economics actually produces the phenomena it analyses just to maintain its success. This inner criticism reveals the questionable veracity of performativity in economics, and consequently its possible misapplication outside economics. Other theorists, such as Donald Mackenzie and Yuval Millo (2003), perceive Callon's theory as a valuable tool for analysing the social impact of economics. In the face of this internal uncertainty about the performative in economics, it becomes harder to postulate the exact moment when the simulation of artistic methods by business management began to take place. Also, it is difficult to identify if it was Callon's theory that induced corporate management's interest in performativity, or if it was management authors' writings and speeches that have awakened Callon's interest. A point in common between economics and management is the believing that real circumstances are not merely described but rather activated by a series of events – this is an aspect brought via Austin, in which speech utterances do not simply describe the world, but actually have a force that deliberately enacts what is described. It is a type of language that is consciously enacted through the use of formal aspects to achieve a purpose. The functional component of this language implies an entanglement between propositions and their referents; it involves power to intervene in the (real) context but it also carries the risk of failing in it.

In fact, Jean-Francois Lyotard was already able to foresee in the 1980s the misappropriation of concepts such as performativity and knowledge in contemporary

capitalist societies. Lyotard's main argument is that knowledge has become increasingly influenced by economic factors and technological models heading to what he called the commodification of knowledge. As he notes,

Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its use-value [...] Knowledge in the form of an informational commodity indispensable to productive power is already, and will continue to be, a major – perhaps *the* major – stake in the worldwide competition for power (Lyotard, 1984: pp. 4-5).

The means that the mechanism by which knowledge is legitimised as commodity is performativity, also named ‘efficiency’. For Lyotard, performativity characterises an industrial logic of optimisation, and by extension, the dominant criteria for the legitimisation of scientific research and higher education in a postmodern environment. This type of performativity subordinates science to capital (power and not necessarily money) obstructing the production of new ideas. Lyotard’s view on performativity is perhaps the most pessimistic in the realm of social sciences. The growing corporate influence in the past decades suggests that Lyotard was quite accurate in his predictions about the changing nature of knowledge in neoliberal societies, as well as about the marketisation of education.

It is not coincidental that Lyotard’s view of performativity as capitalist efficiency was the leading idea of the conference, ‘Capitalizing on Performativity: Performing on Capitalization’, held in 2014 at the Centre de Sociologie de l’Innovation in Paris.¹⁴ The conference targeted performativity both as an object of investigation and capitalisation: first, it identified performativity as a technical concept, an idea of a practice that has signification in a given sphere, and second it discussed performativity as an object of capitalistic investment that ought to provide some sort of ‘return’ (financial or otherwise). These two lines were then open to the consideration of different fields (economic anthropology, philosophy of law, history of science, organisation studies) for a contrast understanding of performativity in the practices that constitute business and market finances. For instance, Chiapello focuses on the financialization of valuation, namely on how calculation specific to finance is changing the ways of

¹⁴The conference was sponsored by PERFORMABUSINESS, an acronym of Performativity in Business Education, Management Consulting and Entrepreneurial Finance, a project funded by the European Research Council and located at the Centre de Sociologie de l’Innovation (Mines ParisTech/ARMINES).

assigning financial values and economic thinking (Chiapello, 2015: pp. 13-35). The fields in which performativity was discussed in the conference go beyond the research framework. However, the leading theme of how performativity is capitalised on as a problematic reality in economics somehow echoes the growing interest of management in art as a form of investment and even capitalisation, as something that ought to provide some sort of profit. This is not necessarily negative if during the process we would not find, as Lyotard wisely predicted, the misappropriation of ideas within the logic of optimisation.

It is evident that a renewed interest in performativity took place in the 1990s, which led to its inclusion in various fields of knowledge. However, because layers of history are made of shifts, the current significance of performativity cannot be rethought in practical terms without taking into consideration how the relationship between art and corporations has evolved since the 1960s. This might find its clarification in both historical and artistic changes, as we shall see in the following chapter.

Chapter Three - A paradigm shift: Between cooperation and managing

Maintain a constructive climate for the recognition of the new technology and the arts by a civilized collaboration between groups unrealistically developing in isolation.

Experiments in Art and Technology, *Statement of Purpose*, 1967

Just as artists relinquished traditional artistic skills and the production of discrete art objects, the status of labor and the production of goods in the culture at large were also changing profoundly as the American industrial economy, based in manufacturing, shifted to a postindustrial economy rooted in managerial and service labor.

Helen Molesworth, *Work Ethic*, 2003

3.1. Toward a new cooperation: Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT)

3.1.1. A new level of cooperation

Founded in 1966 by the Bell Labs scientist Billy Klüver, Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) was set up as a non-profit organization that became a pioneer in the establishment of a new association between art and emergent technology. Together with electrical engineer Fred Waldhauer, and artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman, Klüver aimed to bring science to the service of artistic innovation by breaking down the barriers between the artists, engineers and scientists.

EAT is not canonical in the sense that it is seldom included in art theory, except in specific texts and publications concerning the relationship between art, design technology and the internet (i.e. Ascott, 2003; Bijvoet, 1997; Klüver, Martin and Rose, 1972; Wilson, 2002) despite its fundamental role in bridging the legacy of Fluxus and recent digital and multimedia art. However, EAT fulfills my purpose here. It symbolises a new level of cooperation between art and corporations, and to a certain extent, it

represents a change of the artists working conditions coincident with flexible specialisation instated in post-Fordist societies. The cooperation with the various corporations was rather informal and, according to its members, EAT was not committed to any technology or type of equipment, and never established a laboratory, instead they preferred to work directly with engineers in the industrial environment. Even so, EAT was much involved in the conception and production of software for computers, which was fundamental for the development of technology in general, and in particular for statistical analysis.

In the basis of EAT's foundation as a group was the event *9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering*, a series of performances that took place from 13 to 23 of October in 1966, bringing together artists and engineers. The performances were held in New York City's 69th Regiment Armory, as a tribute to the historical 1913 Armory Show. Ten artists¹⁵ worked with approximately 30 engineers for 10 months to develop technical equipment that was used as an integral part of the artists' performances. For example, Steve Paxton combined performance and sculpture in his piece, *Physical Things*, where participants needed to walk through inflatable polythene tunnels that housed installations and dance pieces. The piece was meant to function as a participatory experiment to investigate the way technology modifies our senses, routines, and eventually, our perception of time. It included two artistic trends of that time, the happening and expanded cinema: the former, a spontaneous short piece of performance, and the latter, the combination of film, video and performance usually in an immersive atmosphere with the intention of questioning the traditional link between spectator and screen. In the area of dance, choreographer Yvonne Rainer invited professional dancers and non-dancers to perform – *Carriage Discreteness* – everyday gestures and generic tasks, such as walking and carrying objects from one point of the stage to another, while various types of images were projected onto screens.

Subsequent multidisciplinary projects emerged from the collaboration between the four members of EAT and several engineers and scientists. In 1968, EAT joined the Pepsi-Cola team coordinated by David Thomas to help design the Pepsi-Cola pavilion for the Osaka World's Fair tilted, 'Progress and Harmony for Mankind', set for 1970. Billy Klüver and Robert Breer as project coordinators asked the artists Robert Whitman

¹⁵The artists/performers involved in the performance series included Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Rauschenberg, David Tudor, Robert Whitman, John Cage, Lucinda Childs, and Öyvind Fahlström. The ten pieces are available in DVD format.

and David Tudor to design different parts of the building's infrastructure. For the interior, Whitman conceived a spherical mirror with a reflecting surface in the form of a dome, creating a holographic image of the interior turned upside down. This sensorial experience would be complemented with sound system planned and produced by David Tudor, which consisted of 37 speakers fixed behind the mirror, with headsets for the viewers. The intention was to generate an immersive experience through the combination of optical, spatial and sound effects. The dome was then shielded from outside with a steam cloud sculpture, by multimedia artist Fujiko Nakaya. Other projects related to telecommunication experiences. In 1969, when the United States was setting a satellite over India, Billy Klüver and Vikram Sarabhai, the responsible for the satellite project, organised a group of engineers, educational professionals and artists, including Whitman, to develop an educational television network programme in the rural areas of India. Another community project, which was part of the *Project Outside Art* programme in New York City, aimed to introduce children to new communication technologies.¹⁶

Besides different types of projects, EAT's activities also included a series of conferences. Together with the Technical Service Program (a-one-to-one talk with engineers and scientist on the artist's specific project), EAT organized 30 conferences given by scientists from specialised research labs and private companies including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.) and Eastman-Kodak (Rochester, New York, U.S.). These conferences were intended for artists that wished to explore new technologies in their work such as holography, computer-generated images and sounds.

Although a recent tendency in the late 1960s, the experience of artists working with business and industry is not exclusive of EAT. As pointed out by art historian Claire Bishop, a few comparable models could be found in Europe: in Britain, various sculptors were working in new materials that demanded close collaboration with steelworkers; in Italy, competitions were sponsored by Esso and Pirelli; in Holland, the Philips electricity company worked with an artist to make robot art; and in France, the Groupe de Recherche d'art Visuel (GRAV) were sponsored by industrialists interested

¹⁶A resume of EAT's projects and statements is available at the Vasulka Archive, sponsored by the Langlois Fondation. The archive currently consists of over 27,000 pages of documents relevant to the history of video and electronic art. These include articles, essays, interviews, reviews, schematics, diagrams, illustrations, posters, concert programs, photographs, and correspondence. Vasulka made available online a brief history and summary of EAT's major projects from 1966 to 1998.

in the exploitation of techniques and visual phenomena (Bishop, 2012: p. 166). However, each of these experiences is different in terms of method and goal. What distinguishes EAT from the above-mentioned examples is the formation of an organization whose members worked in straight collaboration with different fields to bring concrete projects to life. Despite the interactive emphasis in both groups' activities, the difference between EAT and GRAV, for instance, lies in the elaboration of short manifestos on the part of the latter against the institutionalisation of art. Founded in Paris in 1960, GRAV's members included international artists working with kinetic and Op-art, such as Julio Le Parc. Some of GRAV's manifestos on perception were elaborated against the art market and the cult of artistic personality. According to Bishop, the group made a huge effort to affirm that their work was political in its implications, emphasising social and collective participation as a solution to capitalist individualism. Yet, this line of thinking was never attached to a political project, despite Le Parc's participation in the occupations of May'68 (Bishop, 2012: pp. 87-93). Contrary to GRAV that aimed at a social revolution in art by the use of 'perceptual re-education' against the generalised apathy of spectatorship (Bishop, 2012), in EAT's approaches, there was no primary intention of a critical position, just a pragmatic view of what artists could obtain from corporate technology for their artistic purposes. We cannot forget also that the cultural environment of each country contributed to the differences between both groups: France, in particular Paris, was experiencing a political atmosphere that would lead to the sociopolitical events of May'68, whereas the United States was more focused on strengthening its ties with the corporate and technological multinationals.

The role played by EAT in the artistic scenario of the 1960-70s is used here to exemplify the mutual interests shared by artists and engineers. We can sense the echoes of Dadaism and Constructivism in the work of EAT's members, particularly in Rauschenberg's various reinventions of monochrome painting and the inclusion of mundane subjects that represented the famous motto 'painting relates to both art and life'. However, EAT as an organisation was clearly outside of what was supposed to be the critical canon that characterised the conceptual Institutional Critique and the post-studio tendencies of that time, whose tactics of compromise between the artists' autonomy and the art system was far from being transparent.¹⁷ For this lack of

¹⁷For example, Institutional Critique in the 1960s can be observed in the practices of Daniel Buren, Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, Marcel Broodthaers, and Michael Asher, in the 1980s in the works of Andrea

transparency, it has contributed, among other aspects, the self-centred discourse on the role of the artist, and to a great extent the artists' relationship with the art market and the old practice of patronage, which according to art historian Anna Chave was surprisingly influential within minimalist and conceptual art. In her words,

The spiritualized view of Minimalism held by Count Giuseppe Panza di Biuono and the founders of the Dia Art Foundation, Heiner Friedrich and Philippa Pellizzi, led them to elevate certain artists within the Minimalist ambit and motivated them to underwrite particular forms of Minimalist production, especially site-specific forms [...] Panza's initial forays as a collector of contemporary art proceeded in a fairly ordinary way, but rather than continue to acquire discrete objects that appealed to him, he developed an idealistic vision of the potential for public installations of contemporary art [...] That vision came to be strongly shared by the founders of Dia, who in time established numerous permanent sanctuary-like art installations, such as De Maria's 1979 *Broken Kilometer*, in New York's SoHo district (Chave, 2008: pp. 466-467).

On the contrary, EAT's members embodied the corporate artist as a natural attitude to create works that incorporated new technology. The service provided between both sides was mutual: one of the objectives formulated by Klüver and Rauschenberg was to eradicate the boundaries between the arts, technological change and contemporary life. The desire on the part of the artists to work directly with engineers in the industrial environment and the absence of any judgment about the aesthetic value of artistic projects showed a new form of engagement between both sides. Even though EAT should not be seen as an example incorporating all the changes of post-Fordist working conditions, they definitely represent the flexible side that characterised the new way of working across different domains.

Fraser, Antoni Muntadas, Louise Lawler, Renée Green, and more recently, in the practices of Matthieu Laurette, Carey Young, amongst others. Probably a more radical conscious form of critique produced outside the system is concretised by the Situationist International (SI) organisation. With an existence from 1957 to 1972, SI as revolutionary anti-capitalists developed both a political critique of capitalist society materialised in the 'society of the spectacle' and a form of *dérive* to challenge the routine of everyday life. We should not forget also the Berlin Kommune I, the Dutch Provo and the San Francisco Diggers as diverse counterculture movements in the mid-1960s.

3.2. A paradigm shift: Managing corporate forms

3.2.1. The artist as manager, the curator as entrepreneur

Jacques Tati's iconic film *Play Time* (1967) introduces us to the gadgets of the modern corporation and steel high-rise buildings constructed of glass and straight lines. The comedy playfully describes the interference of industrial technology in the daily routine of the citizens, making human interaction more difficult. The film anticipates the 'action office' characterised by small spaces divide by vertical panels, an office setting that would become recurrent after the 1960s. More recently, the television series *Mad Men* (2007), portrays the business atmosphere of advertisement in the 1960s. The fictional Sterling Cooper advertising agency (and later on Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce) set in New York City serves as the background scenario of the daily life of a creative director named Don Draper. Although chronologically distant and formally different, both the film and the series represent the emerging corporate culture of the 1960s and share the same feeling of alienation of postmodern times.¹⁸

Alongside the post-industrial economic paradigm and the significance of the 'ad-men' in the culture of the 1960s, the emergence of what has been called in art the 'aesthetics of administration' is not a coincidence. This designation was given by Benjamin Buchloh in 1990 to describe the way conceptual artists were fascinated by corporate bureaucratic forms and somehow adopted the positions of managers outside offices. Buchloh's text focuses on language specificities in conceptual art, which led to the renouncing of the material art object and to the questioning of traditional visual paradigms. For instance, the artistic predisposition to administrative forms is visible in Hans Haacke's work *Visitor's Profile* (1969-1973), a statistical compilation in the format of a questionnaire of the types of visitors to an exhibition. This predisposition can also be seen in the elaboration of contracts accentuating the economic and social relations in the mediation of art, as for example, Robert Morris' famous *Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal*, also named *Document* (1963), a typed statement in which he denied that his other work *Litanies* (1963) had aesthetic content. Morris action pointed out a proximity to Duchamp's work that Buchloh describes as follow:

¹⁸A critical stance on the industrialised world is already present in cinema before the 1960s. For example, the iconic film *Modern Times* (United Artists, 1936), directed by Charlie Chaplin in which he interpreted the 'Little Tramp' character struggling to survive the adversities caused by the industrialised world in the 1930s.

In *Document*, Morris takes the literal negation of the visual even further, in clarifying that after Duchamp the readymade is not just a neutral analytic proposition (in the manner of an underlying statement such as ‘this is a work of art’). Beginning with the readymade, the work of art had become the ultimate subject of a legal definition and the result of institutional validation [...] The result of this is that the definition of the aesthetic becomes on the one hand a matter of linguistic convention and on the other the function of both a legal contract and an institutional discourse (Buchloh, 1990: p.117-118).

Another important moment in the history of artistic contracts was Seth Siegelaub’s creation of a document, which was meant to protect artists’ rights of dubious sales. *The Artists Contract* (1971) could be read as an agreement-manifesto, as pronounced by Siegelaub:

The Agreement has been designed to remedy some generally acknowledged inequities in the art world, particularly the artists’ lack of control over the use of their work and participation in its economics after they no longer own it [...] It is expected to be the standard form for the transfer and sale of all contemporary art, and has been made as fair, simple and useful as possible (Siegelaub, 1971: p.1).

However, according to art historian Alexander Alberro (2003), the contract ends up reinforcing the intersection between capitalism and art, and above all, the dissemination of conceptual artworks as commodities. By aiming to free artists from the pressure of art institutions, Siegelaub used advertising to make contemporary art available universally, but in due course opened the door for a dependence on the marketplace. For Alberro, Siegelaub was a key figure in the foundations of conceptual art. Through his role of curator and dealer of art, Alberro sees him as another kind of entrepreneur.

From a slightly different point of view, Buchloh formerly notices that the changes in the capitalist conditions of production led to a series of linguistic and legalistic engagements, and ultimately to the adoption of an aesthetics of the administrative:

But this aesthetic of linguistic conventions and legalistic arrangements not only denies the validity of the traditional studio aesthetic, it also cancels the aesthetic of production and consumption which had still governed Pop Art and Minimalism. Just as the readymade had negated not only figurative representation, authenticity, and authorship while introducing repetition and the series to replace the studio aesthetic of the handcrafted original, Conceptual Art came to displace even that image of the mass-produced object and its aestheticized forms in Pop Art,

replacing an aesthetic of industrial production and consumption with an aesthetic of administrative and legal organization and institutional validation (Buchloh, 1990: p: 119).

We can sense in Buchloh's statement a certain inevitability of conceptual art's tendency to bureaucratic immaterial forms. At the same time, it reveals the plurality of artistic forms in the 1960s-70s in its differing aspects: contrary to minimal and pop art that were still embracing aspects of industrial and mass consumption, conceptual art began to overlap with managerial strategies.

This proximity to organisational modes of production makes part of a major shift from Fordism to a post-Fordist system that has brought the decline of regulation by the nation-state and the rise of global markets and corporations. According to sociologists Eve Chiapello and Luc Boltanski (2005), this shift was accompanied by a restructuring of the working conditions in services, corporations and institutions, which required a series of implementations such as short term contracts, subcontracting, and outsourcing. This has deeply altered the relationship between art and managerialism, eventually leading to the gradual disappearance of the structural conditions of the artist critique. We know today that this interpretation developed in their publication *The New Spirit Capitalism* from 1999 would become less rigid in an article that Chiapello wrote in 2004 titled 'Evolution and Co-option: The 'Artist Critique' of Management and Capitalism'. In the conclusion of the article, she ends with an optimistic remark about its possible futures, which I transcribe here:

The agonising question at this point is to determine whether 'artist critique' has definitively collapsed or if there is some way of reconstructing it on the basis of some basic core of resistance. For it remains obvious that it has not lost its reason for being but merely a large degree of its effectiveness and credibility [...] It seems to me that 'artist critique' continues to call attention to unresolved problems. It embodies a discussion as to the value of things and stands opposed to the commodification of other forms of values which money will never be able to take into account: artistic value, aesthetic value, intellectual value [...] Art per se stands opposed to this project of complete mastery by science, each individual artwork constructing an inexhaustible world that it is, however, able to question (Chiapello, 2004: p.593-594).

Chiapello's article is more optimistic, but it does not evade some of the faults of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Boltanski's and Chiapello's book is indeed a well elaborated

study that combines sociological narrative, political economy and cultural analysis. However, in any publication there is always the risk of departing from the political and social specificities of a context to build arguments about the general state of things, and this is the major fault of *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Despite its meticulous analysis, the work is predominantly centred in the context of France – in the dynamic that runs from the years following the events of May 1968, when the critique of capitalism was vehemently expressed, to the late 1980s, when the critique of capitalism was profoundly altered.¹⁹ The authors are aware of the risk of tackling a transformation of global scope on the basis of a local example. They justify this method by arguing that

[...] similar processes have marked the evolution of the ideologies accompanying the redeployment of capitalism in the other developed countries, in accordance with modalities that stem from the specificities of political and social history, which only detailed regional analysis can bring out with the requisite precision (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p.4)

Even so, this justification is not enough to evade faults, especially if we consider the political and cultural differences between France and other contexts, such as the United States, and above all, the kind of criticism in operation and the conditions in which it is shaped in the so called ‘cycles of recuperation’.²⁰ To be more precise, the motivations

¹⁹Chiapello’s doctoral thesis, *Artistes versus managers: Le management culturel face à la critique artiste* published in 1998 is also solely based on French case studies. Within a framework that Chiapello calls ‘artistic’, she examines an association of production of audio-visuals, four book editors of general literature and fiction, and five orchestras of classical and baroque music as artistic examples that refuse the role of management. The refusal is adjustable to the internal specificities of each place; in the case of Alphimages (association of audio-visuals), the refusal of management took the form of exclusion of the representatives of the accounting bureau, thus its clash with the representatives of the creative part; and in the case of the book editors, it had to do with the diversity of the editorial line and the range of publications and sales. The field of visual arts is left aside by Chiapello, who justifies this absence in a footnote of her publication by claiming that the structures of art (particularly galleries) are often reduced to one-person businesses. According to Chiapello, the management of museums and centres of art, which constitute the most important organisations in the field of visual arts, are not usually suspected of distorting art because of the economic constraints that are exerted on these institutions. In Chiapello’s words, ‘nous n’avons pas enquêté en revanche dans le champ des arts plastiques auquel sont pourtant empruntés de nombreux exemples paradigmatisques d’art moderne. C’est que les structures au contact d’artistes vivants (galeries essentiellement) se réduisent souvent à des entreprises unipersonnelles. Par ailleurs les management des musées et centre qui constituent des organisations plus importantes, n’est pas habituellement soupçonné de pervertir l’art du fait des contraintes économiques qui s’exerceraient sur ces institutions’ (Chiapello, 1998: p. 66, footnote 3). This is in fact a naive argument if we consider the way in which many art institutions were gradually subsumed into the capitalist system.

²⁰Some criticism has been made about the book, especially in relation to the sample of management texts used by the authors, which are considered relatively small for the purpose required, at the same time as they fail to distinguish between local and translated works. But the main criticism is precisely the absence of a comparative dimension that could be found outside France given the internationalisation of the themes discussed about capitalism – for example, deregulation of finance, flexibilisation of production, globalisation of trade and investment. See Budgen (2000: pp.149-156).

from which the Situationist International critique of capitalist consumption flourished in France, differs substantially from the atmosphere in which the ‘aesthetics of administration’ took place – even if the resentment against capitalist structures was something those artistic movements shared. The Situationist International critique of capitalist consumption was triggered by a strong political commitment, indeed an ultra-left political stance, whereas conceptual artists sought to use the specificities of linguistic and managerial potentialities outside the traditional barriers of art institutions with contradictory outcomes to their artistic condition.

These contradictions are explored by curator Helen Molesworth for whom the ‘dematerialization of the object’ should be understood as a new relationship between the artist and the artwork. Molesworth’s understanding of artists’ proximity to management in the American context is more pragmatic and less critical than Alberro’s or Buchloh’s points of view. It perceives the artists’ interest in the managerial as a predictable corollary of the information age. Instead of exploring the 1960s art practices in terms of categories, Molesworth focuses on the changing conditions of the artists’ work whose tendency was to adopt intangible processes over manual production. As Molesworth notices:

Just as artists relinquished traditional artistic skills and the production of discrete art objects, the status of labor and the production of goods in the culture at large were also changing profoundly as the American industrial economy, based in manufacturing, shifted to a postindustrial economy rooted in managerial and service labor. The concern with artistic labor manifested itself in implicit and explicit ways as much of the advanced art of the period managed, staged, mimicked, ridiculed, and challenged the cultural and societal anxieties around the shifting terrain and definitions of work (Molesworth, 2003: p. 25).

This means that artists were fully aware of the changes brought about by the growing corporatisation of American society, which forced them to redefine themselves as artists and their work. For Molesworth, more than any other group in the 1960s, conceptual artists behaved like managers producing charts and diagrams, replicating the logic of managerial labour often relegating the production of their work to others. Artist Sol LeWitt took this stand when he asserted that planning and decisions are made beforehand while the execution of the artwork is merely automatic (LeWitt, 1967: pp.79-83) or John Baldessari when he ‘commissioned paintings’ from Sunday painters.

He asked them to faithfully represent banal snapshots of a friend pointing at objects in a domestic and/or studio space (Molesworth, 2003: p. 43).

Contrary to Buchloh or Alberro, Molesworth abstained from a harsh critique of the commodities generated by the aesthetics of the administration. It becomes clear that she avoids this less positive side of conceptual practices. However, Molesworth does not deny this reality; rather she sees it as a natural transformation intrinsic to the artistic practices of that time. Her analysis slightly focuses on the overlap between post-Fordist working conditions and new modes of artistic production. But contrasting with Chiapello, Molesworth does it from the perspective of someone that comes from the field of art, and for whom the proximity to managerial abilities is comprehensible within other contemporaneous changes, such as the questioning of what is an author proposed by Barthes and Foucault. Indeed, instead of the aesthetics of administration, the questioning around the author and the newly central place of the viewer instigated by participatory performances take centre stage in Molesworth's analysis. In doing so, she aims to reveal the other side of conceptual art, the one that negates the logic of art as commodity by providing an experience for an audience. An example of this, according to Molesworth, is Allan Kaprow's staged event called *Fluids* (1967), which consisted of voluntary participants building a wall of large ice bricks in Southern California, and after its completion it involved watching the results of their labour melting. In this sense, *Fluids* offered a 'highly staged version of useless work, questioning the labour of the artist and the leisure of the spectator by virtue of its method of fabrication' (Molesworth, 2003: P.44).

The most important consideration we take from these different readings is that the plurality of artistic practices in the 1960s functions as a counterpoint to strict expressions like the 'aesthetics of administration that seek to define artistic tendencies. Conceptual artists, even those epitomised as 'managers' such as Hans Haacke, responded in many ways to post-Fordist society changes, which makes Buchloh's expression somehow reductive. In this regard, EAT is also an example of this plurality, of how artists adopted a contradictory position which was at times impossible to categorise. As a group, EAT epitomises a proximity to the corporate world, more directed to technology and its working conditions. In spite of that, in the individual career of two of its members, we can find respectively, modernist and conceptual characteristics beyond corporate collaboration, namely in Rauschenberg's diversified work, and in Whitman's multifaceted theater performances. As we know today, after

many texts written about conceptual art, including those of Alberro and Buchloh, the managerial tendency of conceptualism would become a catalyst for subsequent practices. Its interiorisation by critical artistic practices would lead to what we now call Institutional Critique, the ongoing questioning of the role of art institutions from an artist's perspective since the mid-1980s within the binary logic of the inside/outside. The canonical introduction of this category took explicit yet different directions with another generation of artists examining museological representation and criticising its association with colonialism and economic power.²¹

As mentioned in Chapter One, the term 'portfolio manager' proposed by Feher is a rather interesting term that somehow can describe artists' tendencies since the 1960s for management/administrative activities. To a certain extent, the term portfolio manager can also be attributed to the current self-institutionalised artist that somehow deals with and critiques the institution from inside. However, the motives that led artists in the 1960s to want to be managers, at least momentarily, are entirely different from the current motivations that lead artists to want to engage with corporate language and workplaces. Most certainly, it also has to do with the internal changes of corporate management. In the following sections, I will address these changes by beginning to look more contextually to the performative in management writing. I consider this to be the first stage of a performative experience that will succeed in the speech of corporate consultants, entrepreneurs and managers. There is a degree of prescriptiveness and amusement in the way management authors interrelate with their readers and audiences. This and other linguistic tendencies will be gradually and ironically unveiled by artists in subsequent chapters.

²¹The artists of the so-called second generation of Institutional Critique included Andrea Fraser, Christian Philipp Müller, Fred Wilson, or Renee Green.

Chapter Four - The performative in management writing

Like musicians in a jam session, a group of businesspeople can take an idea, challenge one another's imagination and produce an entirely new set of possibilities.

John Kao, *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business creativity*, 1997

4.1. Differences and resemblances of performative writings

4.1.1. Management and visuals arts

Power serves writing, even if temporarily. This idea that traverses Derrida's entire work is perfect to define the writing of management authors in the 1990s, whose vocabulary is prescriptive and performative. These characteristics are visible both in terms of structure and content, and mainly accomplished by practicing stylistic strategies of writing.

The performative in management texts might be viewed with suspicion for the reason that performative writing is normally attributed to a form of writing that takes as its main object a piece of art, whether in visual arts, music or theater. This type of writing emerges from linguistic performative utterances but it aims to defy literary conventions through critical theory often related with themes, such as feminism, memory and trauma. For art theorist Peggy Phelan, writing is itself a form of performance, and performance an ephemeral experience fated to disappear. This inner side of performance is examined by Phelan in the work, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* from 1993, associated with the politics of invisibility, loss and death, to processes of embodiment meant to fade away literally and metaphorically. In an interview in 2003, Phelan agreed that the work could be read as psychoanalytical text, but it is also about the way to resist the relentless materialistic enterprise of capitalism and the commodity of culture (Phelan, 2003: p. 294). As such, performative writing seems to be strictly related to artistic and political motivations, while its theoretical essence seems to be in opposition to the performative in management texts.

Notwithstanding the incompatible points in terms of thematics, the structure of writing, any type of writing, comprises stylistic strategies that can turn the performative beyond a restricted field into other cross-disciplinary dialogues. The act of writing then becomes a piece of work open to investigation about the strategies that authors develop in response to the problems of their own fields of expertise. Performative writing arises from performative utterances, sentences which not only describe a given reality, but also may change the social reality they are describing. Management writing induces the behaviours of individuals and eventually alters the environment of corporations. In this sense, it is a type of writing that ‘speaks’ performatively, enacting (but not always) what it describes.

Another important aspect is that performative writing requires an active form of reading. This is achieved in management writing by resorting to stylistic devices such as metaphor and hypophora (the author makes questions and promptly replies to them) in order to create a strong bond with the reader. Phelan describes performative writing as ‘solicitous of affect even while it is nervous and tentative about the consequences of that solicitation’ (Phelan, 1997: pp.11-12), a way to ‘inquiry into the limits and possibilities of the intersections between speech and writing’ (Phelan, 1998: pp. 12-13). Certainly, Phelan’s statement is brought within her own sphere of interests with contrasting themes of management writing. However, to a certain extent, we can find a parallel in the intention of unfolding through writing the embodiment of particular characters. In the essay *The Ends of Performance* (1998), this is patent in the way Phelan presents herself in multiple characters or different selves in conflict with one another. For instance, ‘Peggy, the worrier’ would prefer to organise an anthology than a conference about performance studies: ‘Are you crazy? If you have time to burn, why not edit an anthology?’; ‘Peggy, the querulous’ is insistent that Peggy live up to the ideals she preaches to her students: ‘Books, Books, Books. Yes, you are a writer, but the fact is that you have been teaching for a long time’ (Phelan, 1998: p. 2), and so on.

This multi-positional writing that aims to empower and encourage students in the field of performance studies finds an equivalent in the structure of management writing, namely in stylistic strategies that allow the construction of imaginary dialogues and describe the emergence of exceptional individuals – a model of corporate *persona* spreading into the public sphere. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the motivations from which performative writing is thought of and constructed. Therefore, despite the

linguistic resemblances in terms of structure, management writing does not question the authority of language, rather it performs the authority through language.

4.2. Changes in management writing

4.2.1. The transformation of firms

I focus now on the differences between management texts of the 1960s and the 1990s. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, the second spirit of capitalism finds its most natural expression in management literature – the first management texts resources from 1959 to 1969, and the second from 1989 to 1994.²² The literature of each period deals with the transformation of firms and the question of *cadres* (manager, executive director). In the words of the authors, ‘for each of the periods under consideration, it is possible to bring out an archetypal image of what was recommended to firms as regards the type of *cadres* to employ, the way they should ideally be treated, and the kind of work that might appropriately be asked of them’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p. 60) – a moral tone that Boltanski and Chiapello criticised but perceived as being necessary to counterbalance the purely technical side of how to obtain profit. A point in common in management literature of both periods is that profit is not exclusively perceived as an inspiring goal. Although with some variations, there is a persistent concern in the two periods to encourage the personality of *cadres*, or his substitute as we shall see, beyond mere profit. However, at the same time, such literature has registered changes within capitalism and/or a new tendency towards other representations of the ‘capitalist spirit’. Following those changes, Boltanski and Chiapello unveil striking differences in management texts of the 1960s and 1990s.

The first of those differences has to do precisely with the question of motivating the elite of *cadres*, their aspiration, discontent and engagement within firms. Whereas in the 1960s, this turned out to be a major concern for the majority of management authors, particularly in relation to the size of firms or corporations, in the 1990s, the question of how to engage *cadres* was just one more example of many other problems which involved all employees. In the reading of Boltanski and Chiapello, management texts of the 1960s criticise the familial line of capitalism among employers; this was due because they rejected the favouritism of the private and the professional that somehow could compromise the objectivity of the management process as a whole. Moreover, the

²²It is worth mentioning that the starting point of management literature coincided, at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the work of two seminal figures: F. H. Fayol (1841-1925) and American F.W. Taylor (1856-1915). It coincided also with the birth of the discipline of ‘management’ and the emergence of a new social body of salaried managers and administrators. See Boltanski and Chiapello, (2005: p. 59).

1960s management project intended the emancipation of *cadres* and the reduction of bureaucracy that emerged from a growing integration of larger firms. However, the emancipation of *cadres* seemed hard to obtain in a context where hierarchical processes were still too much entrenched (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: pp. 64-68). The struggle against the bureaucracy that characterised professional hierarchies appears to continue in the 1990s management texts, but according to Boltanski and Chiapello, depending on the angle they are considered from, the questions posed by management authors in the 1990s are simultaneously different and identical. They are identical in the critique of bureaucracy, but they differ in relation to the new themes proposed. For management authors in the 1990s, themes such as innovation, creativity, and pressure on competition became central, at the same time as hierarchical modes of organisation began to be rejected. The reasons invoked to justify this anti-hierarchical feeling had to do with the refusal of ‘dominant-dominated’ strict relationships in firms (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: pp. 69-70).

Another difference between the 1960s and 1990s texts relates with contrasting levels of economic development in the world. Management authors in the 1960s schematically divided the world in two parts: on the one side Western Europe and the United States (the free capitalist world), and on the other side the socialist countries – an expected division coinciding with the cold-war period. With the changes brought by globalisation, the 1990s inevitably witnessed the emergence of new protagonists in the partaking of the world’s economy. As observed by Boltanski and Chiapello, the old capitalist countries would confront the emergence of a third capitalist pole in Asia (Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and finally China) and later on Latin America that rapidly entered into the North American market.

Finally, the most striking difference between the management corpora of the two periods is the way the position of *cadres* is regarded. In order to discard the hierachal modes of organisation implemented in the 1960s, management authors in the 1990s automatically reject the position of *cadres*, which are seen as agents of the very bureaucracies that are to be dismantled. As observed, ‘Under a set of reforms of the 1990s, the term *cadre* is equivalent to hierarchy, whose rigidity impedes the development of the management sector’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p. 76). This does not mean that *cadres* will disappear from the context of firms; on the contrary, it means that the figure of *cadre* has lost his status of manager/supervisor achieved in the 1960s as he became commonplace in the managerial universe of the 1990s, a ‘mere’

subordinate employee, an accountant or a technician. Consequently, the French term *cadre* is gradually replaced by the term *manager* during the 1980s, referring to those types of individuals who have the aptitude for leading a team, and above all, know how to adapt to global changes (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p. 77).

Boltanski and Chiapello understand management literature in the 1990s on two levels: as a source of new themes and recommendations to new corporate protagonists of how to enhance the development of firms, and as the source of a new moral tone by defending what *should be* and not *what is*. This leads the authors to question the realism of management literature and how believable it is when it comes to evaluate what really happens in firms: ‘They (management authors) select the cases employed according to their demonstrative power and take from reality only such of its aspects as confirm the orientation to which they wish to give some impetus’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p. 58). However, Boltanski’s and Chiapello’s study seems to ignore the effects of this neo-management vocabulary. For sure, they identify a prescriptive tone in it, but precisely because of this prescriptiveness, they fail to see its extensiveness outside the framework of firms. I shall return to this matter at the end of this section after examining the particularities of management writing techniques.

4.2.2. The grammar of persuasion

In my view, management authors in the 1990s already show a performative intent in two intertwined aspects: firstly, in the way they elaborate the themes discussed in the texts through a specific type of vocabulary, and secondly, in the description of exceptional persons on whose creative vision firms, groups, and individuals can now be inspired. A part of the vocabulary exercised by management authors is descriptive material that results from empirical observation in the workplace of the corporation in study. However, another part of the vocabulary is based on hypothetical formulations in the format of a guiding manual which may be followed or not by corporations, conferring to the writing a lively and inventive characteristic oftentimes based on metaphors. It is precisely in this apparent ‘fiction’ constructed from a partial reality which better suits the authors to reveal that the performative side of corporate vocabulary emerges. This aspect is of importance to consider as we shall now see.

Management vocabulary of the 1990s is based on high expectations for the development of firms, and most importantly, for certain qualities of individuals. Despite the authors having different opinions on how to manage the expansion of firms, they

share a number of aspects and concepts. One aspect in common is the manifestation of an individual that better embodies the alterations of the corporate sector. Management authors put too much emphasis on the character of this individual whom everyone should recognise and trust to confront new challenges, and whose vision of leadership has the capacity to anticipate the need for change. In a certain sense, this individual is a model for the common good of human beings to be able to find themselves personally, a path of self-knowledge and self-improvement.

The work of American management author Rosabeth Moss Kanter on change management follows a linear line of thinking when it comes to analyse the behaviour of this type of individuals. This begins in Moss Kanter's (1993) bestseller *Men and Women of the Corporation* originally published in 1977, where she introduces the concept of empowerment for which she has ever since been best known, and it continues in subsequent publication, *When Giants Learn to Dance* (1989). At the base of Moss Kanter's proposal is the idea that a corporation is most productive when all its employees are empowered to make decisions on their own. The old hierarchical system of control gradually ceased to function in the horizontal network model where individuals are freely reorganised as teams. In this model, where competitive pressures are forcing corporations to adopt flexible strategies and structures, individuals need to rely on their own capacities, resources, skills, and to develop self-control if they aspire to make a difference in the corporate setting. Women were particularly in need of this type of empowerment because they have traditionally been assigned low-status jobs (Kanter, 1993) – a condition that Kanter aimed to change with the contribution of her own work.

These are the main guiding principles of the concept of empowerment proposed by Moss Kanter. However, she does not apply this concept solely to employees; she has been extending it to the idea of leadership and to the qualities that a leader will need to develop to inspire staff going forward. In so doing, Kanter inevitably establishes a difference between the role of (old) managers, whose authority used to come from hierarchical position, and a new conception of the leader, which might also be the expert or the project-head:

Leaders in the new organization do not lack motivational tools, but the tools are different from those of traditional corporate bureaucrats. The new rewards are based not on status but on contribution, and they consist not regular promotion and automatic pay raises but of excitement about mission...The old bases of managerial authority are eroding, and new

tools of leadership are taking their place. Managers whose power derived from hierarchy and who were accustomed to a limited area of personal control are learning to shift their perspectives and widen their horizons (Moss Kanter, 1991: pp. 68-69).

Moss Kanter names these emerging practices that challenge the old power of managers as ‘postentrepreneurial’ because they involve the application of entrepreneurial principals such as creativity, and they also include successive cross-functional projects and strategic partnerships with suppliers or customers. The manager does not necessarily disappear as a professional person in the compound postentrepreneurial corporation. However, managers need to restructure their position, title, and authority in a world where subordinates are encouraged to think for themselves and where managers have to work in network with other departments and even other companies. Ultimately, managers must be able to convert themselves into new entrepreneurs and leaders (Kanter, 1991: p. 62).

Other management authors, such as Aubrey C. Daniels, Bob Aubrey and Tom Peters share Moss Kanter’s interest in the adaptability of human behaviour to novel challenges and positions in corporate management. With the impossibility of examining their works in detail, let me note that they have in common at least three major themes/objectives: 1) the inevitable restructuring of corporate management, 2) the fostering of innovation and creativity, 3) and the recognition of empowered people with a new level of skills, or as Boltanski and Chiapello would say, the emergence of ‘exceptional beings’. According to them, management texts in the 1990s are filled with these individuals constantly educating themselves, with a capacity for self-organization and working with different people (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p. 91). The works of management authors function as practical guides with a set of rules to help people to achieve better results and to build the capacity for competitive improvement. This type of guidance, usually made known as tactics or techniques in management vocabulary, has specific readers in mind: entrepreneurs, managers and leaders.

In fact, these works are more similar between each other in terms of content and strategies of writing than we imagine. If we look at the titles of some of the publications, for example, *The Pursuit of WOW!* (1994) and *The Circle of Innovation: You Can't Shrink Your Way to Greatness* (1997) written by Tom Peters, and *Parties with a Purpose* (1992), *Management by Common Sense Is Not Management At All* (1994), and more recently *Oops! 13 Management Practices that Waste Time and Money*

(2012) written by Aubrey C. Daniels, it is obvious that the use of stylistic and rhetorical devices of writing aim to call the attention of the readers – an aspect that becomes even more evident in the eloquence of the discourse.

One stylistic device is the use of the exclamation mark normally applied when we wish to make a strong and lively statement, which at the end of the sentence may indicate some sort of bewilderment or surprise. American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald often stated that to use an exclamation point is ‘like laughing at your own jokes’. Whether or not we agree with this statement, in the case of management, authors intend to use confident and optimistic writing as a marker of friendly interaction, sometimes in a cynical way.

Another strategic device is the rhetorical side of the writing, often metaphorical and at times not literal, which corresponds to vocabulary based on hypothetical formulations. The use of a metaphor implies that a comparison is being made between two realities or concepts; the pure metaphor is one that exists with no connection to the real, whereas the simple metaphor is one that establishes a connection between two levels, the real and the allegorical. Management authors usually use both categories of metaphor as a way to transcend the meaning of the words. For example, Moss Kanter, in her book *When Giants Learn to Dance*, compares the world of management to the Olympic Games under the slogan ‘competing in the corporate Olympics’:

The global economy in which American business now operates is like a corporate Olympics – a series of games played all over the world with international as well domestic competitors. The Olympic contests determine not just which business team wins but which nation wins overall. Furthermore, in such combination of games, a team’s members may compete as individuals in some aspects but compete as a team in others. Collaboration thus plays a role (Moss Kanter, 1989: p.18).

Clearly, the basis of comparison that connects both worlds is the term competition. But competition loses all its significance if it is too focused on individual performance. The usefulness of these analogies became clear to Moss Kanter when she was trying to help an executive in a large communications corporation understand why he was getting negative performance ratings despite his apparent competence. The problem detected by Moss Kanter was that individual quality or excellence at the workplace is not enough. Accordingly, in the restructured corporation in continuous transformation where nothing remains stable for very long, there is a greater responsibility for the

performance of the whole team. As such, the new players in the corporate Olympics should be able to deal with constant change and with a strategic imperative that appears to be paradoxical: to do more with less' (Moss Kanter, 1989: p.22).

Even so, Moss Kanter's writing is more conventional and contained in terms of its expressiveness when compared to Peters' writing, where management vocabulary is taken to another level of unconventionality. In the book *The Circle of Innovation: You Can't Shrink Your Way to Greatness*, Peters constructs an eccentric and playful text with the help of graphics, images and signs. He became a bestselling author in the field of management due to his writing skills typified by short sentences, the use of a number of technical devices, and imaginary dialogues in a teasing mode very similar to what a salesman would do if he needed to captivate the client's attention. A language device frequently used by Peters is the *hypophora*, in which the author raises a question and then answers it:

How do you include innovation?
Simple: Decentralize!
What's the problem with decentralization?
It almost never works.
What's the solution?
Don't decentralize. Destroy! (Peters, 1997: p.35).

The type of layout employed in the book, filled with quotes and capital letters, intends to create a dynamic effect in the written text:

This book is five years...and roughly 400 seminars...in the making. It's about one B-I-G- idea: innovation/a 'top line' obsession. And it's about 15 discrete/b-i-g-g-i-s-h ideas... each of which is a stop on our Circle of Innovation (Peters, 1997: p. xvi).

When I began working as a management consultant at McKinsey & Co. in 1974, 'we' (the professional service people – accounts, consultants, ad agency denizens) were considered the PARASITES... living off the sweat of real people's brows. Times have changed. And how! The nerds have won! (Peters, 1997: p.8).

In a teasing mode of interrelating with the reader, Peters plays with his own condition of 'frustrated' consultant at the same time as he recognises the ambivalent facet of corporate management. However, his cynical awareness and stylistic skills are

more in debt to his capacity of responding to the objectives proposed – to reach the maximum public for example – rather than to a true ability for writing.

In these works, the stylistic strategy often loses its lively feature in the dryness of the content. The main themes follow one another with a tendency for repetition of ‘how to renovate active decision making’, ‘how to optimize performance’, ‘how to foster innovation and creativity’, ‘how to nurture leaders’, and so on. The small variations that may occur in this *know-how* are suggested by personal opinions that each author chooses to introduce according to their professional activity. For instance, the type of vocabulary used by Peters is attributed to the so-called consultant gurus, independent advisors and commentators that are not necessarily academic gurus like Moss Kanter. But, in reality, the boundaries between these designations are very tenuous.²³

First and foremost, what is noteworthy about these texts is the regulatory tone of the vocabulary, thus contributing to a homogeneous format of its structure and content. These texts include guidance proposals for corporations, and above all, they reveal ideals based on normative rules targeting corporate individuals. This type of performative writing, as we shall see, finds echo in the speeches taking place in some corporations. However, the recent wave of motivational talks, in which people share professional experiences, inspiring statements, and ways of living, take to another level the language of management texts. In other words, the ideas that were thought to be expressed for the corporate workplace rapidly spread outside to public conferences. Good examples of the embodiment of this change are management consultants John Kao and Daved Barry, whose main objective is to inspire others with their ideas and relating them with other spheres, authors that I shall discuss further in the following sections.

This is perhaps the biggest fault of Boltanski and Chiapello, to be exact they seem to overlook the rising of a particular model of ‘persona’ through specific techniques of language. This is not to say that Boltanski and Chiapello fail to see the emergence of exceptional individuals, rather they seem to disregard the versatility of language techniques as a form of control in the governance of conduct regardless of being inside firms or not. Certainly, our critique can be seen as highly demanding given that we have the benefit of a temporal distance that Boltanski and Chiapello did not have when they wrote the book. In fact, at some point, they recognise that the 1990s texts are associated

²³Management theory identifies three types of gurus: academic gurus, consultant gurus, and hero managers.

with a nascent spirit of capitalism, which had not yet received its most bracing materialisation when they were written in the 1990s (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p. 94). This is quite true concerning the tendency to turn the world of corporations more human. Boltanski and Chiapello notice that the neo-management discrediting of bureaucracy and alienation at work gradually led to the valorisation of the human factor as modus operandi. In so doing, management authors' guidance opened the path for new risks of exploitation; because people are 'expected to give themselves to their work, this facilitates the instrumentalisation of human beings in their most specifically human dimensions' (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005: p. 98.)

In this sense, it can be said that the major contribution of 1990s management texts was to create the necessary mechanisms for new enterprise subjects to rise, individuals that seem to accept more easily the challenging conditions created for them. On the other hand, the presence of the human factor in corporations was already defended by management authors in the 1960s, which somehow weakens the differences pointed out by Boltanski and Chiapello between the two management periods, at least in relation to this matter. Still, it seems that the renewed input given by management writers in the 1990s increased interest in the human side of the corporation. Since then, seminal texts of the 1960s, such as those of Douglas McGregor, have been revisited and reinstated in the past decade by a sector of management that defends distributed leadership and employee/customer commitment (Heil, Bennis and Stephens, 2000). More recently, Ross (2004) gave a critical insight against this human component at corporate workplaces based on his experience in two prominent new media companies located at Silicon Alley in New York, where he found a deceiving sense of belonging and freedom, a topic that I shall explore further in chapter Four. For now, I shall continue to look at a management way of thinking and appropriating artistic processes.

4.3. The imperative to perform creativity: John Kao's *Jamming*

4.3.1. 'Management as art'

I focus here on a key publication that to some extent is a preceding sign of a managerial way of looking to art to improve creativity. The book, *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity* (1997), written by consultant and business professor John Kao must be included in the same category of bestseller management books examined in the previous section through which the guiding principles proposed were generally conceived with corporate readers in mind. Similar to the previous authors, Kao's intention is to pursue the empowerment of individuals within corporate management, in particular to nurture the know-how of innovation, the capacity of managers to stimulate creativity in their employees, the impact of information technology on creativity, and so on. The same method is maintained in relation to the resourcing of metaphors as a way to compare realities or concepts. However, contrary to Moss Kanter, whose predictable comparison between the world of management and the Olympic Games founded on competition did not raise surprise, Kao brings up a singular metaphor for understanding the grammar of creativity. He uses the techniques of jazz improvisation to explore the creative side of business. Despite the focus on music rather than visual arts, this already indicates a different type of mindset, one that perceives management as a form of art rather than a science, and uses artistic processes to corroborate this idea. Two questions are essential to begin with: what circumstances do the corporation and their teams need for the creative process to take place, and in what way can the 'jamming' metaphor make that process more understandable and mutually achievable?

The motto 'The age of creativity' is the title that Kao gives to the first chapter of his book. A former pianist, he defines creativity as the entire process by which ideas are generated, developed and transformed into value (currency and meaning). For Kao, in this new era, companies should compete not only for technology, but also for creative people and the valuable ideas they produce:

The business world is already launched on a new quest. The ancient pursuit – for capital, for raw materials, for process technology – remains eternal. But now business seeks a new

advantage – delicate and dangerous, and absolutely vital – the creativity advantage (Kao, 1997: p. xiv).

Kao's general definition of creativity as a catalyst between knowledge and value emerges within a context of unprecedented changes in management, in which the majority of authors see creativity as an organisational necessity, but these professionals fail to address it properly. The truth is that, for Kao, in many business people's lexicon, creativity is equivalent with 'nice' and 'easiness'. However, managing creativity is difficult, it is necessary to explore the nature and sources of the creative act, meaning to find a place for people to contend and collaborate (Kao, 1997: p. xvii).

Kao contends that creativity represents a powerful form of competitive advantage, one that entrepreneurs, leaders and managers must learn to leverage if they want to achieve their professional goals. Thus, in his view, the discipline of fostering and developing those creative ideas is an aspect that corporations need to take seriously every day in order for the company to flourish as well. To encourage corporations to begin moving towards creativity, Kao recommends systematic procedures for a continuing cultivation of the company's resources. One of those procedures is the establishing of an audit to help to bring the creative process into the mainstream of management thinking. 'Creativity needs to be examined as a system, not as isolated initiatives', says Kao, 'done properly the audit can lead to a complete revolution in how creativity is conceived and implemented' (Kao, 1997: p.173). As a current process of scrutiny in corporations, the audit consists of an evaluation that targets specific areas of the corporations, such as creative capital, creative design and creative finance. Much of Kao's book clearly explains the importance of investing energy in these areas and prescribes methods for taking action. One of the chapters concentrates, for example, on the importance of environmental design in promoting creative interactions among people.

His writing follows the same colloquial tone of what he preaches. This is particularly visible in the epilogue of the book, 'The creativity toolkit: A Guidebook for Monday Morning', a guide orientated towards each stage of the discipline of creativity. What follows is a series of questions and pieces of advice to help to define the creative problem, the framework from which the creative process unfolds:

Activate the imagination. The imagination is like a muscle: it strengthens through use. And nothing uses it better than looking

into the future, say 25 years from now, as a way of forcing your thinking beyond the domain of what you know. Design a 2020 Ford Taurus. Draw the Manhattan skyline (Kao, 1997: p. 166).

Use theatrical gestures. A startling or vivid gesture can clear and turbocharge the group mind, whether it be a new location, activity or expectation, metaphor or combination of people. Send your team off to a cabin in the woods. Or to Formula 1 Racing School (Kao, 1997: p. 169).

Work from the bottom up. More connection between corporate levels is essential in a creative company. The hierarchy needs to evolve into a network, the organization into a band-stand. Universally accessible online systems or voicemail can provide ways of communicating that ignore conventional hierarchies (Kao, 1997: p.172).

Track variables. Yves Dubriel of Renault tracks the quantity of ideas generated by his teams as a proxy for the performance of those teams. What are your tracking methods? (1997: p. 175).

Increase the quantity of information. When Lou Gerstner took over IBM, he ordered 50,000 subscriptions to *Wired* magazine – to get his executives in tune with the new information technology culture (Kao, 1997: p. 178).

Get fresh viewpoints. Input from different perspectives shouldn't come just from a board of directors, but also from advisers and a range of "friends of the company" (Kao, 1997: p. 178).

To accomplish these and other goals, Kao advises leaders and management teams to learn from the practices of freestyle jazz improvisation, or 'jamming'.²⁴ Depending upon the players and the professional conditions in which they find themselves, the exercise of jamming will permit a different result each time it is experienced; it is an exercise adaptable to changing conditions. In jamming terms, this means 'picking the tune, its key, and its tempo then setting the agenda – when to start, and when to end. Next, there's the arrangement – figuring out what combination of instruments will produce the best sound' (Kao, 1997: p.168). Overall, when applied to the corporation's environment, this means to destabilise conventional methods, to rebuild the internal

²⁴A jam session associated to jazz is a process in which musicians play (i.e. 'jam') by improvising without extensive preparation or predefined arrangements.

organisation from long-established procedures to new structures around projects and ideas. Kao gives as an example of the radical changes operated by Oticon:²⁵

Lars Kolind orchestrated the change process at Oticon as a series of conversations that took place at company meetings [...] He practices the art of stage management by linking Oticon's change process to larger issues of the day, for example by getting government support and media attention for Oticon as a twenty-first century organization (Kao, 1997: p. 195).

These changes also included the elimination of all reporting relationships, job descriptions and traditional accountability structures. Ultimately, Kolind empowered those who were the most active persons in the company to drive the change process. 'These were the people who had consistently taken responsibility for making things happen that affected the welfare of the organization as a whole' (Kao, 1997: p. 95). Essentially these doers were given full permission to pursue objectives according to the interests of the company and the way they understood the market. Paradoxically, sometimes this implies to hiring people that do not fit in the pattern of the corporation, people who break entirely with the prototype by virtue of their style or expertise.

Another important component of jamming improvisation as a process, according to Kao, is that creativity is not dependent on the mood of the day. In jazz terms, this means that being creative is the vocation of the musicians, thus a potential vocation of individuals as well. Therefore, to adopt the practices of jamming will definitely facilitate the conception of an environment where potential creators can do their work. This involves, among other things, mapping a process to understand where creativity really happens, what stimulates it and how it evolves. The role of leaders is fundamental in this process. For Kao, the tone of an organisation comes from its leaders; if self-confidence and the ability to inspire self-confidence in employees do not exist in the leader, chances are they will not exist in the corporation either. The goal must be then to reinforce the position of the leader in the corporation as an agent of change, to redefine competition and in so doing to achieve growth through creativity (Kao, 1997: pp. 191-193).

As mentioned in the former section, management writing is indeed the first stage of a performative experience that will succeed in discourse. With the broadening of

²⁵Oticon was founded in 1904 in Denmark and is the world's second largest hearing manufacturer with branches in various countries.

network platforms and video-sharing websites (youtube, vimeo), the dissemination of the corporate message has become more effective. In this regard, the revival of motivation is perfectly embodied by Kao. Over the past decade he has been promoting his ideas on creativity through TED talks, a conference model usually organised by business universities, public and private foundations under the slogans ‘ideas worth spreading’ or ‘better life coaches’. Events such as the Global Wellness Summit are included in this new format of meeting, following the successful model of the World Economic Forum in Davos. These slogans suggest that there is a demand for a certain character to take shape and materialise through rhetorical corporate discourse. It is a type of speech that wishes to influence, induce self-confidence and inspire people to discover what they are capable of achieving.

One can say that Kao’s perception of creativity is coincident with a postmodern attitude in which being creative is a natural aspect of the person’s character, contrary to early modernist principles when creativity was still associated with a romantic idea of the creative genius. Within a postmodernist perspective the artist/individual is more of a potential vehicle from which creativity emanates rather than a genius continuously illuminated by the spirit of creative inspiration. By using the metaphor of jamming, Kao stimulates an unpredictable facet which is not usually associated with the conventional world of corporations. However, in the framework of Kao’s proposal, creativity is not totally free of regulation. What Kao proposes is a business of creativity, a disciplinary way of managing creativity collectively in a systematic fashion to obtain results and to solve problems. From his perspective leaders and managers must make creativity an imperative of the corporation’s culture, which means to follow a series of rules to define specific goals, and then communicate them throughout a process of organisation along with the belief in their achievability. There is also a sense of measurement that runs throughout the way creativity should be stimulated in corporate terms. Creativity is not a product in a conventional sense (Kao, 1997: p.174), and yet in the majority of corporations creativity is measurable using a number of objective criteria.

After scrutinising a type of management vocabulary whose prescriptive tone reclaims the effectiveness of empowered self-performativity as a renewed attitude in the corporate field, a question must be left here for subsequent analysis in Chapter Eight: To what extent is creativity as a valuable tool in corporate management coincident with an artistic view of the creative process?

We have seen that the empowerment of individuals within corporate management is nurtured by the idea that management is also a form of art, and creativity the ideal tool to achieve the best results. Since the early 2000s, this conviction has been reinforced in a number of business and management publications that evoke art as a potentially comparable field, intrinsically flexible and collaborative. The next chapter looks at this tendency.

Chapter Five - The corporate workplace: A new model meaning

If you (APG) are doing what I think you are doing, I wouldn't advise my company to have anything to do with you. And if you aren't, you're not worth taking into account anyway.

IBM official statement about APG's placements in 1960s

Art is now seen not only as an object of pleasure, however, also as a new alternative asset class with interesting business opportunities.

Deloitte's advertisement in Luxembourg office, 2015

5.1. The artist as model

5.1.1. The valorisation of artistic qualities

At the basis of this tendency is the belief that artistic qualities generate new ideas and forms of communication useful for corporations, sharing similar concepts and techniques with corporate management. This is evident in a series of business articles, management books and reports that make the association clear. The publication *Artful Making: What Managers Need to Know About How Artists Work* (2003), a collaboration between business school professor Robert Austin and theatre director Lee Devin, functions as a guidebook for managers to understand how artists in the field of performing arts have become skilled in innovation and handling the pressures of deadlines and limited budgets. The authors aim to contradict the idea that art-based processes are not entirely reliable given their casual approaches, which might be seen as immature, a recurrent misconception in the traditional business field. The term 'artful-making' refers to the way artists are able to structure their work conceptually, how they manage to use ideas as their main technology for work planning, a process that the

authors call ‘cheap and rapid iteration’ (Austin and Devin, 2003: pp. xxii-xxvi). Another publication, *Artful Creation: Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business* (2004), describe how the arts represent a huge potential for the development of corporate strategies. In *The Art of Business: Make All Your Work a Work of Art* (2005), the authors Stan Davis and David McIntosh propose to approach work in general as a work of art, emphasising that to apply artistic sensibility to business will in fact improve performance and profitability. Published in 2008, *The Sage Handbook of New Approaches in Management and Organization* edited by Daved Barry and Hans Hansen gives cross-disciplinary insights about the new trends of management. It was precisely when they were in Portugal that many of the ideas about the edition were discussed and shaped. The objective was to bring wide-ranging theories that would generate associations between fields, a type of ‘patchwork’ or a ‘rhizomatic mixture’. This consists of full chapters and short notes called snapshots about themes that eventually will be important to discuss and to practice in a near future (Barry and Hansen, 2008: pp. 4-9) A great part of these themes relate to the way corporations are thought and experienced mostly from business and management perspective. Also, a series of reports, such as *The Value of Arts-Based Initiatives: How to Combat Recession* (2009), and *Managing artistic interventions in organizations: A comparative study of programmes in Europe* (2011) statistically present the way artistic processes may contribute to enhanced corporative methods in the workplace.

Some of these publications are advantageous in providing a general overview of the growing investment of corporations in art. This investment can be interpreted in terms of effort, interest, and time. The use of reports, mostly made in the contexts of academia and corporations, already shows that corporate management attention on the arts has been transformed into a form of mutual evaluation of how to get the most out of possible artistic collaboration. The majority of these reports are developed under European consultancies and programmes, and the people behind them usually operate as intermediaries bridging the corporate world and the arts. The reports are the result of shared experiential learning techniques with the aim to empower people and organisations to be innovative, to improvise and to take risks. In the introduction of one of those reports, we can read the following:

The challenges businesses are facing today are around human capital (team working, managing change, retaining talent, helping staff to reflect on the situation, see things differently and become engaged), innovating

to get out of the downturn and transformation. Who are the experts at solving these challenges and generating these effects? The answer is the arts. The skillset of the arts sector is just some of the skills a business needs in order to combat the recession [...] Arts-Based Initiatives (ABIs) are another way in which businesses can generate value from existing relationships with the arts, as well as an opportunity to establish new relationships, by exploiting the knowledge and skills within the sector for their own competitive advantage (South, 2009: p. 3).

The value that corporate management has in mind has been converted in the past years into high expectations created around individuals/artists and their skills. In other words, this can be translated into what analysts, such as Maurizio Lazzarato, Michel Feher and Stewart Martin, have been calling ‘human capital’, which eventually leads to real (monetary) profit if well managed. The growing investment in human skill is strictly dependent on performative efficiency, namely how artistic qualities can be stimulated for optimal organisation of the corporate setting.

At the moment, corporations evaluate the development of artistic processes and decode them in reports. There is pressure for evidencing the results of artistic interventions in corporations, and the reports are an example of that pressure. But when we look to the programmes supported by European consultancies, a number of studies are also developed by art mediators. The purpose of the following section is to analyse one of these reports on artistic programmes specifically conceived for corporations. The programmes are not presented herein as our case studies. Hence, the brief analysis is always consistent and dependent on the information available in the report. The objective is to understand through its analysis that an artistic turn has been taking place within the sphere of corporate management. The corporate workplace acquired a new significance for both artists and corporate managers when compared to the 1960s-1970s, which resulted in part, as already seen, from management writing, but also from general changes in capitalist societies.

5.2. Arts-based initiative: A comparative report

5.2.1. From programmes to projects

For some time now corporations have wished to expand experiences with contemporary art, and a part of the field of art is receptive to this trend. In the past decade, the European Commission has been stimulating a number of cultural and educational programmes, which include the collaboration between both fields. In this framework, specific platforms, such as the one mentioned below, are invited to work as mediators of those collaborations. The assignment might comprise seeking out artists and corporations for joint projects, to provide a methodology throughout the process, monitoring, and ultimately elaborating studies to evaluate the impact of artistic interventions in the workplace. These are usually called arts-based initiatives.

One of these organisation platforms, TILLT, together with Professor Ariane Berthoin Antal of Cultural Sources of Newness at the Social Science Research Center in Berlin (WZB), coordinated a comparative study of six artistic initiatives in Europe designed to bridge the arts and corporations. The objective of the study titled *Managing artistic interventions in organizations: A comparative study of programmes in Europe* is to

‘...understand the different approaches...to identify and disseminate useful practices...to document and compare the different structures, methods, and the problems among the selected cases in order to reveal needs and weaknesses of these processes and thereby to provide input for further and deeper research into this arena’ (Antal, 2011: p. 16).

This consists of observing the conditions in which artistic interventions occur, the stages necessary for exchangeable and learning processes, and the impact on artists and employees. As we can read in the study turned into a report, TILLT is a non-profit organisation with an institutional assignment of transferring the discourse of art into forums outside the framework of traditional artistic domains. Based in Gothenburg (Sweden) since 1973 and directed by an executive board of 12 members, TILLT has recently been ‘commissioned to develop new methods in how artistic competence can develop working life and vice versa’ (Antal, 2011: p. 21). This includes a variety of services to help to stimulate the interaction between cultural activities and corporations. One of these services is the Cultural Ambassadors Programme, which consists of

providing around ‘50,000 employees in nearly all sectors with affordable access to a broad selection of cultural events and arts, thus serving as a hub for the human resource development programme of every workplace affiliated to TILLT’ (Antal, 2011: p. 21).

Since 2009, TILLT has developed new programmes with European funding. One of these include the Airis programme (Sweden) in which an ‘actor/director/playwright dancer/choreographer, a composer/musician, visual artist/painter/photographer, is placed into a corporation to interact with employees over the course of ten months, functioning as a non-traditional consultant and a source of inspiration, with support from a TILLT process manager’ (Antal, 2011: p. 22). Other programmes extended to contexts such as France, Spain, Switzerland, and UK, where other intermediaries/organisations are integrated to collaborate with TILLT. For a period of two years (2009-11), the TILLT project team, which included a general director, process and project managers, and a special unit responsible for strategic alliances, conducted study visits to these countries to interview some of the participant artists and host organisations to know their opinions about the projects they have experienced. Besides Airis in Sweden, the other projects within the European program include Disonancias and Conexiones Improbables (Spain), Interact (UK), Artists-in-Labs (Switzerland), 3CA and the New Patrons (France).

The report about the impact of these artistic programmes on corporations was published in the format of a book in 2016. A conference about the same thematic also took place recently at Gothenburg University, School of Business, Economics and Law and School of Design and Crafts (HDK). The book maintains an identical structure as the report about the evaluation of the interventions, however new sections were included about music and theater. The authors in the conference discussed in parallel sessions the new themes of the book, with titles such as ‘From aspiration to evidence: music, leadership, and organizational transformation’, ‘Choreographing creative processes for innovation’, ‘Managers in artistic interventions and their leadership approach’, just to name a few. The majority of the authors come from the field of business, management and creative design, and their line of research is orientated towards the arts & business field. The managerial interest in the arts comes then from the possibility that it opens for managers, leaders and entrepreneurs to learn through experience with artists.

5.2.2. Airis (Sweden) and New Patrons (France)

Whilst organisations have in common the placement of an artist or a group of artists into a corporation to collaborate with employees over a period of time and the dissemination of this type of networking experimentation, they differ in terms of approach and methodology. The variety of artistic activities is substantial and so is the scope of corporations participating in the project. Accordingly, given the impossibility of covering all the organisations and their projects in detail, I shall focus on two of them: Airis (Sweden) and New Patrons (France/International). The reason for choosing these two has more to do with a contrast in terms of method rather than the pertinence of the projects.

Airis' 'Artist in Residence' programme was launched in 2002 as a pilot study coordinated by TILLT in collaboration with the Västra Götaland Region Council in Sweden. According to the report, the programme started as a cultural project with three separate goals: 1) a cultural political goal to create an arena where industry and the culture sector could interact; 2) a business development goal aimed at enhancing the creative capabilities of industry and public sector organisations; 3) a labour market goal where employment opportunities for professional artists are being created (Antal, 2011: p. 24). Overall, TILLTs' coordination of Airis aims to strengthen the bond between the cultural and the business sectors.²⁶ The corporations that have been collaborating with Airis are included in the sphere of business, biotechnology, industry, education, healthcare, and engineering/construction. This diversity is also present in the selection

²⁶It is worth calling attention to Swedish propensity to the corporate sector and its correlation to society in general. Sociologist Tomas Marttila has been observing this tendency under the 'spectre of entrepreneurship': first, as a general symptom in Europe where a process of continuous redefinition of what an entrepreneur might be exactly is put into practice, and second, more so directed to the Swedish context where the logic of entrepreneurship has become increasingly appreciated and disseminated beyond private business and the economic system. According to Marttila, a policy paper published in 2003 by NUTEK, the Swedish agency for regional and economic growth, declared that 'entrepreneurs can be found everywhere in society. To deal with problems actively and find solutions, to turn ideas into actions or to be entrepreneurial in general – these are some characteristic traits of an entrepreneur: *One who just does!* It can be at school, on construction sites, in health care, at university, or anywhere else' (Marttila, 2013: p.5). By dividing the governmentalisation of the entrepreneur in Swedish political discourse into three phases that he calls the 'spearhead of the economy' (1991-1994), 'entrepreneur - the active subject of society' (1994-1998), and 'entrepreneur - the creative subject' (1997-2004), Marttila reveals a positive atmosphere for entrepreneurship within which small and medium-sized enterprises operate in a manner that vitalises markets and generates new job occupations. The major difference that he encountered between the first and second type of governmentalisation of the entrepreneur concerned the change of the ontology of the entrepreneur from 'natural talent' to 'social construct'. Thus, the recent cultural policies that wish to stimulate the interaction between artistic activities and corporations, or more broadly between daily life and the cultural sphere, need to be understood as consequences of governmental and institutional decisions under the spectrum of entrepreneurship.

of artists invited for the collaboration, which include actors, choreographers, musicians, visual artists, and writers.

The Airis programme of artistic interventions consists of a preparation phase for establishing contacts, selecting the artists and explanatory meetings, followed by four phases. The first phase named ‘anchoring the project’ involves the tasks necessary for initiating a project, namely strategy planning and the selection of a project team. In the second phase named ‘research’, the artist establishes contact with employees and works out relevant questions with them to jointly formulate an action plan for the project. In the third phase named ‘action plan implementation’, the artist develops a number of activities, events or workshops. In the final phase, an evaluation of the activities and a final seminar take place, at which all participating artists and companies report their experiences (Antal, 2011: pp. 26-28).

One of the Airis project interventions included the multinational pharmaceutical company Astra Zeneca, which involved the department of clinical research of the company, and the visual artist Anna Persson in 2004. The artist was given full access to the company installations to develop the research stage that involved talking with the people. As we can read, she was able to find out things about the employees that the leadership team did not know. In the next six months, the artist organised a series of workshops ‘in which the staff was inspired to interpret and embody the core values of the company. This was done by creating silhouettes for each of these core values, where the staff posed in front of a bright light against a white screen and the shadow cast was photographed’ (Antal, 2011: p. 37). This resulted from the series of conversations that Persson had with employees to find out about their problems. The photographs were then transferred onto large sheets of glass that were placed in strategic places throughout the company building.

A second project of Airis, in 2006, included the interaction between dancer and choreographer Maria Mebius Schröder and the Drug Safety Surveillance Department, also at Astra Zeneca. Schröder’s intervention consisted of two different stages: in the first, Schröder started to work on personality issues with the department by asking employees to conduct interviews with colleagues. The reason for this approach had to do with a general feeling of loss on the part of the employees in terms of their status and function in the company. In the second stage, the artist led a series of workshops about ‘leading’ and ‘following’ based on corporeal movements. Apparently there had been a restructuring at the company in a short period of time, which entailed people shifting

roles, thus employees were willing to know more about issues such as leadership and followership. The most rewarding part of the project for the artist was the frequency with which people asked questions, and also a sense of rightness in relation to the work performance.

Astra Zeneca's leading managers who were working with Airis were entirely receptive to their projects. According to the report, overall managers perceived artistic practices as a kind of 'tool kit' for thinking outside the box. The term tool kit is frequently used in management jargon to express a form of practical guidance to enhance personal performance at work. They believe culture is a driver of innovation and creativity, which supports change management activities, rehabilitation processes and cross-functional work. This has not prevented the rise of criticism directed at the usefulness of the projects. As observed by Alexander Styhre and Michael Eriksson (2008), a debate emerged in Gothenburg's largest daily newspaper, Göteborgs-Posten. At the base of the debate is the argument that art and artists should not be seen as a 'production factor', following the creative content defended by Richard Florida. Basically artists should not be seen as useful because art has an intrinsic value beyond utility. However, such debates need to be contextualised within a broader discussion over the financing and funding of culture in Sweden. In the auhtors view, the Airis project was never articulated and enacted in terms of usefulness but 'as instead aiming at helping industry and the public sector develop new skills and capacities on the basis of their cultural training' (Styhre and Eriksson, 2008: p.54).

When compared to the other intermediary organisations presented by Antal's report, the background of the New Patrons is different mainly because it is based on policy for improving the commissioning of public art. It is strictly based on the commissioning of works of art that meet public needs and finds resonance in the community, not only in France but also in other countries of Europe. For instance, the project Conexiones Improbables has taken over the responsibility for the New Patrons programme in Spain, and there are also New Patrons programmes in Italy, Belgium and Germany, even though these are not financially supported by the Fondation de France.

Created in 1993, the New Patrons programme is based on collaboration between the artists, the citizens who choose to be patrons of a work of art, and the cultural intermediary appointed by the Fondation de France. There are eight intermediaries in France who have been designated by the Fondation of France to work on New Patrons projects in different regions of the country. Most of the intermediaries are professional

curators of contemporary art, but some come from other art forms (e.g., music, dance, urban design). The New Patrons organisation discusses with the intermediary and the artist what the art project should be, and with help from the intermediary they generate funding from their own and other sources (Antal, 2011: p.117). One of the intermediaries is the association 3CA, whose projects are located in the Paris region

The artistic organisation 3CA was created by Mari Linnman, an artist from Sweden trained as a curator in France, together with two colleagues from the field of art. Since it was created in 1998, ‘its mission is to develop the production, diffusion and reception of contemporary artistic projects. 3CA helps individuals in public and private organisations who wish to commission a work of art’ (Antal, 2011: p.119). In so doing, it aims to create a dialogue between artists and citizens broadening to community issues, such as education, health or ecology. 3CA has the legal status of a non-profit organisation, and its main support (60%) comes from the Foundation of France. The work method is organised into four areas: ‘New Patrons projects to integrate art projects in different environments’, ‘artistic residencies in secondary schools’, ‘exhibitions and consulting via Contexts’ (an umbrella association co-founded by 3CA and two other artistic associations), and ‘intermediary services to help artists and engineers collaborate on research’ (Antal, 2011: p.119). The role of the intermediary is to explore the area of intervention and see if it is suitable for an artistic project; if so, it defines the framework and conditions for the project with the New Patrons. According to Linnman the ‘first role of the intermediary is to listen to the New Patrons and to help them set aside the inhibitions they often feel when they face art’ (Antal, 2011: p. 120). The delineation of the framework includes selecting the artist, a preparatory study, raising funds for the project, and finally, production. Each of these stages is crucial for the possible development of projects; for instance, the preparatory study is a piece of work in and of itself because not every project moves into the final phase of production. The artistic output of this stage may take the form of a publication or prototype model.

Linnman proposed two artists to the New Patron commissioning group of the Hospital St. Antoine who she thought were suited to the project in diverse ways. The commission group decided to work with one of the artists proposed, Melik Ohanian a multimedia artist who is based in Paris and New York. One of the reasons for being chosen by the commissioning group had to do with Ohanian’s interest in the concept of time. Ohanian’s proposal had to take into account the hospital atmosphere and the expected anxiety of waiting, the concepts of ‘cure’ and ‘care’, the required moments of

quietness and contemplation, and the connection between services. The artist was aware that patients needed to be attended, which caused a mixture of anxiety and tiredness. Taking these states of mood into consideration, the artist projected, as we can read,

[...] a series of animated modules for the ceiling, composed of mirrors and light that would be seen by patients when lying on their backs [...] The distribution of the modules on the ceiling would serve as markers along the paths patients move and are moved in the new facility...In order to create a feeling of continuity between the places that patients and professionals move through, the artist decided to place seventy modules on the ceilings of the emergency reception area, the polyclinic and the reanimation area (Antal, 2011: pp. 127-128).

Linnman notices that New Patrons are extremely demanding about the selection of artists for projects, particularly because they do not want their art projects to be treated as competitive bids the way other public works must be treated under European rules. The same can be said in relation to the role of the intermediary, which for Linnman corresponds to that of a curator with an adequate amount of responsiveness to interpret New Patrons' intentions. Her role as an intermediary/curator of the New Patrons in France is the same role played by Nina Möntmann, also a mediator/curator of the New Patrons in Hamburg (Germany). One of the projects of the New Patrons in Hamburg curated by Möntmann is a film by the late filmmaker Harun Farocki on the work of the Quickborner Team, which I shall examine in subsequent sections. In terms of evaluation tools and processes for the New Patrons in France, when comparing to the other case studies of Antal's study, there is no information available. 'The programme has existed for some twenty years and changes have been made, but even the intermediaries who manage the projects do not know how and when evaluations are conducted' (Antal, 2011: p. 124).

5.2.3. The difficult evaluation

The evaluation of the programmes in the report leads to a more general assessment of the renewed phenomenon of collaboration between artists and corporations. The first aspect to be noticed is a growth of artistic interventions entrenched in corporate training, often organised by consultants and intermediaries. This recent trend is driven by a growing mutual interest of both artists and corporate managers to learn from each other.

Corporate consultants and researchers expect that artistic intervention initiatives unfold as an organised network or a ‘spill-over’ effect, as it is called in management jargon.

The second aspect to be noticed is that artistic interventions and correlated programmes arise in various countries, thus responding to different cultural, socioeconomic and political background needs. Because they are complex in nature and interact with external influential factors, it complicates the evaluation of their impact for both artists and employees, and ultimately, on corporations. However, despite the diversity of projects, organisations, and artistic approaches, Antal agrees that the programmes examined have much in common. The similarity is driven by a shared belief that many kinds of ‘added values’ can be generated through the interaction of the two worlds (Antal, 2011: p. 139). This includes the development of technical skills, motivation and creativity, self-presentation, and so on. But for this to occur, it is crucial to take the perspectives of all the participants into consideration – the employees, the artists, the organisations, and the societies in which they are embedded. For some researchers, the majority of studies on artistic interventions have focused on the benefits for employees and organisations, but few have addressed the value they can represent for the artists involved (Brellochs & Schrat 2005, Ferro-Thomson 2005, Berthoin Antal 2009, 2011). In my view, this feedback would be extremely important to understand how artists really feel about these interventions, their evaluation, and how they really see their role as service providers in corporations.

It must also be noted that the expected effectiveness of artistic interventions has not only increased the pressure on artists but also on intermediaries and researchers to give evidence of the positive impact of these activities. Antal recognises that the comparative studies, even if useful, work as instruments of this pressure in an area of research that is still very recent. Another problem that may well arise from this pressure is the instrumentalisation of art for corporate purposes. As mentioned in relation to former projects, some managers see art as a kind of ‘tool kit’ for thinking outside the box, and for top managers without personal experience in the field of art, numbers are very important. There a risk of a quantitative research rather than a qualitative research. However a possible instrumentalisation is not exclusive of corporate management. As noticed by Antal, in their interest to attract companies to participate in their programmes, the intermediaries are seeking ways of making the projects more visible to potential future hosts. The intermediaries rely heavily on networking platforms and external communication to acquire the necessary visibility, but sometimes they

encounter difficulties in the process, which may lead to unforeseen results, including instrumentalisation. Pia Areblad, TILLT's director of strategic alliances, makes clear the mutual apprehension and challenges:

There is fear from the artistic sector of using art instrumentally. There is fear from the corporate sector of non-result oriented processes, which is significant for artistic processes. The understanding for using cultural competence and methods to develop business is sometimes difficult to get for both sides. Therefore, it is essential to find a new vocabulary, thus reassuring both parts' integrity and interest in order to provide a breakthrough when developing creative partnerships. Conducting research is essential in order to visualise the effects of creative partnerships between the cultural sector and the business sector and to develop this new vocabulary (Antal, 2011: p. 24).

The issue of a new vocabulary is in fact a central aspect to continue to pursue in our research of how artistic and corporate identities are set in motion and how they overlap and/or collide with one another. This is of particular importance given the diversity of artistic approaches.

The cases included in the report show that the majority of the artistic approaches are based on workshops and interviews aimed at direct contact with the employees, while others prefer to respond to a social and public need by working closely with public organisations. Also, the cases show that 'artists can find this type of projects appealing for various reasons. Some seek the opportunity to influence a specific context and at the same time to help people develop themselves, others may also derive inspiration for the art they create, ultimately, financial benefits are an important factor too as artistic interventions in organisations function as a new type of market' (Antal, 2011: p. 148). This diversity makes the evaluation of interventions even more difficult. In my view, the term intervention is itself ambiguous and potentially a point of differentiation between artistic practices that collaborate with corporations and those who act upon them somehow destabilising corporate working methods. In the latter, the meaning of intervention exceeds a position of involvement in order to strengthen the bonds, to foster dialogue between the two parts, or acting to improve something in a different working area. Intervention might also mean intrusion, interference and possible interruption of a process or method. For some artists, to help in corporate decision-making processes is not enough. This side of intervention is what I pursue in the subsequent sections.

5.3. From present to past: the case of Artists Placement Group (APG)

5.3.1. ‘Context is half of the work’

Artistic presence in corporations is not a new phenomenon. We just need to look back to the collaboration of designer Paul Rand with various corporations, the non-profit organisation Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) and their association with engineers analysed earlier, or the emblematic British group, the Artist Placement Group (APG). However, precisely because the cultural and historical conditions are different today, there are differences between the present interventions and the 1960s placements. The first can be found in the level of organisation of current interventions (mechanisms of evaluation of their successes or failures), the second can be found in the circumstances in which artistic interventions are occurring, and perhaps most importantly, the third can be found in a renewed receptiveness on the part of corporations. Let me clarify by looking to the case of Artist Placement Group (APG) in the 1960s.

Founded by the artist couple Barbara Steveni and John Latham in 1966, along with Anna Ridley, artists Barry Flanagan, David Hall and Jeffrey Shaw, the APG artists initiated, between 1966 and 1979, a series of residencies at various British companies. As we can read in the journal available in the exhibition dedicated to the group at Raven Row Gallery in London in 2012:

The group aimed to find ways for artists to relocate their practices from the studio to the industrial workplace, and in the process to alter the perception of the artist as marginal to the key social issues of the day. APG’s proposal to organisations was that they forego the idea of patronage by commissioning works of art, and instead consider benefitting from the artists insights. In turn, APG would enable artists to benefit from a ‘real world’ context in which to develop new ways of working (Hudek and Sainsbury, 2012: p. 3).

In this excerpt, there is a clear intention in evidence on the part of APG to reframe the traditional relationship based on patronage, and to open up a new inspiring and motivating contact between the two worlds. The first striking difference between current interventions and APG placements has to do specifically with the phase of preparation of the artists’ residencies. Contrary to current interventions, in which there is a mediator contacting the organisations and developing background work for the acceptance of the

artists, it was APG artists, particularly artist Barbara Steveni, who negotiated their placement in the companies. Curiously, APG's programme for the placements, if we can describe it as such,²⁷ has to a certain extent similar ideas to current interventions. The artists placements would occur in two phases: the first phase was a viability study lasting one or two months (this corresponds to the phases of research of current interventions), and the second phase would be the placement itself. The artist would then write a report of the experiences, leaving the decision to the host organisation to adopt, or not, the proposed ideas – contrary to this, the report today is mainly written by the researchers of the organisation that mediates and observes the intervention. Out of nineteen associations with the host companies, ten qualified as full APG placements.

Despite the resemblances mentioned and the proximity with the employees through interviews, the projects developed in a quite different context atmosphere. Sculptor Garth Evans was the first APG artist to be placed at the British Steel Corporation with a fellowship negotiated by APG. During his placement of two years (1969-70), Evans observed and studied the production of steel. Part of his work consisted of the elaboration of reports and photographs about the phases of production, which in due course were included in a book produced by the company titled *Some Steel*. Other placements included Ian Breakwell and David Parsons at the British Transport Film Unit, again negotiated by APG for a short period of three-months in 1973. Breakwell and Parsons viewed several films and conducted a series of interviews with employees. The subsequent stage of the placement was to collect data into a report, but eventually, the artists also proposed to make a travel film with the support of an Arts Council grant, titled *The Journey* (1975). For Breakwell, the film represented an ironic take on the travelogue and worked as homage to the Lumière brothers' film of a train leaving a station (Hudek and Sainsbury, 2012: p. 21).

But not all placements were entirely productive. In fact, the initial intentions of APG that the artists would have a positive effect on corporate industries soon collapsed due to the artists' lack of specialised experience with various working conventions. This generated a succession of misunderstandings. APG's principle was that artists would be paid a salary by the host organisations. As we can read in the documents shown in the exhibition, not all organisations agreed with this premise, and as a result many

²⁷The term programme was never used by APG to describe the organisation and development of the placements. Nevertheless, I decided to use it here because some aspects of their intentions have certain resemblances with the programmes of current the interventions.

placements were rejected. For instance, British European Airways (BEA) declined to grant artist David Hall a full placement, nevertheless the company allowed Hall to fly for free across Europe. During the various trips, Hall was able to record cloud formations, which resulted in a 16mm film titled *Timecheck*, commissioned by the British Film Institute.

On the other hand, for those hosts who paid some sort of salary to the artists, it was difficult to understand why artists were so resistant to work as artists, namely to give artistic lessons to the employees. Their approach of wanting to engage more deeply with the corporations activities was frequently seen as naïve by the managers of the companies. In a Frieze article online from 2007, Peter Eleey describes how different positions at times generated conflicts:

George Levantis, who in 1974 was placed aboard three different shipping vessels belonging to the Ocean Trading and Transport Ltd, had a sculpture tossed overboard because it didn't fit with what his hosts expected of him: namely, to relieve boredom among the crew by teaching them watercolour painting [...] As an Ocean Trading official put it: 'if we had wanted some kind of sociologist aboard, I'd have hired a sociologist' (Eleey, 2007).

Then again, we need to look at the APG attitude within the context of the new economic paradigm of production and consumption, when artists began to develop a more flexible relationship with their work by also adopting the position of managers – a shift in art practice from the studio toward a service-based economy in which flexible performance was also included. Thus, APG's refusal to give form or definition to the placement itself should be understood as a symptom of a broader movement away from the art object. Theorists have been calling this type of refusal dematerialization of the artwork or 'conceptual dematerialization', which for Molesworth, as examined in Chapter Two, is nothing more than a new relationship between the artist and her/his work. In the case of APG, it seemed to be a dematerialization based on social engagement in the sense that in a placement the 'artwork' is not the end product but the whole process. As stated in the publication of the exhibition at Raven Row, APG was fundamentally a discursive project.

Ironically, what was considered a naïve attitude in the late 1960s gradually became a reality. APG's aim of positioning artists as possible advisers of processes in the workplace of public and private companies is actually the common approach taken by

current artistic interventions. The artist must work out relevant questions with employees to find the necessary requirements for daily work and then present the proposal to the host to initiate the collaboration. However, a conceptual difference separates the placements. The APG artists placed in the organisations were named ‘incidental persons’ by John Latham, whose inclusion and function in the workplace was rather unclear,²⁸ whereas artistic interventions studied by Antal, for example, are strictly planned to foster an open dialogue and help to enhance the employees’ performance at the workplace. APG’s artistic presence in organisations was a disconcerting force as they did not correspond to the expectations that managers had for them, namely to behave like artists and help to improve the atmosphere in the workplace.

In the face of an increasingly corporatised world, what has changed in relation to the placements in the 1960s besides the scepticism of managers? Two major alterations can be pointed out. First, in the following examples, the workplace is not just a *place* of interaction or cooperation, but also *active material* (physical and mental) to be included in art projects. Second, the performative becomes central for the artists to disturb the corporate atmosphere, and language is their vehicle – depending on the specificities of the projects, this might take on different paths. Some artists choose to get involved with the workers and surprise them with their behaviour, meanwhile other artists prefer to stay behind the scenes and focus their attention on the workers’ or consultants’ vocabulary. These strategic options also generate different types of ironies: some are veiled in the silence of the artist, and others more bluntly exposed.

²⁸The disconcerting behaviour is also a consequence of a highly theorised practice, named ‘time-based theory’. To Latham, space and objects would be subsumed under time and events.

Chapter Six – Performativity in the corporate setting

Why change the environment? Context is everything.

Margaret Crane, *Art and Innovation: The Xerox PARC Artist-in-residence Program*, 1999

6.1. The case of Xerox PARC: Pamela Z's, *GeekSpeak* and Joel Slayton's *Conduits*

6.1.1. A place of intersection

Contrasting with APG's motto that 'context is half of the work', an important aspect of today's interplay of art and corporate management is that context may become the entire work. The corporate workplace is a fundamental setting for the exchange of ideas amongst people from different fields, yet it may also become a site of tension between artists and workers. The three corporate programs I will analyse in this chapter have different goals and collaborating artists. The difference has both to do with artistic strategies and the type of corporation.

From this section onwards corporations cease to be an abstract entity and become a specific reality which I will focus on, especially technological research, business and service consultancy. Among the three cases, PARC is the oldest, dating back to the mid-1990s. The main characteristic towards which PARC has been orientated is the intersection of fields – art, media and scientific innovation. Formerly Xerox PARC, the Palo Alto Research Center Incorporated (PARC) located in Silicon Valley was transformed into an independent company in 2002 focusing on the research of science, technology and business concepts. On the company website, we can read that PARC is a place that encourages and supports the entrepreneurial scientist to be successful in his/her passion for scientific research.

In 1993, PARC developed an Artist-in-Residence Program named PAIR which brought together artists, scientists and researchers to explore technology as a common

language. Its main goal was to facilitate the exchange of ideas between two different sides, art and science, and then to provide alternative viewpoints, theories and methodologies that would benefit PARC and other scientific communities. The artistic approach to technological science and vice versa is not recent. We just need to recall Bell Laboratories and Experiments in Art and Technology's one-to-one collaboration between artists and engineers. The main difference is that this connection was not taking place in the realm of academic professionalisation. The majority of the partnerships between artists and scientists in the 1970s were established on an informal basis and directed to the development of projects that aimed to discover new media resources. There is today a new understanding of how this interdisciplinarity can be relocated into educational programmes that did not exist before. As technology evolved, the new media penetrated art academies and artists were entirely receptive to this. As a result, the conditions of engagement have changed, not only in the context of PAIR but in general. In the publication *Art and Innovation: The Xerox PARC Artist-in-residence Program* from 1999, where PAIR's artistic residencies have been documented, we can read the following:

PAIR is an opening into using some of the methodologies of art in scientific research, which is a creative activity itself and therefore is always on the lookout for new techniques to be borrowed from other professions [...] PAIR has observed that modern corporations are dependent on science advancement and nervously wonder whether inviting artists into their research centers will dull their scientific edge or sharpen it [...] PAIR is not unaware of the irony of bringing artists into corporate hallways (the partnerships between artists and middle-class workers are perhaps the best unintended consequence of PAIR): the individualistic ethos that drives modern capitalism is not just reflected in Western art but actually derived from it (Harris, 1999: pp. 16-18).

It is evident in this citation that there were contrasting feelings in relation to artistic collaboration inside PARC. The process of the artists residency program turned out to be extremely complex in the sense that the success of the projects was not only dependent on the level of involvement of artists, scientists and research groups, but it also depended on small yet important logistic details, such as the working area and the material available. Also, it was reliant on PARC's support as the host structure. Therefore, from the beginning there was a mixture of apprehension, constructive optimism and speculation about PAIR's artistic and corporate interaction.

The process that led to the PAIR residence comprised the conceptualisation of the programme, the selection of artists and their paired scientists, and finally the implementation of the programme. However, a series of questions needed to be discussed before its implementation. In a meeting between PAIR External Advisor Panel (EAP) and PAIRCORE Internal Advisor Panel (IAP)²⁹, the themes discussed comprised of how to project the artist-in-residence programme in a research environment and how to balance technological complexity and artistic pertinence. An additional concern to the external advisory panel had to do with the contribution of artists for scientific discoveries, or as it is expressed in the current neoliberal terminology, the ‘value’ of artists’ participation in terms of creativity, knowledge and experience, and how this contribution could benefit the artists themselves in terms of financial needs (Harris, 1999: p. 26-28).

With these questions hanging in the air, the programme initially created two types of artists in residence – long-term and short-term residencies. The intention was to provide an experimental timeframe between the pairs before adopting a long-term residency commitment, but since its embryonic stage, the programme exposed some difficulties for the artists selected. PAIR artists were not hired as full-time PARC employees because there was a concern that taking artists out of their field of practice would turn them into researchers, thus altering the dynamics that was meant for the artist-scientist relationship (Harris, 1999: pp. 29-30). In addition, there were constraints regarding space. The interior design of PARC was arranged in sections separated by courtyards, thus creating large distances between employees. The structure was built under the standards of the modern corporation where each room has its own exact function, which usually results in a hierarchy of closed spaces and identical furniture. With such an environment, competition for office space soon emerged. Because it would be expensive to convert offices into studios, PARC/PAIR did not sponsor the creation of studio spaces for the artists and their research colleagues. All the artists that were selected for the residency at PARC were accommodated in empty office space with customary furniture and computers located as close as possible to the person that they

²⁹IAP included representatives from various research groups within PARC. Their function was to facilitate the artist-scientist collaborations, and to set into motion and evaluate the processes of their projects. EAP included external representatives to PARC, basically people that worked in museums – for example, Peter Gordon, the chief curator of San Jose Museum, Craig Harris, executive director of the International Society for the Arts, Sciences and Technology of San Francisco, and Bob Riley, curator of Media Arts at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

were collaborating with (Harris, 1999: pp.37-39). These difficulties did not seem to bother some of the artists. As stated by Margaret Crane, an artist in residence:

Why change the environment? Context is everything. I was interested in seeing how the culture and atmosphere of PARC interacted with the work that Jon Winet and I were doing. And the physical site is obviously part of that atmosphere. Transforming the studio space was certainly an option, but I think that both of us found that interjecting our ideas into the environment was more conceptually satisfying than manipulating the physical setting (Harris, 1999: p. 40).

Apparently it did not affect the interaction of the pairs as well. The initial misapprehension was gradually replaced by a common understanding between artists and scientists to find a mode of communication during the residency that would heighten the diverse steps of their collaboration. The locus of work became the tool of work as well.

In fact, dialogue turned out to be the selected means of expressing the nature of the collaborations and the focus of research amongst the pairs. For example, in the project *Artscience Sciencart*, composer/performer Pamela Z and researchers Michael Black and David Levy explored the types of conversations that frequently took place at PARC among researchers about a variety of topics. But this shared interest in conversations emerged randomly when the three felt that they were struggling to give a concrete shape to the project. The focus of the project became about the similarities and differences between artists and scientists, the way these affected their work and about concepts underlying the nature of what determines an original versus a copy.

During her residency, Pamela found herself immersed in PARC's conversations, which revealed a type of technical language that given its specificity sound like a foreign language. Pamela recorded these voices of PARC and sampled them to create a sound piece called *GeekSpeak* (1993-1995). The piece itself was inspiration for more conversations such as this one on the relationship between art and science. The dialogue is too long to transcribe here, thus I include some fragments:

Pamela: Michael, I want to ask you why you're a scientist? First of all, *are you* a scientist?

Michael: Yes. It took me a while to realize that... And now that I'm actually a manager, I still list scientist because that is what I am... being a scientist is something more than just – well I shouldn't say just – but something more than being a programmer. It means that your're seeking

deep answers to deep questions. As an undergraduate I also studied psychology because I was interested in how space effects people's moods.

Pamela: So it does seem blurry, this line between science and non-science?

Michael: I think people see PARC as a place where blurring can happen because there are people from all different parts of the spectrum.

Pamela: It's funny because I've been dealing with a lot of blurring where art is concerned and it's mainly around computer arts. My big complaint is that the multimedia industry stole this word multimedia from the arts. It used to mean 'more than one medium'. In that context you may have performing going on with projected image, perhaps with sound and dance. Then the computer industry stole the word, and now suddenly any 'artwork' done on the computer is considered multimedia. So now multimedia means 'one medium' [...] So I was sort of annoyed at the loss of that word because now we have to say interdisciplinary or come up with new words because the original word has been rendered meaningless [...] I am noticing many people suddenly being *artists* because of the computer industry. I am questioning the level of artistry in what they're making. Is it art, or is it just a mastery of some software? It's just that this current obsession with new media has brought about such a glut of work, and so much of it is tied to money... (Harris, 1999: pp. 213-219).

Both Michael and Pamela are interested in the analysis of human gestures: his work entails the examination of visual motion and facial expressions by computers, and in her work, Pamela usually manipulates physical gestures by using technology. The processes and the resulting projects of the pairings were so diverse that it is impossible to cover all of them here. There were cases where the artist and researcher were not really co-developing, and there are other cases where the collaboration worked in symbiosis such as the project of Pamela Z and co-researchers. However, it is important to add that this variation did not overshadow the combination of knowledge: an artist would have an idea and a researcher would eventually make it happen with the help of technology. Thus, the additional concern about the artist's contribution in terms knowledge and experience was quickly exceeded by the participants. Something that is clear in all project narratives is that technology builds the common ground for the collaboration between artists and research scientists. PAIR was based on the idea that technology can be used as a common language to get otherwise divergent disciplines to speak with each other. As seen in the previous sections, this is what Pia Areblad, TILLT's director of strategic alliances, is referring to when she proposes the need to find a new vocabulary as a way to reassure the integrity of different fields in the development of creative

partnerships. She is not alluding exclusively to language per se but to mediums in a broader sense. Technology provides a common language here, even if it is understood and used in a different ways.

Nonetheless, there is a more distrustful side of this symbiosis. Despite the fruitful intersection between the pairs triggered by the technological experimentalism that brought them together, we can sense in the speech of Pamela Z a protest or even a criticism toward the appropriation of art concepts and/or the simulation of artistic expressions in the corporate world in general. Precisely because art is able to embrace a critical role as an independent zone of research, a part of that critique is inevitably self-reflexive. Pamela's speech around the universal question of 'what it means to be an artist' or 'what is art' leads me to think that this truism acquired a specific meaning in the context of PARC, where new ideas were and are rapidly being transformed into products. The value of those invited artists ran the risk of being tied to what Xerox PARC represented (and still represents) in the context of Silicon Valley, which is what Silicon Valley itself represents to the world: a site of capitalist venture and efficiency, in which a new type of capitalism is emerging to end the social work compromise built over decades, that is to give some protection to employees in exchange for not questioning the principles of marketplace economy.

As mentioned earlier, the value of the artist is converted into high expectations created around artistic skills for improving productiveness on the corporate setting. A comparable risk to this value by being at PARC Palo Alto, even if temporarily, would be to renounce artistic principles or somehow to adjust them to PARC's regulations by giving up a possible critical view of it. However, a point well defined since the beginning of the residencies was that artists themselves would determine the art they would make; they did not feel constrained to create, speak or criticise whatsoever in relation to how the system worked. This is most evident in the proposal of conceptual artist Joel Slayton, whose focus of attention is the artificial community of Palo Alto.

In the piece *Conduits* (1993-1995), Slayton presents a satirical reflection on Palo Alto's pride in its reputation as a model community. Both the world-renowned Stanford University and the growth of the technological industry around Palo Alto have contributed to this reputation by creating a commitment between business and education. Slayton conducted research before preparing a script, including an extensive review of historical archives and inviting different parts of Palo Alto's community to participate in a public performance event. PARC's scientists, Ken Pier and Mark Chow,

coordinated the live interactive event and facilitated the installation of the necessary computing resources. Its preparation involved a one-year period of investigation, technical experimentation, and dialogue between participants and sponsors.

The idea behind *Conduits* emerged from two sensationalist media events that occurred in Palo Alto in 1994. In the first event, an anonymous telephone call reported that a highly poisonous black mamba snake had been released within the Palo Alto area; in the second, a public sculpture called *Foreign Friends* was repeatedly vandalised in what appeared to be a series of political statements. The local authorities were called to resolve the problems but without any result. Both episodes caused a great distress in the local community. *Conduits* was then staged as a third event – a large-scale, multimedia public performance artwork. As we can read in the publication, ‘its premise is that C-Machine, a hypothetical telecommunications art sculpture of extraordinary dysfunction, is donated to Palo Alto as a centennial gift’(Harris, 1999: p. 252). The *Conduits* performance simulated the donation ceremony and demonstrations of the machine, but an unexpected technical failure resulted in a sequence of small adversities that needed the intervention of the SWAT Team. The intention was to stimulate a public reaction and, at the same time, give an insightful look into the behaviours of citizens as they debated the advantages of this new form of public art in the community. The biggest merit of *Conduits* as performative event was to generate uncertainty in the community audience as they were not sure if they were witnessing fiction or reality. Slayton aimed to show that to rely entirely on technology is not necessarily the ideal path to embrace the future.

I didn't realise the euphoria, the exuberance with which new models of life and work are constructed in firms like these.

Harun Farocki, *Brave New Work*, 2014

6.2. The case of Quickborner Team: Harun's Farocki's *A New Product*

6.2.1. The importance of office design

In late 1990s, Kao suggested that office layouts clearly encourage or discourage the creative side of people working in an organisation. This idea fully incorporates the new office spaces of the 'free thinking'. Corporations such as Deloitte, Google, or IBM, and many other corporations, have gradually adopted the so-called network model founded on self-organised work in the form of multitasked tasks. This model of working is tied to the open plan layout, which has been described by management authors as a strategic element in terms of facilitating exchange of information, project management and coworking concepts.

The open plan office is not entirely a new concept. For instance, architect Frank Lloyd Wright used the scheme in the Larkin Administration Building in 1906, which was based on an open-plan factory, and he also designed the Johnson Wax headquarters building in Racine in the early 1930s to group employees with similar functions. But the logic under which the open plan was developed during that time contrasts with today's logic of collaboration. According to design Professor Jeremy Myerson (2006), it was clearly a hierarchical sign of power where people in higher places had the privilege of having a private office, and those who did not have that possibility worked on the open floor plan. It was also a way for managers to control the work of employees.

In the 1960s, however, fine arts professor Robert Propst came up with a solution for the workers dissatisfaction with the extreme exposure of the open plan office. The solution proposed by Propst was the 'action office', a system of furniture that could be individually customised. The dividers or vertical panels would eventually work for the next three decades, a combination of private office surrounded by a public ambience. This type of design commonly called 'cubicle design' is most evident in a celebrated

scene from the film *Play Time* (1967) by Jacques Tati, in which Monsieur Hulot (Tati) is visiting an accountant inside a corporate building but finds himself lost in the space working environment of small cubicles, surrounded by modernist glass and artificial furnishings.

Over the decades, the circumstances continued with corporate workers being separated into small spaces to perform isolating tasks and having to work intensively to acquire better spaces that would signal their rising status within the firm, until the decade of the 2000s when the open plan was again widely adopted in high-tech offices as a way to foster collaborative and creative work. Before long, it became a debatable subject between those who defend it as an ideal environment for working and those who question its preference for collaboration over concentration and contemplation. For Myerson, in his early book, *New Workspace, New Culture: Office Design as a Catalyst for Change* (1998), the open plan end up creating many discomforts as opportunities, mainly because the type of workforce was changing in terms of demographics and attitude in a knowledge-based economy. His purpose in the recent publication *New Demographics New Workspace: Office Design for the Changing Workforce* from 2016 is to call attention to the necessary balance between management efficiency and individual comfort. According to Myerson, whose perspective is of someone linked to design rather than to management, this is a crucial aspect in today's corporate workplace as the average age of the workforce is older than in any other time of history. A new type of design is then required to improve the quality of the office environment for a well-qualified and mature staff.

Without going into the specificities of the office layout and its connection with the ageing factor, which exceeds the purpose here, the point is that Myerson's observations about the redesign of the office environment cannot be separated from the general changes in corporations and the changing nature of work itself, as well as the restructuring of corporate functions. It is worth recalling Moss Kanter's statement where she names the post-entrepreneurial phase, when emergent corporate practices in the 1990s began to redefine the authority of managers, and eventually their position and title. The figure of the old manager did not disappear; rather it needed to readapt its role in the compound structure of the corporation. This means to be temporarily overshadowed or substituted by other emergent individuals, such as entrepreneurs and leaders. Even though arguing from a different period and about a different situation, Myerson and Moss Kanter have in common the same background theme: the changes to

corporate structures and specifically to the corporate environment. However, through Moss Kanter's observations, we can envision the origin of the problem recently debated by Myerson of the working conditions of an elderly generation in corporations, which affects managers and employees in general. Furthermore, Myerson's remarks on the redesign of the corporate office cannot be separated from the recent stimulus given by corporate actors to the culture of creativity and communication. A vital component of this process is brainstorming, in which management consultants are encouraged (and encourage others) to think radically about the potential for their business environment.

This is the main subject of Farocki's documentary film *Ein neues Produkt* (*A New Product*) from 2012. Farocki accompanied the corporate consultancy firm Quickborner Team (QT) based in Hamburg for the period of one year, documenting the discussions of staff that foresee more flexible working conditions through the use of new spatial concepts, as well as meetings with the clients who are advised to give greater independence to their employees. While filming, Farocki adopted the same invisible presence of previous works, namely *The Interview* (1997) and *Nothing Ventured* (2004) – leaving out any sort of commentary on what he experienced. I follow here the same process by which the film takes shape by letting its scripted performativities speak for themselves, which is to say I do not intend to relate *A New Product* with Farocki's work in general. I am strictly interested in the documentary, on what Farocki gradually unveils: what QT proposes, how they intend to persuade their clients, ultimately, how they speak. According to Nina Möntmann '...this strategic planning can be considered the backstage of their daily work, a stage less visible to outsiders' (Lourenço, 2016).

Quickborner Team's area of expertise is building planning and property management, including the design of workspaces and offices. QT respond to the needs created by the expansion of creative cities, epitomised in what is called the creative class', defended by Florida (2002) to characterise an ideal way of living and working in society. This often comprises of integrating all dimensions of people's lives – areas for working, living, and leisure – together into one neighbourhood. In this sense, it is QT's function to create workplace patterns according to the latest economic and transnational atmospheres of cities. Two of their slogans present in their website give a clear idea of the planning working environment: 'Today, the office is no longer a fixed place. It is in fact a way of working and communicating' and 'QT office concepts make the best use of the extremes of new working environments – openness and retreat, communication and individuality'. Created by brothers Eberhard and Wolfgang Schnelle in 1956, QT

has been planning spaces for more than 50 years, but new technologies, faster competition, and new working environments require new approaches. Therefore, QT gradually moved from office utilisation to office optimisation as an area of expertise, and has been expanding and readapting its services to the current needs of different clients. Besides organisational building planning, QT services also include organisational consultancy and real estate management. These and other consultancy services are applied to various sectors: finance, industry, trade and media, and the public sector.

QT's project for the Unilever Company in HafenCity (Hamburg) follows previous experiences, in which space planning and other services were created/adapted to the buildings specificities. To harmonise with the new eco-friendly headquarters projected by Behnisch Architekten, and to improve the communication between their employees, Unilever management directors wanted a more open office environment. For the new building interior, QT developed a transparent open space office concept with individual modules, and for the ground floor an employee cafeteria and kitchen, along with other public amenities. Its design appears to succeed on multiple levels, including the reduction of energy use. The pleasant work atmosphere, with all amenities inside, makes up part of the QT strategy to expand itself into the areas of 'corporate culture' and 'personnel development'. The successful example of Unilever encouraged Quickborner Team to expand similar strategies to other projects.

The staff of Quickborner Team, which also moved into new offices in Hamburg's HafenCity, invited Farocki to go along with them on a daily basis over a period of one year. The invitation was the recommendation of Möntmann for the New Patrons programme in Hamburg. As mentioned in a former section, the New Patrons programme proposes a new organisation model for artistic production based on the collaboration between the artists, the citizens who choose to be New Patrons of a work of art and the cultural intermediary, which is usually an independent curator. Möntmann's role as mediator is to inform the partners in the area where the project is expected to take place, and after establishing the connection between the artist and the patrons, the aim is to search together public and private funds. In this case, the project was mostly supported by German institutions.³⁰ In Möntmann's words, which can be

³⁰Harun Farocki's project was supported by the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (Federal Centre for Political Education), the Hamburgischen Kulturstiftung, the Körber Foundation, and the HafenCity Hamburg GmbH.

read in the introductory essay of *Brave New Work*, ‘Farocki’s film prompts us to reflect on the sort of reorientation that might be necessary in an era where the structures of organised work are becoming instruments of the neo-liberal logic of competition and efficiency, instead of responding to the needs of societies whose members are ageing’ (Möntmann, 2014: p. 23).

As stated in the beginning of this section, the redesign of the office environment cannot be separated from the changes in management and the changing nature of corporate working conditions in the neoliberal system. These changes have been evidenced in a type of management writing that emerged in the 1990s, a body of work that finds itself in constant restructuring. These writings include the flexible methods instated by the post-Fordist economic system and the rejection of hierarchical modes of organisation, the importance of planning design, and ultimately, the commodities produced by this type of work commonly named ‘immaterial labour’. Some of these topics are unveiled in Farocki’s film about the Quickborner Team’s working methods, and analysed in the *Brave New Work* reader published in 2014. Möntmann calls attention to the vulnerable working conditions of employees in today’s corporations. She states that,

[...] because constant optimisation represents the driving force of neo-liberal corporate governance and is an integral component of its ideology, professional management consulting has long since become an unquestioned feature of modern management...yet however common a phenomenon it may be, for employees it is, above all, a sign of danger when consultants are brought into the firm [...] In order to maximise profit for the company, risk is shifted to employees who are given temporary employment contracts or hired on a project basis without benefits (Möntmann, 2014: pp. 16-17).

Most likely to compensate for the vulnerability of working contracts, corporations are transforming work environments into more pleasant spaces for their employees. Cultural theorist Diedrich Diederichsen briefly refers to this as a form of compensation – I would prefer to say that firms aim to awaken in workers a sense of belonging. Diederichsen ironically notices that employees should not ‘feel like subordinates or strangers in the firm, instead they are to make a whole firm their own, setting up camp now here, now there, on their own initiative’ (Diederichsen, 2014: p. 36).

Architect Andreas Rumpfhuber takes the relationship between working environment and firm design further. By keeping his attention on a model photo with open plan

rooms, which appears in Farockis' film, Rumpfhuber sees it as a representation of working symptoms, a tendency that suggest leisure and spatial freedom, and to a great extent, a symbol of the contemporary transformation of the workplace driven by global corporations. 'The idea of extending leisure time into workspaces has been pursued into a variety of ways to keep the 'corporate flagship' staff motivated and conceal the fact that what is actually involved are new organisational forms and workspaces' (Rumpfhuber, 2014: p. 50). Indeed, as we shall see ahead, the new organisational cool ambience most of the time covers a harsher reality, and eventually, a misleading sense of belonging and motivation.

I would like to now redirect my analysis to the specificities of language unveiled by the film and how these synchronise with the actions of the consultants. Farocki's statement that the film shows that words are not just tools, that they have also become objects of speculation, is crucial to understand the ideological and psychological mechanisms put into practice in the corporate working environment. Farocki follows a team of management consultants as they develop a new consulting product for Vodafone which would give to the employees a high degree of autonomy, or at least a more flexible attendance. For almost 40 minutes, the spectator is brought into brainstorm sessions where concepts are explained with great enthusiasm by consultants of Quickborner Team, Unilever and Vodafone [fig. 1-2]. The procedures of decision-making that constitute corporate branding are brought into discussion. According to the consultants, it is vital to adopt holistic processes as an alternative to the traditional Taylorist vision, in which a series of rules and expected levels of production are demanded of employees. The importance of the whole and the interdependence of the parts embraced by a holistic vision should be implemented in the corporate setting. This means to facilitate the interaction between sections, the dialogue between staff, and ultimately, the exchange of ideas. The open space principle makes possible this engagement.

The consultants' investment in culture and its management is also being reclaimed in the corporate setting. Along with words such as innovation, flexibility and motivation the term culture constantly emerges in the projects discussed by QT consultant managers, such as in the following:

Manager A: But what we do is keep the entire 'T' in view, so than we can say that's the 'T'.

Manager B: But isn't corporate culture the binding element, which basically determines how they interact with each other?

Manager A: This hierarchy or connections are the components of corporate culture. Might be right. The whole system, yes, that's the culture, right? This interaction has rules. This interaction also has premises.

Manager C: When we speak about culture and its elements, there's an exchange. Culture affects the work climate, at least it should, and vice-versa.

Manager B: How can I circulate knowledge faster? This is purely a cultural aspect which effects many things within the company.

Manager A: Let's think whether culture can be a means to an end...

Manager B: But corporate culture is not really a process, although actually, it really is.

Manager A: That's why the concept of corporate culture has to be further developed (2014).³¹



Fig. 1

Harun Farocki, *A New Product* (2012), video still

³¹These passages of the reader are unpageable. They relate to dialogues of the *video still* that divide English and German versions.

The evasive way they refer to culture as a key aspect of their corporate vision recalls Yúdice's description of culture as resource, the vital condition of a new epistemic framework in which culture is absorbed into an economic and ecological rationality. This is the type of culture that is modulated according to the consultants' own goals, that permits them to achieve the creative impulse within its own codes, which enables them to embrace artistic skills and eventually to become participants in an artistic process. It is the type of culture that opens the way to the 'total work of art' (gesamtkunstwerk), the ultimate ambition of these consultants, as they confirm. The irony is that they are unable to define it.



Fig. 2

Harun Farocki, *A New Product* (2012), video still

Language is essential in the process. The strategies of communication put into practice here seem to reveal that QT make use of a speech that appears to be functional for everybody – artists, clients, corporations, cultural and economic media. On the other hand, according to Möntmann, QT communicated directly with CEOs and architects but not with the employees of the companies that hired them (Lourenco, 2016). This shows a selective attitude about *to who* this type of speech should be address – a type of speech that intends to persuade by using optimistic words such as 'innovation', 'motivation', 'strategy'. These speech-acts bear a resemblance to the vocabulary of management writers whose writing is decidedly performative and prescriptive.

In the previous case study, Xerox PARC, the common language was technology. In the documentary it is what speech is capable of transmitting to audiences. The act of

describing something here is characterised not only by its content but also by its force (illocutionary acts). The consultants' rhetoric is optimistic, informal and amusing, at the same time as it should expand certain qualities of the consultants' personalities and be able to give confidence to people. But this confidence is somehow betrayed by an overstatement, a dramatisation of gestures and excessiveness of ideas. This means that language does not materialise here as an isolated factor; the significance of its content is overshadowed by theatrical, startling and vivid gestures of the consultants. In this sense, it has much of what Parker and Sedgwick consider opposed inferences of the performative, namely absorption and theatricality, which in the corporate workplace of QT become one. When we watch the documentary *A New Product*, it is as if we are watching a play, but at the same time we cannot avoid feeling that something is being masked. Mark Fisher describes this quite accurately in his essay:

The documentary form of *A New Product* may specifically recall the so-called 'mockumentary' style of *The Office*. The unwary viewer might well imagine that the members of the Quickborner Team, the business consultancy which Farocki's camera follows, are in fact actors, playing out a kind of deadpan sequel to the series written by Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant [...] The QT members believe that it is possible to reconcile the desire for creative autonomy with capitalist work, and it is just this belief that provokes our laughter (Fisher, 2014: pp.65-66).

The fact that words in the documentary are not just tools but also objects of speculation acquires a double meaning, which to a certain extent is paradoxical: on the one hand, we can see it as a strategy of communication for managing oneself – to speculate about something involves risk, which is a very common strategy in corporate consultancy; on the other hand, it discloses the vulnerability of language in general and of corporate language in particular when it is confronted with its own emptiness – a language that turns into an object of speculation comprises a type of speech generated on hypothesis, on what should be. There is also an artistic intent on the part of QT. There is a speculative dimension in art that is appealing to corporate management. The speculative in art is much connected to science and technology, to computer simulations where playing and experimenting is associated with the spatio-temporal thematic. But it calls also for an attitude, one that plays through, designs and/or creates potential scenarios. It is this speculative attitude that interests corporate management the most, yet it also reveals their weaknesses. In the construction of hypothetical scenarios – or

what Fisher calls ‘their belief in a world where the most banal work can become creative and artistic’ (Fisher, 2014: p. 80) – there is a failure of intention, of passing a message about something that is not entirely convincing for the audiences. And it is not convincing because it hides a harsher reality.

QT’s approach to a holistic vision follows the general tendency to turn the environment of corporations more calm and human. In this regard, QT seems to follow the suggestion that Aubrey C. Daniels (1994), the expert in management behaviour has been spreading since the 1990s: that a high-quality work environment will bring out the best in people. Likewise, to understand behaviour at an individual level is the key to obtaining exceptional performance in the workplace. It is not coincidental that texts of management writers such as Daniels (1994), Druker (1996) and McGregor (1960) have been revisited in the past decade by a sector of management consultants that defend a human dimension in the corporate setting and employee/customer commitment. However, there is a reverse side to the situation. Precisely because the atmosphere becomes more human, it facilitates the instrumentalisation of individuals in the workplace: with an appealing working environment the employees will spend more hours at work.

Andrew Ross gives insight into this renewed ambience and human component in workplaces. As Ross suggests, the old axioms ‘be careful what you wish for’ and ‘good jobs don’t fall out of the sky’ are perfect to illustrate this new ambience. Ross spent 18 months in two prominent new media companies, Razorfish and 360hiphop, located at Silicon Alley in New York. The objective was to go beyond superficial information about the internet bubble, and to observe the impact on the daily practices of the employees, but above all, how they judge their workplaces. Here he encountered a new kind of workplace design that could offer both a sense of belonging and freedom to the employees. Ross encountered a workplace quite similar to Quickborner Team’s ideal space: open layout and background music, low-rent ambience which somehow contrasts with the eco-friendly option of Unilever. Also, he found that the employees’ trendy style in these two companies was different from the general corporate staff in the United States, usually formal and monotonous. Their style suggested that of an artist, informal and nonconformist in their postures, because many of them were in fact artists from the area of web design hired for their creativity and style (Ross, 2004: p.10) – the ‘no-collar’ expression in the title of Ross’s book is meant to illustrate the nonconformist side of workers. This style was being used by the companies to market their own image.

The interviews that Ross conducted with the staff showed that they considered themselves different from the type of employee that is only interested in profit. They were encouraged to think outside the box, to share ideas and information. The psychological influence that this environment has on the staff shows that they are afraid of losing such a pleasant work atmosphere. But after conducting several interviews, it became clear to Ross that the bohemian scenario covered a different reality. Along with the increasing financialisation of the new companies, in which profit eventually became more important than the production of services, the employees' work environment quality considerably diminished: they needed to work 70-hours a week, they lacked managerial protection, and their sense of sharing entirely disappeared. 'When work becomes sufficiently humane, we tend to do far too much of it and it usurps an unacceptable portion of our lives' (Ross, 2014: p. 255). Although Ross' study focused on the American context of Silicon Alley, it brings up similarities with Quickborner Team in Germany. These are not common workplaces, and although they still make up part of a small niche that started in Silicon Valley, they are increasingly becoming an alternative to traditional workplaces. Various changes have occurred in the corporate workplace since the 1970s, yet looking at the revitalisation of the human factor in today's corporate place, one might question how much the environment has changed, at least in the manifestation of ideas.

Co-worker: You have to wait for something or...
Pilvi Takala: No, I'm doing a bit of thinking about what I should do...
Co-worker: Ok, I thought you had to wait for something...

Pilvi Takala *The Trainee*, 2009 (excerpt from dialogue)

6.3. The case of Deloitte, Pilvi Takala's *The Trainee*

6.3.1. Investing in art: Towards partnerships

The international accounting and financial services corporation Deloitte has been investing in art. The term investment has a double meaning. The first is a literal investment in the art market and how it might be used as a tool to build stronger relationships with clients all over the world. For instance, the programme 'Art and Finance', a platform for investment in art collections, started as a local initiative in Luxembourg in 2011 and is now expanding its collaboration to other Deloitte firms in Austria, China, Germany, Italy, and Singapore. The second is a less visible form of investment, namely in collaborative partnerships with artists and art institutions, which in due course lead to the commission of artistic projects. Both meanings comprise what is commonly designated by sponsorship, a phenomenon that shows how the role of corporations has become quite extensive and ubiquitous as patrons of the arts. Herein, I shall focus on the second aspect of this investment.

Deloitte represents what is usually called the network corporation. As the company defends, Deloitte is a financial brand under which various member firms around the world operate independently and in conjunction with regional affiliates to provide audit, consultancy, financial advisory, and other related services to select clients. Although structured by the same principles which can be found on Deloitte's websites, each member firm is subject to the laws and professional regulations of the particular country in which it operates. This means that certain services may not be available in certain countries. This also includes the type of relationship that each branch develops with the field of art. The 'Art and Finance' programme based in Luxembourg also incorporates

an annual conference, which in 2015 took place at the Armory Show in New York, entitled ‘Art: more than an asset class’. But Deloitte Portugal, for instance, does not include any sort of programme related to art. In fact, it is difficult to find in the firms’ country-specific websites any sort of information about art projects, at least directly. There is a connection with the field of media technology and with universities in all of Deloitte’s firms that might involve artistic programmes, but there is no information available.

Nevertheless, the projects exist. Two of the case studies examined here have Deloitte in common. Pilvi Takala’s piece, *The Trainee* (2008) resulted from a collaborative project between the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art and Deloitte’s office, both located in Helsinki. Also artist Ryan McNamara was invited to discuss his work with Deloitte employees in the New York office, through a workshop series named ‘Art Think’.

In 2012, Art Think was presented as a model of creative thinking. At its base, we can find the recurrent idea that the world of financial consulting is, in many aspects, similar to the world of art. The strongest point in common between the two is creativity, or in other words, the way creativity is managed. Coupled with this thought, there is another recurrent idea that the world of finance has much to learn from the field of art, thus it must look to the ways artists create and innovate. For the first Art Think invitee, Ryan McNamara, most of his pieces require different collaborators at different sites, a versatile feature that pleases and fits into the world of financial consultancy. The basis of his work is performance video, which often involves adopting absurd postures and a level of persistence to surpass the constraints of the situation.

In one of the pieces he presented, *Make Ryan a Dancer* (2010), McNamara took public dance classes held in and outside MoMA P.S.1., over a period of 104 days. In the museum, visitors could watch the uncomfortable way in which the artist attempted to imitate the professional moves of dance coaches moving from classical to contemporary dance. The galleries were turned into dance studios with mobile bars and mirrors scattered throughout the rooms. Another piece showed was the performance entitled *II* (2011), held at Robert Wilson’s Watermill Performance Center in New York. Here McNamara and collaborator Sam Roeck were buried up to their necks in the ground while they sang songs in duet to one another. At some point during the show, the audience stumbled and, in quick succession, accidentally kicked each artist in the head, however the artists continued to sing. Much of McNamara’s performative work rests on

absurdity or even comedy, and the effort that he inflicts on his own body often relies on audience reaction to be effective. This was what happened here as the unpremeditated incident became part of the performance, which also shows McNamara's strategic tendency for adaptability. Looking back to the strategies implemented by McNamara, he is indeed in many respects a model to be followed by Deloitte employees, not necessarily because of the content of his work, but mostly because his personality possesses the qualities aspired to by managers, consultants and employees. This includes his ability to interact with collaborators, to be enthusiastic and versatile, and to be capable of dealing with situations that present some sort of risk.

While having a performative intent such as in McNamara's work, Finnish artist Pilvi Takala takes a different approach in her piece *The Trainee* from 2008 [fig. 3-4]. The major difference rests on the way she exerts the illogical, ironic or absurd components in the work, less flashy and more introspective than McNamara. In fact, her unassuming behaviour in the piece could not be more distant from the comedic character that McNamara embodies. Also, *The Trainee* was conceived for a different context. It is the outcome of a collaborative partnership between the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki and Deloitte Helsinki. Thus, the motivation behind Takala's project, to engage with Deloitte, is quite different from McNamara's pragmatic workshop.

Takala was contacted by Kiasma curators Marja Sakari and Leevi Haapala, who were aware of the kind of work she produces. The idea was to propose something to their sponsor Deloitte. The corporation expressed their interest in working with the artist more actively, rather than just lending art for their office from Kiasma's collection. Takala and the curators proposed then an undercover operation at Deloitte's in which the artist would pose as an employee (which afterwards changed to the position of a trainee) in their office building in Ruoholahti, Helsinki. The intention was to produce an art piece using that position, which would later be shown in Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art. The artist received a fee, which was an artists' fee for the project, and not for being an intern at Deloitte. The fee was around 400 euros in total; it was paid by the museum, and not directly by Deloitte. There was no production budget, thus the editing work was entirely produced by Takala. Deloitte purchased one edition of the final piece, donating it to Kiasma's collection (Lourenço, 2016). During her one-month residency, Takala embodied a fictional character named 'Johanna Takala', hired as a trainee by Deloitte in their Marketing Department. During this period, she recorded her

residency and the reactions of her colleagues by hidden video camera. *The Trainee* is then a video and slideshow work based on this one-month intervention.

A young woman sits motionless at an empty desk in an open plan office, a strange and inappropriate behaviour for a busy corporation such as Deloitte. There is no computer at her desk and she appears to be simply staring into space, occasionally receiving curious glimpses from her colleagues. Besides sitting all day doing nothing, the woman spends an entire day going up and down in the office lift. Due to her awkward behaviour, she gradually becomes the object of speculation and gossip by her coworkers, which occasionally attempt to make conversation. To their questions of ‘who is she’ and ‘what she is doing’, Takala replies that she is doing a bit of brainwork. After a second encounter with Takala in the lift, a perplexed coworker asks ‘You’re thinking again?’ to which she replies, ‘It helps me to see things from a different perspective’. Takala’s inactivity does not fit into the rules of the corporate place. The fact that this weird person spends all day doing nothing, except thinking, frustrates and disarms her colleagues as they do not know how to react. Thus, instead of confronting her directly, the colleagues start to send interoffice emails to their supervisor – who is in fact aware of the lazy and fictitious ‘Johanna Takala’ – complaining about her behaviour.

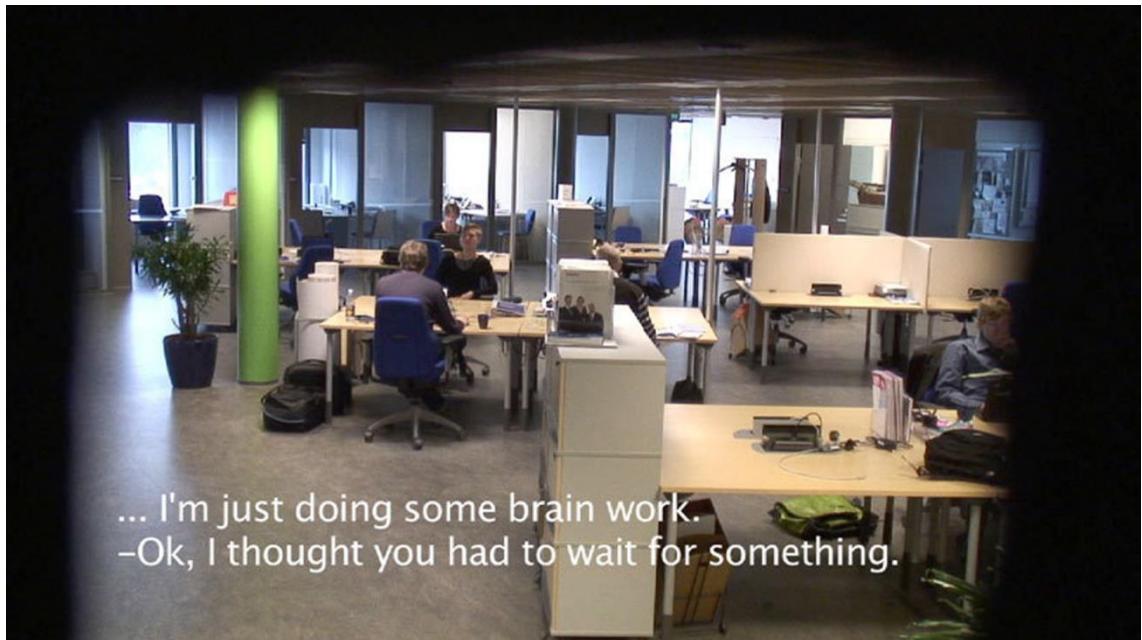


Fig. 3

Pilvi Takala, *The Trainee* (2008), video still

Takala's fictional character shows how the term intervention in corporations can exceed a position of involvement to foster dialogue, as occurred in the projects reported by Antal. Here intervention means intrusion and possible interruption, but not the interruption of an action or a method since Takala is devoted to inactivity. There is instead an interruption of a certain way of thinking and behaving, or as Takala describes it, a form of disruption of the supposed consensus that governs normative behaviour in a work environment (Lourenco, 2016). In so doing, her posture both inverts and subverts through irony the performative component that is frequently used by corporate strategies of communication to establish a parallel between art and corporate management. This does not mean that Takala is fully discarding performativity; she is inverting it instead for artistic purposes. Her speech does not consummate an action at the same time as it refuses the capacity to be operative for an audience. But her speech constructs an identity that presents itself as artificial and ambiguous in its attitude when it comes to challenging the boundaries between reality (being an artist) and fiction (temporarily assuming another identity). In this sense, it is not a mere performance by the subject/artist self-presentation, but a peculiar process of invoking a sarcastic character.

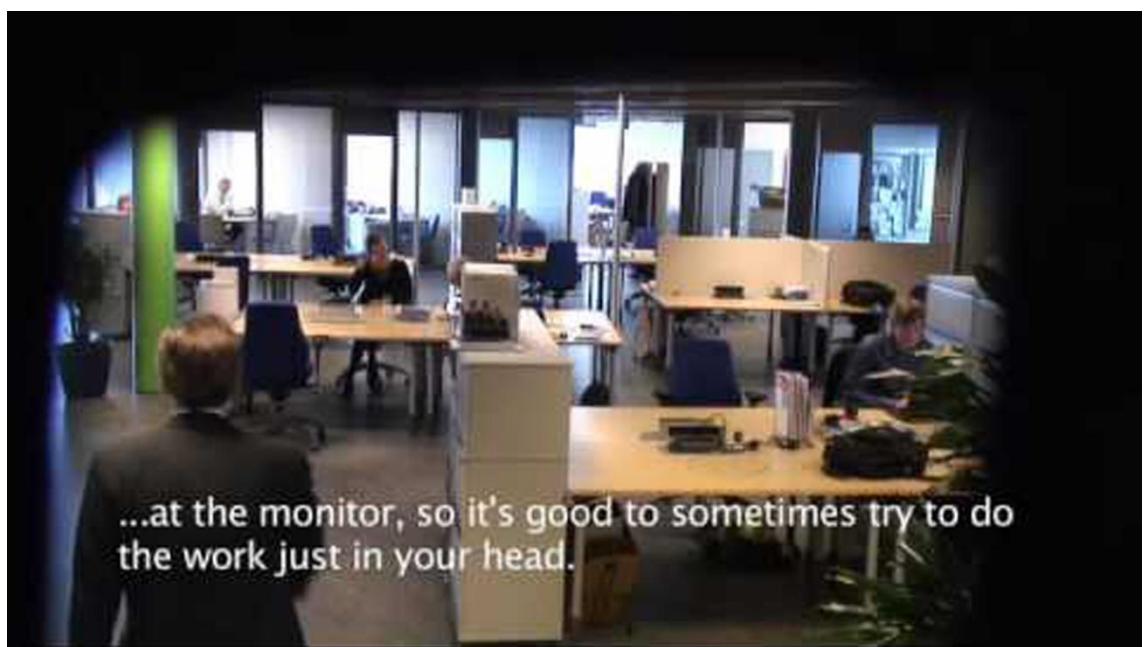


Fig. 4

Pilvi Takala, *The Trainee* (2008), video still

When Takala replies to her colleagues that she is doing brainwork, she deliberately yet indirectly raises the question of immaterial labour, a term coined by Lazzarato to describe the type of ‘labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity’ (Lazzarato, 1996: p. 133). It discusses two different aspects of labour: 1) it refers directly to the changes taking place in workers’ labour processes in big companies in the industrial and informational sectors, 2) and it refers to a series of activities that are not normally recognised as ‘work’ in the traditional sense such as the cultural and artistic. For Lazzarato and other post(Marxist) authors such as Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, this type of labour can be found in the cultural and artistic fields (visual arts, fashion), in the production of software, advertising, and so forth. The concept emerged as a way of thinking capitalist transformations, and its purpose was to grasp changes in the concept of production. The commodity of labour contributed to what Italian post-workerism (*operaismo*) labelled precarious labour – example of the ‘precariat’, that is exploitation sometimes carefully masked by the improved conditions of the workplace (as examined in the previous section).

In my view, Takala’s approach dismantles the polarity commonly applied to the concept of immaterial labour. More specifically, she revokes the split between communicative and uncommunicative, author and audience in an environment that it is not neutral. As a ‘material worker’ she is involved in a process that could be defined as intellectual though not executional in a conventional way, but shaped by the demands of capitalism, in which self-centredness and self-valorization become central; as a ‘immaterial worker’ she is producing subjectivity by devoting herself to unproductivity – paradoxically, this inactivity works against what is demanded by capitalist requirements of production, namely cooperation, collective coordination and skilled communication normalised by management. Takala’s piece should be seen vis-à-vis the subject of immaterial labour as a small gesture of confrontation, mostly because the subject is highly complex and full of contradictions. This makes even more sense when we realise that Lazzarato has rejected the term that he himself proposed.

The concept of immaterial labour was filled with ambiguities. Shortly after writing those articles I decided to abandon the idea and haven’t used it since. One of the ambiguities it created had to do with the concept of immateriality. Distinguishing between the material and the immaterial was a theoretical complication we were never able to resolve [...] People interpreted *material* and *immaterial* as opposites: there was immaterial work on the one hand – the work of artists or architects for example –

and traditional work on the other. We couldn't seem to escape this polarity between the two terms and that was a constant source of confusion. The concept was intended to be political in nature but it was recast in a socio-economic light as soon as it was published [...] This wasn't at all what I had intended, I wasn't interested in putting things into separate categories. So I abandoned the concept altogether and worked on subjectivity production instead (Lazzarato, 2010: p.12).

Looking back to Takala's behaviour in *The Trainee*, we can say that she subverts the notion of exhaustion by devoting herself to inactivity. Curiously enough, it was not the figure of the supervisor empowered by the system that he represents that felt unconformable with the situation, but rather her coworkers who appear to be less tolerant. By refusing her compulsion to work, Takala threatens the sense of purpose that often characterises corporate employees. This reveals that workplace discipline no longer needs to be entirely administered by managers or supervisors but has instead become a system of self-management. Still, what her colleagues ignore is that this apparent intangible labour is in fact a practice procedure that begins precisely with brainwork. *The Trainee* seems to embrace the ambiguities raised by immaterial labour instead of ignoring them, that our ideas today have a more tangible significance than before. Ultimately, Takala's piece acquires more pertinence if we see it as another small yet important step to surpass the impasse caused by immaterial labour in the way she intersects different postures and visions, and this is exactly what she does with her moments of strangeness at Deloitte.

A crucial aspect that needs to be mentioned is how Takala's project is understood by Deloitte's administrative managers. We already know that her strategy of refusal is situated in the opposite end of social and artistic patterns of resistance like those defended by 'socially engaged art'. Practices similar to Takala's approach incorporate a double-game situated between the corporation and the artistic field, securing a space for manoeuvre. Given Deloitte's sponsorship and direct collaboration – we know that the supervisor did not feel uncomfortable with her fictional character because he knew that she was playing it – Takala's subversion may be seen as uncritical. However, as Takala assures in a conversation;

Throughout the whole process of *The Trainee* I was aware of the fact that Deloitte could benefit from the collaboration, and that I could not prevent them from taking over of my work for their own purposes. At the same time, I saw the collaboration as a possibility to produce something

that cannot be reduced to a creative input for Deloitte's benefit but can also be critical and operate completely outside of Deloitte's control, thus contributing to agendas that might be completely opposite to Deloitte's. I think I managed to do that without causing conflict with Deloitte or compromising my work. The piece reveals existing tensions rather than makes value judgments. As much as I would like to work outside the reach of corporations like Deloitte, I do not believe in completely independent positions. I prefer to acknowledge their existence and power and see what I can do regardless, than to ignore them (Lourenço, 2016).

On the other hand, we can imagine that Deloitte's interest in the work, and by extension in contemporary art, is based on strategic marketing. To have collaborative projects with artists and art institutions contributes to a more positive image of the company. In the current culture of neoliberalism, image has almost a superior value to that of goods. If the image is being carelessly produced a company might find many of its costs of doing business rising dramatically; in this sense the image is fundamental for maintaining a high level of competition. In this regard, Deloitte is no different from other companies. Looking to the project as a game as they did, the managers at least, inevitably places the employees as players of the game as well. But because they were not aware of the real procedures of the project, we can envision them more as pawns in a game of manipulation. When viewed from the perspective of Deloitte, *The Trainee* worked as a test to see how the employees would respond to a situation that challenged their routine.

Takala's work represents the ambiguous situation in which post-conceptual self-reflexive practices find themselves in the current situation of art and corporate institutionalisation. On the one hand, artists portray themselves as being critical and against the current power structure, corporate or otherwise, while on the other hand, their activities are financed by a group of collectors who are pillars of that same structure – we know that Deloitte has purchased Takala's piece and has been investing in a large collection of contemporary art. Artists like Takala have clearly renounced the making of art objects and concentrate their efforts on the individual (the artist often emerges as being the piece) following the 1960s dematerialization of artwork. In so doing, their processes have become apparently unproductive. There is a refusal or a distortion of the artwork, which is simultaneously a misrepresentation of artistic activity. Certainly, Takala provides a service to the corporation but not a common service. This is a service that somehow entraps the sponsors in their admiration towards contemporary art and their own image, a blindness that inhibits them from seeing what

the project has really unveiled. The critical position of Takala can be found in her ability to create and play the game.

I think humour is the main weapon of struggle against power and capitalism.

Burak Delier, *Freedom has no script*, at Iniva, London, 2014

6.4. Irony as practice: Burak Delier's *Crisis and Control*

6.4.1. From irony to tragedy

The video installation, *Crisis and Control* from 2013, by Turkish artist Burak Delier is an awkward piece. Contrary to Farocki's film and Takala's video, where a sense of awkwardness is gradually unveiled through the use of ambiguous sentences, in Delier's video, which was not commissioned by a corporation, the spectator is confronted with moments of visual awkwardness. In a blunt way, Delier mocks the holistic side of corporations and the condition of 'white collar' workers.

In *Crisis and Control* [fig. 5-6], we can see corporate employees taking on a series of difficult yoga positions in the rooms and corridors of a glitzy company dressed in their formal working clothes. While adopting the demanding positions, the workers begin an emotional discussion about the conflicting relationship of their careers and personal lives. Their behaviour is far from the self-confident worker often associated with corporations. Instead they expose a vulnerable and moody disposition in relation to working conditions. In one of the scenes of the video, a corporate worker/actor in a yoga position at the workspace initiates a monologue, which I transcribe as follows:

I think I've gained enough experience. I believe I have reached a point where I could teach more people, more things. Now, it might be better to do something for myself, rather than for a brand. I do not like the way the people work where I am employed at the moment because they work in a very self-centered way, they do not work as a team. Meanwhile I am experiencing problems due to the egos of a few people. I could deal with them but it would lower my performance at work (2013).

The monologues continue in other scene:

I sometimes find difficult to belong. After all if I were a sales manager, I would be responsible for the sales performance, and if the sales were good, I would be in charge of the accomplishment. In fact nothing is in my hands, but on the other hand I have to control everything. Are the sales moving in line with the budget? Is the procurement plan taking place according to the budget? If not, why? Is profitability falling, or rising? (2013)



Fig. 5

Burak Delier, *Crisis and Control* (2013), video still

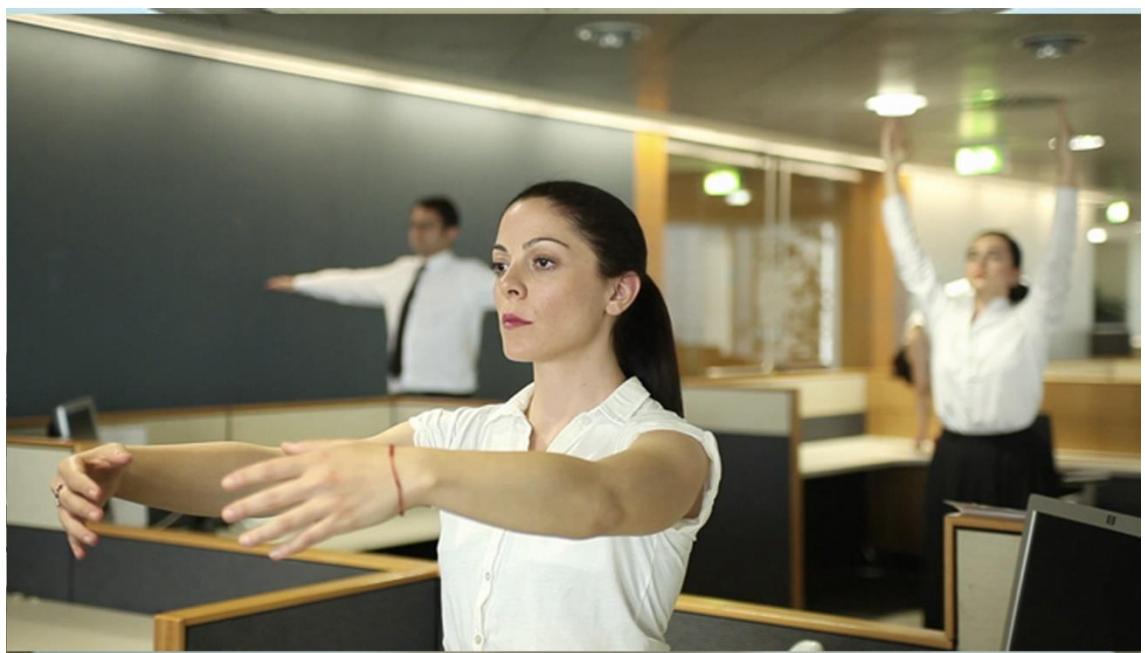


Fig. 6

Burak Delier, *Crisis and Control* (2013), video still

The workers expose contrasting feelings alternating between hope and frustration, empathy and discontent. The yoga exercises are intended to bring an inner peace, but because they are done inside the corporation it makes the situation absurd. The workers seem to have lost a sense of awareness in relation to their exhaustive position both literally and metaphorically.

The piece touches upon the new approach of corporations of a more holistic atmosphere in line with what Quickborner Team defend, that is a good quality environment imposed through flexible post-Fordist principles. But contrary to Farocki's documentary, *A New Product*, where the consultants of the Quickborner Team use optimistic speech to persuade their clients about the benefits of a well designed environment, in Delier's video, we can only perceive feelings of disenchantment and exhaustion despite the glitzy ambience of the corporation. The level of inauthenticity is also different between the two artworks. While Farocki unveils the artificiality of real meetings by letting the consultants speak for themselves, Delier creates a highly controllable staged setting. However, Delier's video is not entirely fictional. The 'actors' are real managers or office workers who indeed practice yoga and whose statements may transmit real feelings about a possible internal crisis. But, by asking questions to the actors/workers about their professional and personal problems, Delier induces certain behaviours, leading them to the aspects that he really wishes to reveal in the work: absurdity and irony.

With this approach, Delier brings a hybrid form of what is frequently named delegated performance. The term has been expounded by Bishop to define a genre in artistic practices that hires specialists of other fields to undertake a job or perform at a particular place on behalf of the artist by following instructions. In this framework, a collective body of people is hired to perform their own socio-economic category (Bishop, 2012: p. 219). Bishop relates this trend to artists³² that have a propensity for socially engaged practices that take within the gallery or the public space, and somehow owe much to the body art tradition of the late 1960s. At the same time, according to Bishop, these artists 'diverge from their predecessors by using other people as the material of their work, thus lacking a sense of personal transgression that often characterised the practices of the 1960s' (Bishop, 2012: p. 223).

³²Some of the artists that practice delegated performance include Annika Eriksson, Dora García, Jeremy Deller, Maurizio Cattelan, Santiago Sierra, Tania Bruguera, Tino Sehgal, amongst others.

Bishop's definition of delegated performance could easily correspond to Delier's approach. However, there are some differences in terms of context and motive. The work of Delier cannot be consider a socially engaged practice in the way Bishop describes, that is practices that somehow deal with issues of representation, gender and minorities within the process of globalisation. Moreover, the performative act in Delier's work is more attached to the world of corporations, and it is from this sphere that he usually departs to construct the semi-scripted speech-acts proclaimed by the corporate workers that he hires. In this particular piece, Delier does reclaim and/or assemble a collective body of people whose sphere of expertise is other than that of art to describe a human behaviour that seems to have difficulty in dealing with the reality imposed by contemporary capitalism.

As noted by Bishop, the artistic trend of hiring people from other spheres outside art has developed together with managerial changes in the economy at large. The term outsourcing became a business catchword in the 1990s to describe activities from service call centers to financial and market analysis stimulated within the process of globalisation. Most of these activities have negative connotations as they are connected with multinational companies that absolve themselves of the legal responsibility for exploitative labour conditions (Bishop, 2012: p. 231). The point in common between business outsourcing and artistic outsourcing is performance, or better said, the improvement of performance. But there are differences as well. Contrary to outsourcing in business whose aim is to decrease risk, in the artistic practices that follow this trend, there is an intention to increase unpredictability (Bishop, 2012: p. 231) – a statement that is highly debatable given financial markets propensity for risk as a way of speculating.

In her analysis of delegated performance, Bishop is aware of a possible complicity between art and corporate management with respect to outsourcing heightened by economic changes. At times it seems even paradoxical. If on the one hand artistic practices resort to outsourcing as a way to criticise the capitalist system from inside, on the other hand, they cannot avoid an emphasis on recruitment and the entire process that is required for contracting people to perform. There has been a shift in contemporary art about the conditions necessary for the realisation of delegated performance. This means that performance, in the past twenty years, has become 'industrialised', mobilising large numbers of performers and audiences (Bishop, 2012: p. 232). But it also means that artists are able to appropriate what has mainly been the role of institutions: to hire and

delegate. Because some artists and curators know from their personal experiences what exploitation means – the commodification of the individual by capitalism – they wish to play with it.³³ Looking to Delier's humorous strategy in *Crisis and Control*, a question must be raised: what role does irony play in this particular piece as a way to contest corporate structures?

Irony is an old concept. Idealist or realist, the concept has been tackled in various fields and has a rich theoretical framework surrounding it – from ancient philosophy to the romantics like Friedrich Schlegel, Stendhal, Victor Hugo, but also Friedrich Nietzsche, Maurice Blanchot, Paul De Man, among others. But it is in ancient philosophy that we can find its foundations, in the so-called ‘Socratic irony’ grounded in concealment and disguise. In his method shown in the *Platonic dialogues*, Socrates acted as if he did not know the solution to a certain problem in order to unveil and demonstrate the inconsistencies of opposing stances. Essentially, Socrates would enter into a process of dissimulation of knowledge, or more bluntly, feigned ignorance, to create the necessary conditions to disarm the arguments of his opponents. Later in the 19th century, reflecting on the concept of irony employed by Socrates, Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard perceived irony as the ‘infinite, absolute negativity – a position and more polemical toward the social and political environment than the irony of life that accompanies the person who has not made the grounding decision about the nature of his/her person’ (Perkins, 2001: p.7). However, some authors agree that it is not clear how these two forms of irony are related. Despite the difficulties found in Kierkegaard’s reading of the Socratic irony – Perkins believes that *The Concept of Irony* remains the least understood of Kierkegaard’s texts – the shadow of Socrates would prevail in Kierkegaard’s conception of irony, which is distinguished on two levels: to be used as a rhetorical tool and to put emphasis on Socratic irony. As Perkins states,

The image of Socrates which he developed, along with a renewal of religious conviction, preclude his ever becoming a sophist or a romantic...there is every reason to think that Socrates is the model of Kierkegaard’s self-identification as a *réflecteur* and also the source of the concepts of life-development and life-view developed in the critique of Andersen (Perkins, 2001: p.7).

³³For example, French curator Pierre Bal-Blanc performed for two and a half months in Felix Gonzalez-Torre’s work *Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)* in 1991. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Bal-Blanc’s project *La Monnaie Vivant* deals with delegated performance.

For the majority of authors that discuss Kierkegaard's dissertation on irony this is a very dense work, a 'gold mine of hermeneutic reflection' (Olesen, 2001), an 'erotic hermeneutics within patriarchal framework' (Walsh, 2001), or even the 'negativity of irony' (Andic, 2001) – the subject lives in suspicion and in the infinity of possibilities. For literary critic Wayne Booth (1975), Kierkegaard is one of the most interesting authors that have deliberated on the concept of irony. But in Kierkegaard's complex interpretation, irony is an autonomous concept that has its own reality independent of historical manifestations, which according to Booth is not strange for anyone working in the Hegelian tradition. Such an interpretation, however, does not serve Booth, as he claims, 'to deal with specific ironies in the real world, to understand how they make themselves understood or fail to do so, is not by looking at how abstract ideas interrelate conceptually in the real world' (Booth, 1975: p. xiii). Booth examines various levels of irony, and he frames them mainly in the literary context, taking into consideration the relationship between author and reader, a context beyond our interest here.³⁴ There is, however, a point when Booth begins to expose the ambiguities of the term irony that is important for our own interpretation of irony within the work of Delier. Irony has 'come to stand for so many things that it might lose its usefulness altogether' (Booth, 1975: p. 2). On the other hand, it is a subject which still challenges us with a concrete problem: the reading and misreading of ironies or in other words, how ironies make themselves understood or fail to do so. Booth's statement is meant to emphasise that irony is indeed a complex concept and thus should be expounded from different angles.

The highpoint of irony in the visual arts can be found with the modernist avant-gardes as a way to criticise capitalist bourgeoisie. Modernist artists were admirable in theatricalising life by triggering anarchist performances based on provocation and irony. The mock trials held by the Dadaists epitomise instances of this mode of behaviour. One of the trials, the *Barrès Trial*, held at the Salle des Sociétés (Paris) in 1921,³⁵ sought to denounce the growing bourgeois conformism of the author Maurice Barrès, once a great defender of freedom and individualism. Each member of the Dada group dressed up in the ceremonial legal costume of the Palais de Justice and assumed a specific role (defence, public prosecutor), while Barrès was represented by a dummy to

³⁴Booth examines three major lines of irony: 1) types of irony that are stable with a set of limited reading task, 2) instable ironies that are difficult to interpret, 3) and the so called 'infinite absolute negativities' of Romanticism.

³⁵The performers of the trial included Andre Breton, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Louis Aragon, Pierre Deval, Philippe Soupault, Théodore Fraenkel, Tristan Tzara, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Madame Rachilde (pseudonym of Marguerite Vallette-Eymery), Sergei Romov, and Benjamin Péret.

the audience and jury. The purpose of the ‘trial’, according to Andre Breton, was to ‘determine the extent to which a man could be held accountable if his will to power led him to champion conformist values that diametrically opposed the ideas of his youth’ (Bishop, 2012: p.72). For Bishop, this mock trial marks a turning point in Dada performance from a phase of nonsense anarchy to a form of parody as a formal space of debate, a change with consequences for the internal division of the group. For some such as Hugnet and Ribemont-Dessaignes the change from anarchic negation to a form of judging was against what Dada always defended (Bishop, 2012: p.73). The Dada performances were in fact politicised in the rejection of capitalist structures. Taking place at a time when performativity was far from being theorised as a conceptual device, the theatricalisation of performance was seen as a cherished artistic mode for destabilising conventions. In this regard, the socio-cultural circumstances in which parody or irony were put into practice during the avant-gardes diverged considerably from present-day global economic movements. This begged another kind of artistic attitude, as Hutcheon argues, one that aims to use irony as a way to legitimise and subvert from inside that which it parodies. The *inside* herein makes all the difference. Therefore, I return to the question: what role does irony play in Delier’s piece as a way to contest corporate structures?

In the beginning of his short essay on Farocki’s documentary, Fisher asserts that while watching *A New Product*, we just want to laugh. Fisher uses the term ‘tragicomic’, a combination of absurdity and tragedy to describe the consultants’ expressions and behaviours. The laugh comes from the ‘[...] Quickbourner consultants’ investment in a jargon that is simultaneously unintelligible and inane; their painful attempts at pedagogy’ (Fisher, 2014: p.65). By letting the consultants reveal themselves, Farocki confronts us with comic characters, workers pretending to be actors, which inevitably provokes a laugh in the audience. The same happens when we watch Takala’s piece *The Trainee*. Although in a different context and with different motivations, we start laughing when Takala replies to her coworkers at Deloitte that she is doing a bit of brainwork while sitting motionless at her desk. A growing complicity is gradually unveiled between the artist and the audience which does not include the coworkers, who fail to understand the inappropriate behaviour for a busy corporation such as Deloitte. In both works, there is a type of irony that urges the viewer to read between the lines to a point that we – the viewers – wonder if what we are seeing is really happening. However, in Delier’s piece irony is given straightforwardly. We sit and wait but the

laugh does not come. Irony is put into practice in close connection to what is said and what is done. Instead of forming a consistent whole between the workers' actions and their speeches, the words and actions do not match: they intentionally contradict the real situation and the feelings of those speaking. All of this is revealed quickly, and we immediately perceive that this is a staged scenario that is meant to be amusing in its absurdity. The only element of surprise in the piece is that the actors are in fact real workers. In the introduction of this research, I stated that not all artistic projects presented as case studies carry the same level of pertinence when it comes to criticising corporate structures, and this is quite accurate in relation to *Crisis and Control*. What fails in this piece is that humour is given for free, which is to say there is little space in this type of awkwardness for misinterpreting the lines. And sometimes we need to misinterpret them, at least for a moment.

Chapter Seven - Performativity in the conference setting

By ‘propaganda’, of course, I don’t mean just the written and spoken word. I mean everything that by direct or indirect action can prepare people for the free society and break down resistance to its coming.

Fernando Pessoa, *The Anarchist Banker* (1922), 1997.

7.1. Carey Young’s *I am a Revolutionary* and Jan Peter Hammer’s *The Anarchist Banker*

7.1.1. Becoming someone else

These two pieces have a 9 year gap between them. Carey Young’s video *I am a Revolutionary* from 2001 [fig.7-8] is an emblematic piece of the early 2000s, reflecting on the influence of corporate modes of being in daily life. Although extremely short, the video shows an odd situation which the viewer cannot ignore. A woman (the artist) dressed as a business man located in the empty office of a glittering corporation incessantly repeats ‘I am a revolutionary’. Beside her is the likely coach of this corporate training session, observing all the movements and minimising the fact that she is not capable of interiorising the statement. It is of common knowledge, at least for someone that deals with art, that she is alluding to Joseph Beuys’ idea that art is the only revolutionary force included in his expanded notion of Social Sculpture. By readapting the statement into an environment that seems to contradict the very essence of being a revolutionary, Young is purposely subverting Beuys’ revolutionary ideals. Perhaps no other work of Young conveys so closely and yet so ambiguously the interplay between artists and corporate actors, art and the corporate world.

The video transpires tediousness and a certain aridness reinforced by the coldness of the corporate atmosphere. However, like many of Young’s other artworks, we need to

read beneath the apparent dryness of the image. The richness of Young's work is usually hidden in the small gestures, expressions, and especially in the references behind them. In fact, this piece has more layers than it shows. When Young produced the video, she was far from knowing that a few years later Beuys would become a model of creativity for corporate management to the point that his works and statements would be included as guiding principles in business and management books. Still, as someone that has acquired experience in the corporate field, Young is aware that the term 'revolution' has entered corporate jargon to describe changes in a world in which individuals have reached a new level of efficiency, flexibility and personal fulfilment. This can also be deduced in the way corporate gurus aim to incorporate an artistic style. In the face of these changes, Young intentionally doubts artistic tenacity for a revolutionary stance. But because her character embodies the role of a business woman,

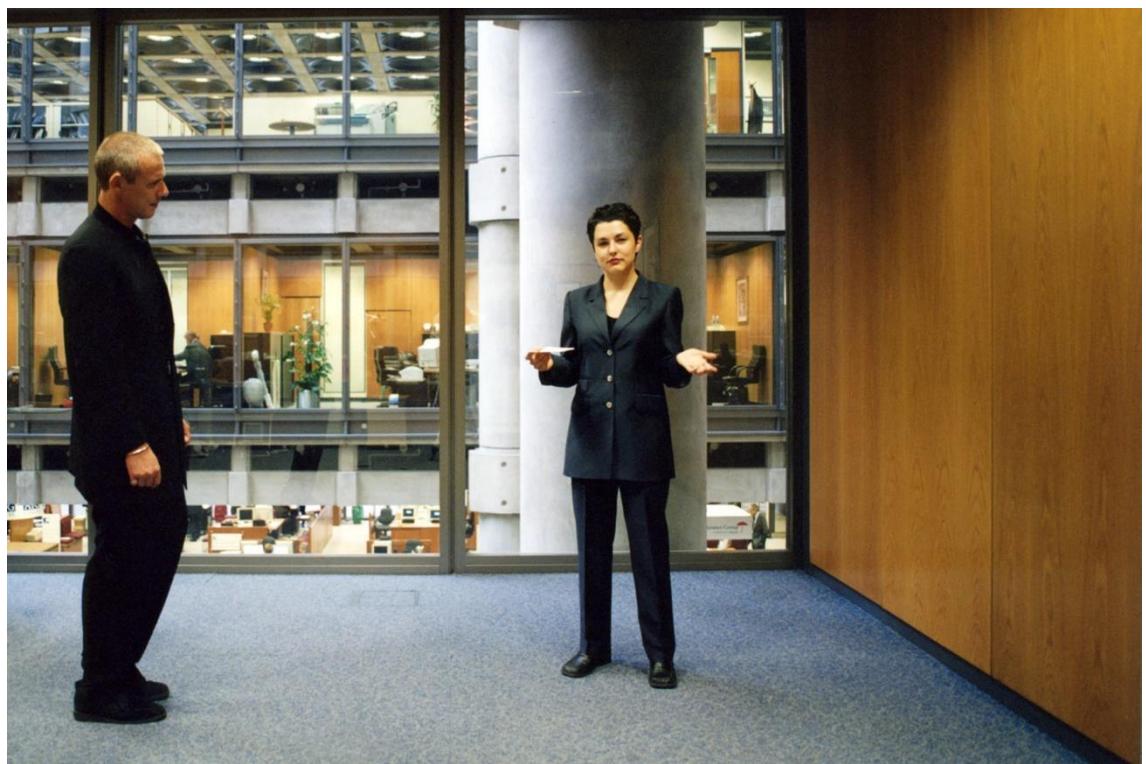


Fig. 7

Carey Young, *I am a Revolutionary* (2001), video still



Fig. 8

Carey Young, *I am a Revolutionary* (2001), video still

she is also doubtful of a corporate aptitude for a revolutionary posture. Ultimately, she doubts the very term revolution whose appropriations by different sectors of society seem to have diminished its historical significance. This state of doubtfulness carries both a serious and a non-serious pose: the first is suggested by the solemn presentation of the training session as if it were the first day of an employee at work struggling to give a positive image of herself, the second is sensed in the repetition of the statement, leading to a feeling of frustration and disappointment about a problem we know to exist but find difficult to decode.

Jan Peter Hammer's video *The Anarchist Banker* from 2010 [fig. 9-10] is a re-enactment in the format of a talk show of a story written in 1922, *O Banqueiro Anarquista* by Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Hammer adapts and displaces the Portuguese narrative to the aftermath of the recent financial crisis. The original story portrays the character of a Portuguese bourgeois entrepreneur turned into a banker in a puzzling dialogue with another man (most likely his secretary) about the essence of anarchism. During the conversation, the banker with anarchist ambitions attempts to convince the young man that he was and still is an anarchist. Making use of a rhetoric that is both confusing and inconsistent, the banker states that all his life he acted as an

anarchist in theory and in practice. Raised in the middle of a poor working class, he soon perceived that he needed to revolt against the injustice of the social conventions that render inequalities possible. ‘The true evil, indeed, the only evil, are the social conventions and fictions which become superimposed on natural realities, everything from family to money, from religion to the state’, says the banker (Pessoa, 1997: p. 91). Not entirely convinced, the young secretary wants to know how he became an anarchist without any apparent contradiction. What follows is the fragment of a senseless dialogue based on absurd arguments:

Banker: [...] you think that I found anarchism impracticable and decided, as I said before, that bourgeois society is the only defensible and just society. Isn’t that it?

Secretary: Well, yes, more or less.

Banker: [...] I’ve told you again and again that I remain an anarchist... If I had become a banker and a business man for the reasons you think, I would not be an anarchist, but a bourgeois.

Secretary: Yes, you’re right. But then how the devil...? No, go on, go on.

Banker: [...] I found it unbearable being merely a passive anarchist, just listening to speeches and discussing them with friends. No, I needed to do something. I needed to work and struggle for the cause of the oppressed and the victims of the social conventions [...] I started to draw up a plan for action. What does the anarchist want? Freedom – freedom from himself and others, for humanity as a whole [...] Now here, my friend, is where I put my clear thinking into action. Working for the future is very well, I thought; working so that others should be free is only right. But what about me? If I were a Christian, I would happily work for the future of others; but then if I was a Christian, I wouldn’t be an anarchist because then such inequalities would have no importance in our brief lives [...] More than I asked: why should I sacrifice myself? I had moments of disbelief, I think you’ll agree. I am a materialist; I only have one life, why should I bother about consciousness-raising and social inequality. For someone who has only one life, who admits no other law than that of nature, who doesn’t believe in eternal life [...] why on earth should he defend altruism and sacrifice himself for humanity, if altruism and self-sacrifice are also unnatural? (Pessoa, 1997: pp. 96-99).

Before a puzzled secretary, the rhetoric continues to reveal a highly narcissistic individual whose ability to turn an illogical idea into seemingly reasonable thinking appears to convince the secretary, or at least to instil a reasonable doubt, that he is in fact an anarchist. This story – referred by Pessoa as a ‘dialectical satire’ and extensively adapted to theatre – divulges an ironic view about the politics of the Portuguese bourgeois society of the early 20th century.

Inspired by Pessoa's narrative, Hammer (2010) constructs a fictional talk-show following the same type of dialogue in which one of the characters speaks in the same rhetorical tone of the Portuguese banker. Over 30 minutes, the actors John Quincy Long and Tomas Spencer take the place of the banker and his interlocutor to discuss the contradictions of neoliberal society. Quincy Long plays the character Arthur Ashenking, a former CEO of an insolvent investment bank, interviewed by Spencer, which embodies the character of the host named David Hall. The interview is initially centred on the bankruptcy of the bank over which Ashenking presided for a long time, which he ironically ends up leaving with an additional retirement benefit. This fictional episode inevitably evokes the multinational bank Goldman Sachs' near bankruptcy, which is claimed to have initiated the 2008 financial crisis. Without showing any regret about his obscure actions and its impact on others, Ashenking persists in a highly self-centred discourse while claiming to be a fighter. This is made in a colloquial tone visible in the usage of the first name. At some point in the interview, Hall asks him how someone that was always an anarchist becomes a financial professional.



Fig. 9

Jan Peter Hammer, *The Anarchist Banker* (2010), video still



Fig. 10

Jan Peter Hammer, *The Anarchist Banker* (2010), video still

Ashenking presents a series of superficial reasons that are meant to convince the interviewer. Although displaced to a different context, the arguments that he uses to convince the host are similar to the banker in Pessoa's narrative. Ashenking was also born in the midst of an unprivileged working class background, he was an activist during the Vietnam War and he is against social inequality. Also like Pessoa's banker, he thinks that only through personal success is one able to reclaim the 'natural order' and to fight the 'evils of convention', and eventually, to achieve the freedom desired by anarchist society.

At first glance the two pieces *I am Revolutionary* and *The Anarchist Banker* do not appear to have anything in common. They take place in different settings, the discourses have dissimilar presentations and the characters seem distant in terms of their performative roles. Despite these differences, both works avoid dispersion by centring attention on a type of rhetoric that is meant to persuade. As viewers, we never see the audiences they aim to convince simply because they do not exist on the sites – it is as if the artists leave for the viewers' consideration which types of audiences would be interested in these performative moments. Most importantly, the protagonists share a pathetic desire for becoming someone else, which can be translated into a quest for a more radical posture on the part of individuals that are deeply embedded in neoliberal ideology. They have in common the correlative terms anarchism and revolutionary,

which are expected to be used in social riots and avant-garde movements rather than by people and in contexts that appear to be antagonistic to those radical forms of being. Whilst Young's piece interrogates who can today claim to be a revolutionary or where we can currently find a revolutionary condition, Hammer's piece reveals that the ambition for being an anarchist has been entrenched in the capitalist mentality for a long time.

Capitalism and later on neoliberalism as an ideology and economic though, produce a form of individualism. At its foundation is the idea that individuals should be free in a society of market relations, a positive foundational aspect that appears to have brought with it various practices of exploitation. There are tendencies within anarchism that also privilege the individual, namely Joseph Proudhon's (2012) ideas on mutualism present in his works, particularly in *The Philosophy of Poverty, System of Economical Contradictions* originally published in 1846, and Max Stirner's (1993) egoism whose theory is expounded in his compound work *The Ego and Its Own* originally published in 1844. Mutualism is highly paradoxical: while critical of capitalism it supported large industries and the free market economy, it opposed socialists but advocated a form of individualist anarchism, and it is based on cooperation as well as on competition. Fragments of these paradoxes and individualistic tendency can be read in Proudhon's analysis of political economy and socialism:

Thus society finds itself, at its origin, divided into two great parties: the one traditional and essentially hierarchical, which, according to the object it is considering, calls itself by turns royalty or democracy, philosophy or religion; the other socialism, which, coming to life at every crisis of civilization, proclaims itself preeminently anarchical and atheistic [...] Now, modern civilization has demonstrated that in a conflict of this nature the truth is found, not in the exclusion of one of the opposites, but wholly and solely in the reconciliation of the two [...] It may be, then, that political economy, in spite of its individualistic tendency and its exclusive affirmations, is a constituent part of social science, in which the phenomena that it describes are like the starting-points of a vast triangulation and the elements of an organic and complex whole (Proudhon, 2012: pp. 51-52).

Mutualism has recently been reinstated by K. A. Carson (2006), which continues to see the free market economy as a liberating form of contact between people, especially if it is based on voluntary cooperation. At the same time, contemporary mutualism maintains a highly sceptical view of state intervention due to its ambiguous relationship

with capitalist corporations and the desire to preserve hierarchical methods of organisation.

The basis of Max Stirner's egoism is the idea that individuals must pursue their own self-interest and self-realisation. This would be an alternative path in the face of the increasing control of religious and social institutions. In the introduction of the reprinted edition of 1993, Sydney Parker describes Stirner's criticism as follows:

[...] Stirner proceeds to criticise mercilessly all those doctrines and beliefs that demand subordination of the interests of the individual to those of the state, God, humanity, society, or some other fiction. He investigates what these terms mean; what, if anything, they are based on; He exposes the bondage of the individual to fixed ideas. He declares his hostility to every creed that would crush or deny individuality (Parker, 1993: pp. vii-viii).

Considered to have a profound influence on his left-Hegelian contemporaries, Friedrich Nietzsche and the philosophical tradition of nihilism, Stirner's theory on egoism is highly complex in terms of structure and requires a profound analysis elsewhere in order to avoid a simplistic reading of it. These variants of anarchism have in common the emphasis on individual self-interest over external elements and the refusal of sacrifice. All individuals have the opportunity to release their nonconformist position; it all depends on how they do it. It was these apparent similarities with capitalist self-centredness that Pessoa wanted to play with through irony and that Hammer aims to relocate to the present by reinforcing its contemporariness. Likewise, Young's primary concern in her piece is the individual, either the artist or the corporate employee, in which the personal enterprise becomes a personal discipline on the verge of losing its revolutionary stance. More important than the possible similarities between anarchism and capitalism about individual self-interest and free-enterprise, and the profound differences between them in terms of hierarchical organisation and governmental structures, these pieces show that certain behaviours exceed time and geography, are indeed universal and timeless despite capitalist structural changes.

This word (government) must be allowed the very broad meaning it had in the sixteenth century. ‘Government’ did not refer only to political structures or to the management of states; rather, it designated the way in which the *conduct* of individuals or of groups might be directed... To govern, in this sense, is to control the possible field of action of others.

Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power” in *Power: Volume 3: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, 2002

7.2. Daved Barry’s, *The Art of Governance*

7.2.1. The usefulness of contemporary art between optimism and scepticism

The analysis of the conference ‘A Arte da Governança’ (The Art of Governance) held at Serralves Foundation in Porto, Portugal, in 2011 [fig.11] has two objectives: 1) to observe the growing interest in artistic skills for the organisation of the corporate setting from a management perspective and 2) to show a clash between different mindsets in a context (Portugal) where the interaction between art and corporate management is still a recent phenomenon under investigation.

The conference took place within a broader programme of conferences entitled *O Imaterial: Os Novos Paradigmas da Contemporaneidade* (*The Immaterial: The New Paradigms of Contemporaneity*) (2011), which aimed to debate the role of economy in different spheres of contemporary societies. In the conference, ‘The Art of Governance’, professor of the Business School of Copenhagen Daved Barry discussed the ways in which contemporary art has been useful for the managing of the work and place of the corporations. Barry focused on how corporate executives are experiencing artistic thinking and methods in the corporate workplace. In the introductory phase of the conference, Barry’s presumption is that he is speaking to an audience that is somehow interested in the relationship of art and governance, art and leadership, and art and management. Actually, speech plays an important role in the conference as this

presentation relies heavily on rhetoric and word game in order to unfold the idea of the art of governance.

Barry begins with an overall question: can we have an art of governance that is based on contemporary art practice? The art practice he is referring to is not craftsmanship but something that he defines as the ‘art of surprise’ and the ‘art of difference’. To clarify this idea, he proposes another question: is it possible to move from an artwork or ‘art that works’ to an ‘art that works at work’? And could it be valuable? This is a complex question to which Barry still does not have the answer. He then quotes Stephen Davies (1991, 2002), professor of Philosophy at the University of Auckland, to define the notion of artwork:

Work that intentionally subverts, rejects or redirects, default conventions and art practices most of the time in original and unusual ways, using devices like symbols, quotation, allusion, parody, irony, allegory and alike (Barry, 2011).



Fig. 11

Daved Barry, *The Art of Governance* (2011), video still of conference

In light of this statement, Barry agrees that contemporary art has much to do with deconstructing things, turning them over, and most importantly, it is all about contestation and creating new understandings. In the meantime, Barry introduces another term which he calls ‘workarts’, defined as ‘art that challenges the workplace’ and through this, ‘tries to do better work’. He then uses a graphic to clarify the formula workarts and its development. In so doing, Barry observes that while the relationship between art and management goes way back in history, it was mostly based on collecting art, that is until ‘the 1960-70s and 1980s we move to this idea of intervention, that the art should do something, it shouldn’t just be about appreciation, beauty or decoration, it should be active instead’ (2011).

Even if the role of corporations as collectors of art did not cease to exist, a major change has been taking place, which according to Barry, is followed by a movement from Art (with a capital A) up to art (with a small a). He defines the first as the type of ‘Art’ that is aim for by the professional art community, such as art institutions, galleries and museums, the Art that is designed for the marketplace and to impress the art world. The second is the type of ‘art’ that is surprising, original, unusual, but is not meant for the art world, rather it is aimed at a niche of corporations that wishes to experience art in the workplace.

With this we see a change that is happening in art, and that would be from this idea of contemplation where ‘I am sited back away from the art’ to ‘I have to do something’. I’m the artist – I may not be a good artist but I need to be actively involved. And this is profound as we will see; it has a lot of implications for what we do and how we invest (Barry, 2011).

After this cryptic statement Barry starts to unravel his ideas by giving examples. Given the amount of examples provided by Barry, I have selected four to describe here. The first example, Deutsche Bank, Barry introduces into the category of art collection. For some time now banks have been investing considerably in art, and Deutsche Bank is no exception. This particular bank has invested hundreds of millions of euros in art, and as Barry points out in the PowerPoint, the bank announced that the ‘refurbished Deutsche Bank HQs houses a selection of artworks that reflects the new orientation of the Deutsche Bank collection’, as we can read in the bank’s collection website. According to Barry, this new orientation means that banks in general should be more efficient, fresh and original. In effect, Deutsche Bank just follows the scheme of many other corporations that have been purchasing art: besides being a form of obtaining profit, it is mostly a strategy for marketing their image. But, for Barry, this form of collecting also hides a less visible intention, which is appropriation followed by territorialisation.³⁶ When Deutsche Bank administrators acquire other small banks they immediately take away all the art from the old company and replace it with their own pieces. Thus, in

³⁶I have substituted the term ‘territorialism’, which is in fact the word used by Daved Barry in the conference, for territorialisation. In my view, the term territorialisation is more accurate to express his idea of a company aiming to buy and organise a specific territory according to its own priorities. The term territorialism is more dubious because it has a historical meaning, namely it is associated with a social system that gives authority in a state to the landowners, and it can also be a system of church government based on civil power.

Barry's view, Deutsche Bank is just one version of art collection and one version of the art of governance.

Barry includes the following examples in the category of organisational art restricting it to what he calls 'interventionist art'. These are examples that somehow contest work, economy or management by bringing a dystopian vision of the workplace. Barry's first example is Kazimir Malevich's work, more precisely a particular painting that shows a group of people working in what appears to be a laboratory, while in the background of the painting we can see cattle walking freely in the countryside. The metaphor of people confined to a specific site working like machines represents for Barry an early idea of dystopia. The second example is the movie *The Matrix* (1999) where agent Smith (Hugo Weaving) is depicted as the quintessential corporate manager with thousands like him, a corporate archetype that is challenged by Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves), a computer programmer living a double life under the hacker alias 'Neo'. For Barry, their resemblance brings a simple question: does the response to dystopia perhaps become the next dystopia? The third example is the English comedian/actor Ricky Gervais, but more precisely the 'mockumentary' sitcom *The Office* (2001) created by Gervais, where he plays the central character, David Brent. His character recurrently teases corporate behaviour, the way corporate managers speak, impose their presence or motivate other people. *The Office* is meant to be a critique of corporate behaviour but also of the corporate environment in general. Gervais and his colleagues even contest the notion of corporate art when they tease with the corporate tendency for purchasing art or contracting artists to play a specific role in the corporate place (Barry, 2011).

Having said this, some aspects need to be pointed out about Barry's performative talk. At first glance, it seems that Barry is aware of the tensions that have been taking place between art and corporate management. His awareness is extensible to the way experiencing art takes various forms in the corporate place thus resonating differently for artists, workers or managers. Furthermore, he is conscious of the art tendency to deconstruct and create new understandings, and with the help of Davies quotes, he even recognises the use of allegory, parody or irony by practices that aim to subvert corporate behaviour. However, looking carefully, Barry reveals a very simplistic and schematic view of art at the same time as he considerably dismisses the internal changes of corporations and its relationship with art.

The first point that I find problematic in Barry's presentation is the schematic approach to art that ends up dictating the general lines of the conference. The language game that Barry utilises to support his arguments – the transition from artwork to 'workarts' – confines contemporary art to a narrowed schematic narrative. An example of this is the historical movement that Barry identifies from Art with a capital 'A' – the type of 'Art' that is directed by the professional art community – to art with a small 'a' – the type of 'art' that is surprising, unusual, but is only meant for a niche of corporations that wishes to experience art in the workplace – as if the art that is commissioned by art institutions could not be unusual or surprising. What is most striking about this approach is not so much the use of a schema per se, a method also adopted in the art field when necessary, but its resolution to reduce art into two main categories: the art that is meant for the professional art field and the type of art that, given its uncommon interventionism, only fits into corporations.

We can find other inconsistencies in Barry's narrative, namely the evaluation that he makes of the connection between art and corporations from the 1960s-70s onwards, when the idea of intervention started to emerge as a bridge between the two fields, thus somehow disrupting the role of art as a mere object of collection and appreciation. This statement would be acceptable if it did not give the idea of a change taking place exclusively in the field of art, which in Barry's words can be translated into the following: 'artists were tired of contemplation and decided to be more active' (2011). This is profoundly deceiving because even during modernism, when collecting art was the favourite investment of entrepreneurial art dealers, modernist avant-vanguards were far from seeing and producing art as a mere form of contemplation. Barry's statements reveal not only a lack of knowledge about the internal changes in the field of art, but also about the nuances that characterise the interplay between art and corporations throughout the past decades. It is a fact that corporate managers in the 1960s-70s were still quite suspicious about artists placements inside corporations – APG's connection with the corporate world is paradigmatic of this corporate position. But, as we have seen, corporate actors gradually changed their attitudes, and in the past decade they have become more enthusiastic with artistic methods, even if they do not understand them at all. Other inaccuracies can be found in Barry's presentation, such as Malevich's work date which Barry claims to be of the 1940s when in reality Malevich died in 1935, or the information about Henrik Schrat's project being initially commissioned by the

stock exchange company, when it was actually Schrat that applied for a grant to the Kulturstiftung der Dresden Bank to be able to do the project.

At last, Barry at no point gives a clear definition of what ‘the art of governance’ is for him, rather he maintains a vague concept of it throughout the talk that is further obscured by Barry’s questions. On one hand, it seems that Barry is making use of this expression to characterise a type of art practice surprising and unusual that impacts the work and place of corporations, but on the other, he also points out Deutsche Bank as one version of the art of governance. The expression echoes Foucault’s lectures on governmentality (2008), or more specifically ‘the art of government’, where he speaks about individuals that play an active role in their own self-government making use of their consciousness, freedom or free will. These categories are vital to understand the notion of government as they refer to a process of social regulation, but also to a process in which free individuals attempt to govern others by influencing their actions. But, no reference is made to Foucault’s notion in the conference, thus we can assume that either Barry does not know Foucault’s work on the art of government, or he just simply decided to omit its mention. Looking to Barry’s examples, we can assume that the art of government is meant for everyone that momentarily exercises some sort of power.

Barry’s presentation generated various responses from the audience. The first question came from Portuguese curator Delfim Sardo, the mediator of the conference. After observing that Barry’s presentation involved a large wall of schematic questions, Sardo asks the following: ‘considering that in the last century modernist art was much critical both in political and social terms in relation to capitalism, and by extension towards companies, how can we establish a bridge between the continuing criticism and this scenario of proximity that you just described?’ (2011). Barry invites the public to answer the question, and in so doing he opens the discussion to the general public. The audience is quite heterogeneous, including artists, curators, entrepreneurs, teachers, and Portuguese and English speakers. In the impossibility of covering all the observations that were made in the following hour of the debate, I have selected the most pertinent ones and transcribe them here.

One of the first observations came from the curator of Whitney Museum, Chrissie Iles, for whom the question of time and space in the corporate workplace is one of the aspects she detected in Barry’s presentation:

I think what you are talking about here is much dependent on the way in which organisations structure two things: time (the working day) and space. Before we even get to the question of how art can impact the thinking of the working place, isn't it incredible that in 2011 nobody has really resolved the issue of how women can have children and be productive in the workplace without being somehow compromised? If this basic question is still unresolved how can we bring art into the equation?... I think to be working in a capitalist milieu such as the US where there is little investment in people over a long term on the part of organisations needs some reflection (Iles, 2011).

Barry did not understand the association between maternity and the role of art at the workplace, however for Iles, the decision-making processes of organisations ought to be thought of holistically. Iles statement can be summarised into the following question: if organisations can use creative thinking (artistic and other) to solve various problems in the workplace, why not use this creativity to resolve one of the major obstacles to women in the workplace, such as the negligence of maternity rights. *According to Iles*, the achievement of maternity rights has not been solved simply because it is not seen as a problem within organisations.

The next observation came from the assistant curator of Serralves, Ricardo Nicolau, for whom the two fields tend to be antagonistic in terms of what they defend, at least from the viewpoint of art:

As I carefully listened to the presentation, a series of doubts start to emerge. In my view, we are discussing here two different fields – art and corporations. I think the question that Delfim Sardo made and was left without a reply is the most important, because it suggests that we are definitely dealing with two different fields, I would say even antagonistic, at least from the viewpoint of art. If we look to the examples given, mostly based on measures and measurement, I think art has been occupied in producing its own countermeasures in relation to the influence of corporations. Surely, there is a ‘canabalisation’ of artistic concepts and methods (this is unquestionable) but there is also a reaction of art to this canabalisation, which itself is a form of canabalisation, that is a reply to what corporations or ‘the art of governance’ can offer to art. In my opinion, the most perfect example of this difficult if not impossible relationship is the notion of creativity. This notion is somehow an outdated term to be use in the field of art precisely because it has been excessively exercised by those practices named ‘the art of governance’ (Nicolau, 2011).

A similar perspective came from an unidentified person in the audience, for whom the connection between the two fields might lead to a possible instrumentalisation of art:

My question comes in the sequence of what has been said formerly. In my view, art is fundamentally subversion, rupture, singularity, and does not have anything to do with economy and organisations. We are focused on the effect of art in organisations, but I ask, what is the state of art after being exposed to such manipulation in those contexts? (2011).

The next intervention is quite divergent and comes from a person that identifies himself as a manager of a small company in Porto:

I do not have a question, but a commentary. I am extremely choked after listening that art is somehow cannibalised by corporations. When we (entrepreneurs and managers) speak about creativity and innovation we are discussing huge challenges that can be comparable to the challenges in the visual arts or other forms of art such as cinema. In fact, it is my belief that arts and organisations have too much in common. This is something that I have been cherishing for a long time, and after this conference, I am quite certain that the proximity must continue (2011).

For João Fernandes, current sub-director of Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid and former art director of Serralves, in order to understand the growing proximity between the two fields, one has to go back to the moment in which art started to make up part of an industry:

In the moment that several materialisations of art turn out to be part of an industry there is a temptation to try to define functions for art. But at the same time, if we look for a function of art we are impoverishing its experience. And this is the mistake of discussions like those we are having now, because we are discussing the uses of art instead of its experience. That is why the presence of art in organisations needs to be discussed within the frame of specific projects. For example, Daved, the projects that you brought to us are a bit fragile because in some way they were obeying a mission. Also, I cannot escape to the feeling that the projects were hiding or masking something. Art extends our experience of life, but it cannot be confined to the goals of a company (Fernandes, 2011).

After one hour of debate, it is obvious that there is a polarisation between two sides: one part of the audience is rather sceptical about the use of art for problem-solving in organisations, and some of them are even reluctant to accept the points in common that

might exist between the two fields. Another part is very receptive about this proximity and quite optimistic about future connections. One of the reasons for the scepticism could be that the influence of corporate structures towards art is still a recent phenomenon in discussion in Portugal, thus generating mistrust amongst the Portuguese community. In Portugal, the connection between the two fields has been occurring mostly through art patronage, and more recently through courses in art management introduced in Portuguese universities in the area of economics – Barry himself taught art management in a Portuguese university as an interim professor. Also, there is an absence of artistic practices that engage so deeply inside corporations as in the international examples I have been examining in this research. Although the interaction between the two fields is a recent phenomenon to be discussed in Portugal, I believe this particular conference is a good example of the clash between different mindsets, despite a general tendency to evaluate the possible uses of art in corporations as a positive factor. As accurately stated by art director João Fernandes, the presence of art in organisations needs to be discussed within the frame of specific projects. Only through this framing are we able to unveil the ways in which artistic practices may agree with, react to or resist corporate management.

Barry's reaction to the mosaic of opinions corroborates this conflict when he claims that he really does not have the answer for what is clearly a confrontation of ideas, 'except that a delicate balance is necessary between managerial pragmatic logic and artistic excessiveness for defaulting conventions' (Barry, 2011). A performative inference should not be overlooked in the content discussed, namely in the capacity for innovation, creativity and leadership, not only in the corporate world but also as an approach to societal problems. Most importantly the performative can be found in Barry's behaviour whose intention it was to captivate the audience with the help of amusing strategies of communication, an aspect I continue to address in the following case study.

I simultaneously, and to an equal extent, agree and disagree with each of the characters. To the audience, I want them to be equally sympathetic and unsympathetic [...] There is no center to their debate; no plot in the script.

Nicoline van Harskamp, excerpt from an interview at Rihzome, 2010

7.3. Nicoline van Harskamp's, *Any Other Business*

7.3.1. Language truisms: From strategy to symptom

We have seen how techniques of language have been extensively put into practice by corporate actors – management authors, consultants and business professors. Usually, this consists of using rhetorical devices, such as metaphor, hypophora and hyperbole, sometimes complemented by a teasing mode of interrelating with the reader/audience. Overall, the main objective is to inspire others with the power of their vision, to induce self-confidence and to encourage people to discover what they are capable of achieving, but ultimately, to deliver effectively to audiences the theories they support. This was visible until now in pieces of management texts, in the speeches taking place inside corporations but also outside them, in conference rooms and public lectures. Given the structural variations of the sites this inevitably generates different synergies. Supposing that the workplace is generally smaller and more familiar when compared to a conference centre surely it calls for a different type of relationship between speakers and audiences. For instance, the way Quickborner Team staff interact with each other while having a hollow and abstract dialogue about corporate culture considerably differs from the way consultant John Kao attempts to connect the concept of 'jamming' with the know-how of creativity and then presents this to managers and students in a conference, or the way Daved Barry is questioned by a diverse audience in an art institution when giving his lecture. In this sense, the variations are not strictly linked to the scale of the sites but also to the situation itself and to the areas of expertise in which speakers operate. On the other hand, we cannot avoid detecting in these interlocutors the use of similar gestures, expressions and figures of speech.

This is the main objective of the piece *Any Other Business* from 2009 [fig. 12-13] by Dutch artist Nicoline van Harskamp, to unveil the inefficiency of language clichés in codified speeches and the reproduction of gestures. Through a series of performative staged conferences recorded by video, the artist explores how the power of language can indeed become meaningless. The artist recovered from archives and online sources materials of real meetings, which were then manipulated in order to create scenarios of different spheres of society. This manipulation functioned as a strategy to annul the effectiveness of communication. For this purpose the artist hired 40 actors to conduct ten meetings in three different rooms over six hours for a live audience firstly presented at an Amsterdam convention centre, following a script rearranged by her. The piece, commissioned by SKOR (Amsterdam), was then adapted to a multichannel video installation and displayed subsequently at SMBA (Amsterdam), PERFORMA (New York), Centro Pecci (Prato, Italy), Newtopia (Mechelen, Belgium) and Nasjonalmuseet (Oslo).

Nicoline van Harskamp follows the same process of hiring specialists of other fields (in this case actors) to undertake a job or perform at a specific place, as Hammer did in *The Anarchist Banker* and Delier in his work *Crisis and Control*. Similar to Delier's piece, van Harskamp's conferences can be consider a hybrid form of delegated performance in the sense that it does not deal solely with socially engaged practices, as defined by Bishop in her analysis of this artistic genre in relation to outsourcing. However, it is not exclusively related to business and management issues either, rather it also includes political and civic concerns. As a whole, van Harskamp's performative meetings reproduce the contradictions of the neoliberal environment in which individuals are caught between ideological positions and the difficulty to express them.

Director George Thornton, a real name for an invented character, opened the conferences, welcoming the audience and presenting the general theme, *Communicative Excellence in Civil Society, Governance and Business*. This theme was simplified in two questions: 'how can we communicate better together?' and 'how can we live together better?' Thornton follows the normal procedures of a conference, giving acknowledgments to the organisers and sponsors of the event and talking about practical issues, such as the schedule of all interventions. In fact, his presentation seems so real that if we did not know that the conferences were staged, we would believe in its authenticity. The sense of reality starts to fade away when Thornton invites local politician Peter Coleman to the stage, who instead of giving the expected introductory

speech reads a resignation declaration, ‘To those who’ve stood by me in difficult times I will be eternally grateful. And to those who have not felt able to lend me their support, let me say this: I’ll leave with no bitterness for you. But good luck. And thank you’ (2012).



Fig. 12

Nicoline van Harskamp, *Any Other Business* (2009), video still



Fig. 13

Nicoline van Harskamp, *Any Other Business* (2009), video still

It is precisely the intention of van Harskamp to avoid the sense of veracity in people and to go beyond the sense of confusion, as she discusses in a short interview with Rhizome (2010). The purpose is to feel that those meetings, given their awkwardness, are indeed staged. In another staged meeting titled *New Business Governance*, three businessmen accepted invitations for an interview to talk about the process of cessation of their companies. Another character, the journalist Steven Chapman, before starting the interview, asks the business managers to give a public apology for being responsible for the collapse of their companies: ‘I am glad to take this opportunity to repeat what I said to our shareholders: that I am profoundly sorry at the turn of events. All of us have lost a great deal of money and a great number of colleagues. And I am very sorry about that’ (2012). The evasive apology is followed by a series of insinuating questions about what really happened with the companies, about a possible increased responsibility on their part for ignoring the problems, to which the business leaders react without a manifestation of remorse. The sense of discomfort is present in another meeting titled *Dialogue Day*. The Chair of the meeting, moderator John Matthews, announces the intention of having a dialogue instead of a debate in order to explore the benefits of making street dialogues for social cohesion policies (i.e. how mutual respect and listening to one another materialises in various forms of dialogue). But instead of generating a productive dialogue for a common good, the meeting results in a hollow discussion about the ‘essence’ of a dialogue. The democratic process that characterises the exchange of ideas in general is substituted by power relations amongst the participants whose games of speech, including overstatement, inevitably render the language empty and worthless (2012).

I cannot avoid noticing a similarity between these language games and the way Quickborner Team discussed what corporate culture might be. As shown in Farocki’s documentary (2012), the use of words as objects of speculation acquire a paradoxical meaning. Likewise, the language games put into practice in the conference by Barry, instead of working as a stratagem to motivate the audience about his ideas, end up revealing his ignorance in relation to the field of art, turning the conference somewhat cryptic. Power turned into vulnerability is precisely what van Harskamp reveals in her piece. She unveils the performative nature of language via modes of behaviour that aim to convince others but end up failing in their intent to communicate effectively. The power that seems to emanate from these behaviours and types of speech disclose the limits of language. As we gradually come to be familiarised with the meetings, we end

up realising that the initial questions – ‘how can we communicate better together’ and ‘how can we live together better’ – have become meaningless. Surely, contrary to Farocki’s documentary, the piece *Any other Business* is scripted and highly stage, and there is a full control of the scenes filtered by van Harskamp intentions. However, the dialogues are taken from real sources, which were originally written and/or spoken by real figures in specific areas – business, management, politics, civic society, and so on. In this sense, there is both a degree of veracity in them, even if this is not the main goal of the artist when staging the meetings.

Let me go back to the initial part of this section, namely to the techniques of language employed by corporate actors. Two questions remain important: to what extent is *how* they speak inevitably tied to *where* they speak, and for *whom* are they really performing? Like any other interlocutor, the main objective of the corporate speaker is to deliver effectively to the audiences the ideas he supports. In the corporate examples that we have been analysing, the interlocutors are primarily faithful to the topics that represent their area of expertise. For instance, the main goal of consultant John Kao is to nurture the know-how of creativity and innovation within organisational management, even before making the connection with the concept of ‘jamming’; Quickborner Team’s area of expertise is planning, designing and building workspaces and offices, and only through the process of brainstorming are they eager to manifest ‘artistic’ skills; Daved Barry is an expert in business consulting and management leadership looking for bridges between his area of knowledge and art. Despite their background differences and slight variations in terms of the sites in which they operate, they all incorporate stylistic devices into their speech for rhetorical effect. In other words, stylistic techniques enhance the emotional and intellectual sides of the people with whom they want to communicate, which might facilitate the link between their area of expertise and the areas they wish to target. The strategies of communication put into practice enable a flexible speech that may be internalised as ideology by the audience. This means that these techniques may allow a greater acceptance of ideas on the part of the audiences without even noticing that this type of speech is performing, directly or indirectly, authority through language. Attached to language devices is also a new ‘power posing’, the use of a few simple tweaks in body language to help the communicator become more influential. As such, it is comprehensible that corporate speakers aiming to perform to a larger number of people independently of the place

where they are performing. But to really know the effectiveness of their speech or to what extent they are capable of convincing the audiences is still unclear.

One thing is certain: the artistic case studies that I have been examining intentionally work towards the failure of corporate speech. Hammer's talk reveals a highly self-centred protagonist whose talent for rhetoric can be interpreted as a flawed conviction of being an anarchist. Young's training session questions the appropriation and the fate of the word revolution/revolutionary by corporate actors. Without interfering in the consultants' meetings, Farocki's documentary unveils 'mockumentary' moments, amusing and speculative dialogues that are caught in their own overstatements. In the case of Takala's internship at Deloitte, she intentionally provokes a senseless dialogue with her temporary colleagues thus destabilising the sense of purpose of the work environment to which they are accustomed. On his part, Delier stages an emotional monologue in which corporate employees reveal a vulnerable and moody disposition in relation to working conditions, even if the work does not provoke the expected laugh. Nicoline van Harskamp also stages language clichés, and she does not need a large audience to accomplish her purposes. For the artist, the ideal audience is one that simply attends the performance as if they were attending a seminar or a talk (2010). These artistic practices have their own coded approaches to the way in which they use speech or delegate others to use it.

In looking to corporate management speeches in their diversity, what begins as an image of self-confidence ends up being a sequence of failed intents. The question is whether they are not merely resulting from stylistic devices but from something more profound. In his article 'Why is management a cliché?' Harney departs from the term 'demotics of management' by asking why so much management literature reads like a cliché. The term demotics of management, according to the author, may be understood in two ways: as the proliferation of places where labour-power might be found, and as management's growing limits when faced with the dispersion and intensification of what Marx called the social individual (Harney, 2005: pp.579-591). Instead of perceiving the cliché as strategic marketing, political or otherwise, like some management authors (Lilley, 1997; Clarke and Robin, 2001; and Newell, 2001), Harney sees it as symptomatic of a much broader problem that has not only to do with neoliberal working conditions but also with management's dispersion in society.

Given the intricate analysis of themes that are not directly important for my own purposes, I have opted for a concise analysis of Harney's main ideas of cliché as

symptom. Harney's argument is presented step by step, combining ideas in a sequence of short sections. He begins by exposing what a symptomatic reading of a cliché might be. As a term of comparison and to make it more understandable, Harney briefly mentions the Marxist reading of the classical political economists through philosopher Louis Althusser. According to Harney, Althusser noticed that Marx detected that a great part of political economists' strategies were designed as answers that would keep certain questions from emerging. Harney does not explain Althusser's theory in detail; rather he merely refers it, leaving to reader the task of constructing possible analogies with all the risks that this conveys. Accordingly, I expose my view of Harney's reading of Althusser. In the work *Reading Capital*, originally published in 1965 and written together with Etienne Balibar, Althusser claims that Marx makes us see the blanks in the text of classical economics', an excerpt which I transcribe here.

The original question as the classical economic text formulated it was: what is the value of labour? Reduced to the content that can be rigorously defended in the text where classical economics produced it, the answer should be written as follows: 'The value of labour () is equal to the value of the subsistence goods necessary for the maintenance and reproduction of labour ()'. There are two blanks, two absences in the text of the answer. It is not Marx who says what the classical text does not say, it is not Marx who intervenes to impose from without on the classical text a discourse which reveals its silence – it is the classical text itself which tells us that it is silent: its silence is its own words. [...] It is the answer that tells us that the question is its own omission, and nothing else. (Althusser, 1970: p. 23).

Essentially, political economy does not see is what it *does*: 'its production of a new answer without a question, and simultaneously the production of a new latent question contained by default in this new answer' (Althusser, 1970: p. 25). What this extract shows is that reading Harney's claim through Althusser and Marxist lens means recognising management's inability for not seeing its dispersion as a repeatable form of commodity but rather as an achievement. But this is not a common blindness of not seeing at all; rather it is a form of blindness that comes from what is perfectly visible. This is what Althusser names the 'non-vision inside the vision', that is to say a type of blindness that dwelt in the misunderstanding between production and what it produces. Amongst the circularity of these multiple readings a question is then necessary: Why is management blind to what it nevertheless sees? The reason might be not so much in the

process of dispersion per se but in the credence that this process will guaranty its success. According to Harney, in the case of the cliché in management ‘the enigma is not just that the production and circulation of management writing necessarily subjects itself to the norms of capitalist production’, rather from the moment this form of writing is transposed to speech it seeks the safety of what is already in circulation’ (2005: p. 583). However, in so doing, management establishes an affinity to the banality of its commodified form. ‘Management’s real weakness is that at the moment of its banality, it realises it has lost track of labour, and this is the beginning of the real problem marked by the cliché’ (Harney, 2005: p.583). This means that much of what was produced in terms of decision-making processes in the corporate workplace has disseminated outside to society, and a great part of management literature is incapable of perceiving, or better said, does not want to perceive this output as a commodity. This has been possible through the incorporation of cultural forms intrinsic and extrinsic to management, as we have been seeing. For Harney this reinforces managements’ presence in all spheres of society, a dispersion that is both visible in managerial language and on the bookshelves of corporate bookstores that display demotics. What we are witnessing is a double movement, namely labour moving out into society and society moving directly into labour. ‘The dispersion of management transferred it to a circuit entrapped in the cliché, in the commodification and marketisation of itself in a loop, and in this condition management can no longer present itself as singular and different despite its efforts’ (Harney, 2003: p. 584-585).

Chapter Eight – The Critique of Creativity

I am interested in the creativity of the criminal attitude because I recognize in it the existence of a special condition of crazy creativity. A creativity without morals fired only by the energy of freedom and the rejection of all codes and laws.

Joseph Beuys, in *Beuys, tracce in Italia*, Amelio, 1978

By looking at Beuys and understanding his approach to creativity, managers can become aware of ways to foster the creative process and how to enable people to unfold their very own creative potential.

Business Strategy Review, *Understanding Creativity: The Manager as Artist*, 2009

Old notions of art and ‘the artistic’ are being replaced, even as they are absorbed, by the new concepts of creativity and creative industry. The claims made in the name of the latter rose up in the skies of metropolitan capital in pace with the bubbles of real estate, stock and derivatives markets.

Raunig, Ray and Wuggenig, “Introduction: On the Strange Case of ‘Creativity’ and its Troubled Resurrection” in *Critique of Creativity*, 2011

8.1. The demand for creativity and its critique

8.1.1. Beuys as *the paradox*

After examining John Kao’s emphasis on creativity in Chapter Four, a question was left in the air: to what extent is creativity as a valuable tool in corporate management coincident with an artistic view of the creative process? In this section, I shall address this question.

Seen both as an attribute and learning technique, creativity is a prolific mental process to produce new ideas, approaches and solutions to problems. It functions also as

an inter-disciplinary tool that has been appropriated and studied by various fields of knowledge: artificial intelligence, art, architecture, advertising, biotechnology, design research, literature, mathematics, music, neurobiology, philosophy, history, social sciences, social psychology, economics, corporate management, and so forth. The plurality of its usage on both personal and social levels thus converts what appears to be an intuitive process into a highly complex concept. There is no single angle to approach creativity, and there is no homogenous way of measuring it.

Given the multidimensional nature of creativity, I focus on how artistic creativity is target and appropriated by corporate management and the current critique of it. Very recently the statements and ideas of German artist and teacher Joseph Beuys began to be appropriated by business management for whom Beuys's approach can help to boost creativity for individuals and organisations. Certainly the appropriation of artistic ideas and practices by management is not necessarily a negative thing. I have been exposing that there is a mutual exchange of concepts and expressions between the two fields that is impossible to deny. On the other hand, this exchange most of the time fulfills different purposes, unveiling incompatible and conflicting positions.

Beuys' idea of the 'expanded concept of art' as a force to transform society echoed radically in the context of the 1960s-1970s. Already known for his involvement with Fluxus,³⁷ and for his controversial role as a professor at the Düsseldorf Academy, where he rejected teaching art according to a curriculum,³⁸ Beuys began to introduce strong political claims into his work. This position was strengthened by Beuys' involvement with the German Student Party in 1967. Later on, in 1971, he founded the Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum, which culminated in a project for Documenta 5 in 1972, where Beuys installed an office to discuss politics and art over 100 days. Subsequently, Beuys co-founded with writer Henrich Böll, the Free International University (FIU) for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research in Düsseldorf, a site for democratic study and expression. Through these actions the concept of Social Sculpture emerged as the vehicle of his political claims and ideals of democracy. As Beuys claims,

³⁷This involvement began with *Festum Fluxorum Fluxux*, a multidimensional festival that took place at the University of Düsseldorf in 1963.

³⁸Beuys abolished entry requirements for his students and instead offered rejected applicants unconditional access to his class for a one-year probationary period.

This most modern discipline – Social Sculpture/Social Architecture – will only reach fruition when every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor, or architect of the social organism. Only then would the insistence on participation of the action of art of FLUXUS and Happening be fulfilled; only then would democracy be fully realized. Only a conception of art revolutionized to this degree can turn into a politically productive force, coursing through each person, and shaping history (Tisdall, 1979: p. 268).

This redefinition of society as a total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) integrated Beuys' political, artistic and pedagogical projects, and with it Beuys echoed the language of manifestos of modernist avant-garde artists. However, contrary to modernist artists who sought to erode the distinction between art and life, Beuys aimed to combine the spheres of life and society as art.

Allied to the expanded concept of art, the axiom 'everybody is an artist' found expression in Beuys lectures given in Achberg, Germany, in 1973, 1974, and 1978. Throughout the 1970s the lectures took place inside and outside Germany, in which Beuys reinforced his idea of art and the sense of social responsibility in education. Beuys 'public dialogue' given at Willoughby Sharp in New York is an example of his idea of art as a whole in the life of the human being (1974). Looking to Beuys practice and socio-political stance the art he proclaimed *Kunst=Kapital* (Art=Capital) had its foundation not in finance but in the social existence of the individual. The meaning of Art=Capital is more social and anthropological than financial. Beuys aimed for universal qualities in the individual that somehow remained masked by capitalist conditions. In such a communion, the individual can achieve a sense of sociability as both a person and an artist.

Let us now look to how business management sees Beuys. In an article by Jörg Reckenrich, Martin Kupp, and Jamie Anderson (2009), it is perceptible that Beuys is not merely an inspiring figure for the field of management, he is the key figure that will guide managers to the principles of creativity. Although short, the article concentrates enough information about Beuys, which seems to indicate that the authors are well informed about the role played by the artist, at least so it seems. The celebrated statement of Beuys 'every human being is an artist' serves as leverage to understand the mindset required to unleash individual creativity in organisations. The authors state that

'Every human being is an artist' is not about taking up visual arts or writing (though this may be part of it). Rather, it's about mobilizing

everyone's latent creative abilities – engaging one's creative thoughts, words and actions and expressing this creativity in meaningful ways wherever it is needed (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson, 2009a: p.70).

Inspired by Beuys, the authors describe the three levels of active thinking – inspiration, intuition and imagination – necessary to improve the process of creativity. In so doing, they present two examples, Pixar Animation Studio and Villeroy & Boch, to help clarify each of these steps. In the case of Pixar, the producer of the first computer animation film, *Toy Story* (1995), the improvement of animation technique was not enough for the success of the film franchise. According to Pixar managers, they needed an unusual idea to surprise the viewer again and again. The element of surprise is not necessarily attached to the plots as these are previously defined by the script, but rather in the construction of the scenes, which are seen as unique in the way they are created. ‘From the design of the characters to the lighting and colours without forgetting details of body movement, all of this works into the element of surprise and is dependent on the inspiration of each member of the team – the eye blink of a fish that excites the customer makes all the difference’ (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson, 2009a: p.71). Inspiration needs to be nurtured not only by those who have it but also by those who are available to listen about it. Throughout the process it requires openness and self-determination from both sides (employees and managers) to be transmittable and successful.

Imagination is the second element to take into account to improve creativity. As we can read in the article, Pixar changed the internal tasks of their development teams: ‘Instead of coming up with new ideas for movies,’ their new role should ‘assemble small incubation teams to help directors refine their own ideas into powerful visions/pictures of potential films that would then be presented to the management board’ (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson, 2009a: p. 71). As I understand it, this means that the employees’ imaginations are redirected and capitalised upon via a sort of brainstorming or shared visioning session with their manager to think outside the box. And we continue to read in the article that ‘Pixar does not judge teams during this incubation stage by the material they produce, but by their imagination and the team’s social dynamics’ (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson, 2009a: p.71), a form of corporate agenda to potentialise an act of individual imagination into a common vision of it.

In relation to Villeroy & Boch, a huge producer of high quality ceramics, the firm seems to contradict the recurrent idea that it is uncommon for corporations to base their decisions on intuition as this is seen as arbitrary and illogical. According to the authors of the article, Wendelin von Boch, the CEO of the firm, states that the ability to make intuitive decisions is an essential factor of the success of Villeroy & Boch in placing new product lines on the market. In the context of corporations such as Villeroy & Boch, intuition is inherently linked to strategy design and to a guiding framework, namely of how to present and talk about the ideal concept in the right moment. Before the analysis of a concept the employee is allowed to reflect on the subject and then discuss it with the entire team (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson, 2009a: p. 71). But they rely also on Beuys' concept of Social Sculpture – the potential of art to change society and society as an artistic medium – to support their own vision of the structure of the process as an essential component for boosting creativity in organisations. The example given by the authors is the California-based design company, Ideo, whose project team is heterogeneous, enabling the multiple perspectives that are needed to manage a corporation. During their task of redesigning the supermarket shopping cart, there was the risk of conceptual dispersion given the amount of people working on the project. Facing this tricky situation, the team leader came up with the proposal of narrowing down the potential options to four key needs for the shopping cart: shopping, safety, security and finding what one is looking for (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson, 2009a: p. 72). According to the authors, Beuys' idea of structure could be a source of inspiration to prevent dispersion and focus on the problem:

Beuys stated that every material that we use to produce an art product ranges between two poles, the pole of structure and the pole of movement. He relates the left side of the diagram to activity, warmth, energy, movement and intuitive thinking, but also to disorder and chaos; the right side to form, coldness, organization, rational thinking and structure. This also applies to materials. Beuys used this concept systematically in his artworks... Beuys claimed that this principle was not only relevant to art production. He said it had validity for all processes, including processes of communication... Process creativity, according to Beuys, is the active shaping of a situation (by adding more structure or chaos), instead of controlling it (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson, 2009a: pp. 71-72).

This article is included in Chapter Four of a larger publication titled *The Fine Art of Success: How Learning Great Art Can Create Great Business*, in which Reckenrich,

Kupp and Anderson (2011) depend on other creative artists like Damian Hirst and Jeff Koons for guidance on innovation, creativity and leadership.

The use of renowned artists as role models for corporate management is quite recent but not entirely novel. Sociologist Antonio Strati has observed four main research approaches to the aesthetic dimension of work in organizations: the ‘archaeological approach’, the empathic-logical approach’, the ‘aesthetic approach’ that arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s preconised by Strati himself through Georg Simmel’s sociology of the senses, and the ‘artistic approach’ which arose during the early 2000s (Strati, 2010, pp. 880-893). The artistic approach from a management perspective makes use of arts-based methods, including creativity, to grasp the dynamics of organizational development. The publication *The Art Firm: Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing from Wagner to Wilson* from 2004 by Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, professor at the Copenhagen Business School, is included in this last group of research. In the publication, Monthoux refers to a wide range of brilliant minds – from philosophers Friedrich Schiller to Emmanuel Kant, Friedrich Schelling to Friedrich Nietzsche, without forgetting composer Richard Wagner and contemporary artists such as Joseph Beuys and Robert Wilson, amongst others – to demonstrate the importance of aesthetics and creativity performed in art firms.

More than a concrete place, the ‘art firm’ is an author’s idea that departs from artistic-philosophical aesthetics to construct management aesthetics, or better said to forge an aesthetic element in management. This is perceptible from the preface where Monthoux mentions ‘Dionysus Inc.’ – an invented name for an intangible firm – to the end of the publication where he asserts that ‘now the time has come to expand the art firm from the third realm of theaters to business on a vast aesthetic field and make the dream of Dionysus Inc. come true. Managers themselves feel the need to go beyond sponsorship and really embed art into business’ (Monthoux, 2004: p. 348). Indeed, imagination is a key word in this dense publication, in which the author embraces a desire to be imaginative and aims to transfer that ability to his readers; the ability to imagine Wagner as a CEO, Nietzsche as a managing director or Schopenhauer as Nietzsche and Wagner’s management professor, is certainly an ability that is not within everyone’s reach. This tendency that perceives management itself as a form of artistic

expression, or that looks for a parallel between aesthetic experience and corporate management, has generated its own followers.³⁹

Monthoux includes Beuys' role in a type of firm that he names 'Flux Firms'.⁴⁰ He begins by examining Beuys' biography and his tendency to reject traditional materials, while describing him as a maker of aesthetic energy with the desire to restore contact with nature. Monthoux refers to Beuys' most emblematic axioms, such as Art=Capital and Social Sculpture by stating that 'flux firm became the model for the flux moving toward a new society of a third aesthetic kind between formal political planning and materialistic profit orientation' (Monthoux, 2004: p. 254) and he continues, 'Beuys was certainly qualified as both a brand manager and a concept developer. His dictum Kunst=Kapital caught on as quickly as any soft-drink slogan, and he appeared costumed in his trademark bizarre outfit long before marketers minted the term branding' (Monthoux, 2004: p. 258). While reading Monthoux, it is evident that he is aware that Beuys' axiom Art=Capital is not a glorification of the market of art, and that Beuys' art had its foundations not in financial capital but in the living human being. However, along with a dense body of theory, there is an excessive tendency in this publication for neologisms and management jargon, such as in the following excerpts:

The desire for meaningful connections to art was partially satisfied by superficial rituals and pseudometaphysical ceremonies. Charlatans were brought in to remedy the lack of energy, as management consultants would be hired to resuscitate a dying business by decoding its brand genetics. This only left a feeling of emptiness, a growing nostalgia for the good old days of the gods (Monthoux, 2004: p. 62).

Wagner's enterprise gained strength only when – with much help from his in-house critic Nietzsche – he based his managerial agenda on the

³⁹For instance, professors Ian King and Jonathan Vickery in their book *Experiencing Organisations: New Aesthetic Perspectives* (2013), bring an anthology of writings about aesthetic experiences and intuitions in organisations that aim for multiple and creative methodologies.

⁴⁰Monthoux proposes five types of 'art firms': avant-garde enterprises, artistic companies, art corporations, flux firms, and postmodern performances. The first emerge, according to him, from Wagner's influence in which the experience of a modern enterprise is concentrated on collective artwork; the second, 'artistic companies' are described as regular private companies with didactic goals and a tendency for staging events – examples include Jean-Louis David's ventures in Jacobin festivities and Sergei Diaghilev's Russian Ballet; the third constitute the incorporation of art as a socioeconomic institution into state financed networks of public theaters – examples include the Berlin Freie Volksbühne and directors such as Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator, and the Swedish Stadsteatern starting with Alf Sjöberg; the forth, 'flux firms' represent the type of artistic innovation developed after the Second World war embodied by the figure of Beuys; and finally the fifth, the 'postmodern' or 'postmod performances' as Monthoux names, encapsulate theatrical experiments beginning in East Germany concentrated on the figure of dramaturgist Heiner Müller, when the Berlin Wall still existed and subsequently after the fall of the wall, but also on Robert Wilson's performance.

Schopenhauerian ideas he had discovered in the 1840s. Schopenhauer became Wagner's management guru, helping him conceptualize how he wanted art to work for philosophical contemplation rather than just as diversion (Monthoux, 2004: p. 112).

If on the one hand, this type of publication refers to the cognitive, sensory and perceptual faculties usually associated with aesthetics – which can in fact be apprehended and experienced by anyone – its usage in the field of management organisations, on the other hand, raises suspicion and is seen as a form of instrumentalisation of free aesthetic expression, a characteristic cherished for a long time in art and philosophy. Harney describes Monthoux's publication as schizophrenic, and assigns it to a tendency that sees 'art as the final product, a product in dialogue with other products, a product that will be coded differently by different users' (Harney, 2010: p. 434).

To a certain extent I understand why artists in general and Beuys in particular are seen as potential figures to be followed in the field of corporate management. The idea that creativity is within the reach of everybody as a universal and natural capacity of the individual is extremely appealing for those who rely on the concept to be successful. At the same time, the *personas* that emanate from these canonical figures function as ideals of encouragement but also of authority useful for managers and potential leaders for managing work in organisations. Beuys himself is recognised as a cult figure, a stag leader and ultimately a figure of authority within the art field. Art theorist and curator Jan Verwoert (2008), describes this figure of authority as paradoxical: on the one hand, Beuys constantly confronted through his practice traditional notions of authority that were coupled with artistic work and the figure of art professor; on the other hand, through his own discourse, Beuys frequently performed the artistic authority with which he was trying to break. For Verwoert, however, Beuys contradictory position is less problematic than the orthodox interpretations that have been accepting this authority without questioning it, making it more difficult to understand his work. One of these interpretations of Beuys can be found in Donald Kuspit's *The Cult of the Avant-garde Artist* (1993), in which Kuspit interprets Beuys practice through the image of the healer that Beuys incessantly projected to the public. Verwoert intends to show that Beuys' artistic and historical significance moves between the need to refuse authoritarian definitions of what artists are supposed to be and the need to recuperate certain aspects of the authority of the artist's role.

In this way, Beuys' ideas found fertile soil in business and management authors, especially in those who are eager to provide some sort of guidance for others to accomplish a high level of productivity and efficiency as is desired in the corporate field. However, we need to understand that Beuys' statements and actions about creativity and social sculpture were put into practice in a different context, that of the post-war fractioned Germany, which inevitably conveys a sociopolitical connotation to creativity. The way they were put in practice is also relevant to perceive Beuys as a paradoxical model for management. His idea of creativity is most importantly embedded in the artistic, civic/ecological and political actions that worked towards an expanded understanding of art.

In 1971 Beuys and a group of students went to the Grafenberger woods in Düsseldorf to protest against the planned removal of a local forest to make way for tennis courts. The group used birch brooms to sweep the paths of the forest and they marked the trees that were to be cut down to show how devastating the destruction would be for the place. The action ended up being more than a civic demonstration, it revealed above all Beuys' ecological consciousness that began when he was still young, and which would endure until the end of his life as a way to disrupt the tendencies embodied in consumerism and capitalist growth.

In another action, *Sweeping Up Karl Marx Platz* (1972), Beuys revealed the political extension of the concept of Social Sculpture. On May 1st, after the Labour Day demonstrations, Beuys and two students swept up the debris left behind at Karl-Marx-Platz in West Berlin – part of the wreckage has been exhibit in various galleries. The action revealed the extent to which Beuys embodied the contradictions of his time and the internal political fragmentation. Empathetic with the Marxist collective vision of capitalism as a form of exploitation, Beuys also believed in individual action as an ideal of self-determination. On the one hand, he criticised the capitalist side of West Germany, but on the other, he was highly critical of the oppressive Communism of East Germany or any fixed ideology as we can read below.

The fault lies not with Marx, but with the slavish following of a doctrine. Marx's analysis of things as they stood in his time is a work of genius. But from our different vantage point in time we can see that there are omissions in his theory. Marx could not foresee how capitalism would survive and transform into the power of the multinationals and the repressive domination of the state (Tisdall, 1979: p. 271).

By deciding to execute an activity on a day that was/is not meant for people to work, the artist exposed a radical attitude in the eyes of those that were vehemently against the breaking of rules. To remove the debris of that particular day was also highly symbolic in the sense that it functioned as a statement of something that should change or even was meant to disappear. Beyond this political symbolism the action also functioned as an extension of the concept of Social Sculpture. Only through art will the work lose its exploitative nature, and in turn the work will transform art and release human creativity.

Beuys as an artist aimed at liberating the individual: first, in relation to the individual himself and what one is able to do, and second, in relation to a capitalist society based on wage exploitation. Creativity should be understood in this sense as an attitude of the conscious, liberation and disobedience to capitalist power and governmental bureaucracy. Beuys could not understand creativity if it were not related to the self-conscious ‘I’ which stands in the field of inner freedom (Kuoni, 1993: p. 54). His ideas on creativity were outlined in a manifesto at the Free International University:

Creativity is not limited to people practising one of the traditional forms of art, and even in the case of artists creativity is not confined to the exercise of their art. Each one of us has a creative potential which is hidden by competitiveness and success-aggression [...] The creativity of the democratic is increasingly discouraged by the progress of bureaucracy, couple with the aggressive proliferation of an international mass culture (Tisdall, 1979: pp. 278-279).

When we look to Beuys’ statements on creativity only as words they can easily be adapted to any circumstances or different principles. However when we read them within a specific framework or context they acquire specific meanings. The fact is that Beuys’ ideas on creativity cannot be detached from his criticism of capitalist economy orientated towards unlimited material growth and consumerism. Likewise, it cannot be detached from his fractured political background and ecological conscious. As such, for Beuys, it was necessary to develop alternative paths based on ecological spirituality and social awareness where human faculties could be fully expressed and fulfilled. The ideas of anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner were particularly important to reinforce Beuys’ preference for the gradual independence of society structures and real participation in the world.

Having said this, the appropriation of Beuys’ ideas and statements by business authors reveals a simplistic reading of his work but also of him as an individual and

artist. In their vision, creativity is restricted to a technical meaning which stands for the ability to think better or to improve something. It is seen as a prerequisite, a key skill to manage change and renewal. More than a qualitative feature there is instead a quantitative inference of creativity which is also embedded in the formula ‘how learning great art can create great business’, the title of their publication (Reckenrich, Kupp’ Anderson, 2011). By being positioned in the fields of strategic management and marketing management, the authors discuss successful strategies for driving innovation and creativity in the business world through the lens of various artists. The article on British artist Damien Hirst for example makes clear this use of creativity, namely how it helped him to create a new market space in the art market and how this allowed him to be wealthy and successful. The guiding principles to achieve these goals should be ‘who is the customer/public’ and ‘what do I offer to this customer/public’. Both terms can easily be replaced by consumers or buyers, ‘the new ‘who’ with relatively new wealth, who did not buy for artistic interest alone, and that the contemporary art world had been slow to serve’. As an artist, entrepreneur, and strategic innovator, Hirst became his own brand (Reckenrich, Kupp, Anderson 2009b: p. 45)

It would be naïve to perceive creativity as a pure concept that should not be unleashed, manipulated and capitalised on for specific goals. Humanly dependable thus profoundly shapeable, creativity is transversal to various fields. As such, it becomes a potential tool to be worked in different manners. The question is whether the ideas underneath creative business management – successfulness, competitiveness and greatness – distort everything that was the basis of Beuys’ beliefs. Beuys aimed for a universal creativity that somehow could unmask capitalist constraints at the same time as it worked towards liberating the artist/individual from internal and external rules. The ultimate paradox of using Beuys as a reference for today’s business activities lies precisely in the values he defended – self-determination and freedom – which were contextually claimed in opposition to the economic system with which business management still identifies. On the other hand, it is the universality reclaimed for creativity that allowed its misappropriation. Still, it is also the condition of being transversal and universal that permits the criticism of its misuses from different points of view, as I shall discuss.

8.1.2. Creativity: An object of critical revision

Looking to the previous examples, it is clear that artistic creativity has provided corporate consultants with a valuable tool for the projection of an image of themselves as liberal and progressive. As examined in Chapter Three, Kao already defended in the 1990s that creativity represents a powerful form of competitive advantage, one that consultants, leaders and managers, but also people in general, must learn to leverage if they want to be successful. By using the practices of freestyle jazz improvisation or ‘jamming’ as a form of guidance, Kao stimulates an unpredictable facet which is not usually associated with the conventional world of corporations. Since the early 2000s, fostering creativity became a truism intersecting various sectors of the global economy. For instance, in the field of the creative industries, Florida (2002) relies heavily on the ‘creative ethos’ potentially embodied by all of us as the most valuable feature of today’s new economic, social and cultural sphere. Management guru Daniel H. Pink (2006) contends that we are entering a new age where creativity is becoming increasingly important in a time that belongs to the minds of creative designers and inventors. The main argument of Pink is that we moved from an economy and society built on the logical computer capabilities of the information age to an economy and society built on the inventiveness of the conceptual age. And the list of authors could continue. Although taking different approaches, they all have in common the pressure laid on creativity to make us better professionals in the workplace, and eventually better human beings.

But, in the past decades, the term creativity has been an object of revision within the field of art. In my view, this revision has two major motivations: 1) an internal scrutiny of what creation/creativity means within the field of art, focusing on the historical genealogy of the term while attempting to demystify the early modernist myth of the ‘genius artist’ whose work resulted from spontaneous inspiration; 2) and an external response that aims to question the logic of creative demand in general, and by extension the way art is being used as a model for economic and management processes of working. These two major drives together give way to a heterogeneous critique of creativity, covering various topics such as cultural precarisation, creative labour in the creative industries, creativity and artistic education, and so on.

This is patent in the publication *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity, and Resistance in the Creative Industries* from 2011, edited by Gerald Raunig, Gene Ray

and Ulf Wuggenig, in which the critique of creativity emerges from different fields, namely art, cultural studies and cultural industries. The essays included in the publication emerged from a three-year research project (2005-2008) of the European Institute of Progressive Cultural Policies (eipcp) with the aim to rethink the modalities of contemporary art practices. According to the introductory note of the editors, the demand created around creativity is mobilised between populist impulses, cultural entrepreneurs and creative bohemians, a demand that calls for critical responses which are far from being homogenous in terms of approach and position. However, all the critical perspectives in the publication agree on one point, that ‘critique should be more than a gesture of global negation or a predictable ritual of rejection’ (Raunig, Ray, and Wuggenig, 2011: p. 2). This means that critiques of the resurgence of creativity should also be constructive in their own differences.

For McRobbie, one of the contributors in the publication, the rhetoric of individualisation in the context of the culture industries aimed to bring a new conception of individual creativity, one that provides sufficient freedom for people to explore their own creative capacities. ‘Our imagined community and branded national identity now comes to be constituted through practices that are understood to be creative’ (McRobbie, 2011: p.120). She identifies three short-waves of entrepreneurial culture in the creative economy of the UK. These ideas, which make part of an ongoing investigation since the 1980s, were previously published in an article online in 2007, and later included in the *Critique of Creativity Precarity, Subjectivity, and Resistance in the Creative Industries*.

The first short-wave is characterised by the work of young entrepreneurs, people who were influenced by the so called post punk ‘do-it-yourself’ ethos and wanted to create a kind of independent economy. This first wave ‘self-generated sub-cultural entrepreneurs who were to be found busily inventing styles, sewing in their own kitchens and then selling what they made at weekend street-markets provided what we would now call incubators for experimenting in creative self-employment’ (McRobbie, 2011: p.122). Despite the attention they had in terms of media, these generations lack support from the part of the government while forced to competition, leading to bankruptcy and debt. In the late 1990s these types of activities began to disintegrate and were eventually replaced by another type of creative ethos, a second wave of multi-taskers.

This second wave is characterised by a more neoliberalised model in which creative people benefit more directly from the expansion of new capitalist enterprise ventures and media communication which converge in the spaces of network sociality. This brought, among other consequences, de-specialisation, internships and unpaid work, the growth of leisure culture, the expansion of freelance culture and of urban centres like London as centres for the arts and culture, and eventually attractions for the finance sector (McRobbie, 2011: p. 124). The early 2000s gave evidence to new social elites, in which subject matters such as ‘race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality have no space for expression because either it is assumed in this cultural field that such issues have now been dealt with and that equality is taken for granted, or else there is such competitive individualization that there is no room for such concerns’ (McRobbie, 2011: p. 125).

Finally, the third wave is characterised by the ‘Hollywood effect’ or the ‘Los Angelesation’ of London. According to McRobbie, this wave is marked by a strong influence of the American industry and it is driven by the idea of the ‘one big hit’, meaning that efforts are centred on various projects at the same time with the expectation that one of these projects will guarantee a better position in the competitive creative labor market, and ultimately, to relieve the pressure of multi-tasking activities. In essence this ‘produces a ripple effect in terms of widening options and possibilities and it also enhances the status and power of the ‘award-winner’ in the cultural economy’ (McRobbie, 2011: p.126.). In practical terms, this means that people aim to position themselves more emphatically in the creative market, often encouraged by governments to reveal one’s potential and to search out the qualities of creativity that we all supposedly have. For McRobbie this search for one’s own creativity became normalised as a practice of cultural governance in the UK, but it can also be exportable through projects and collaborations between institutions and universities. The emphasis on creativity ‘started to emerge from business schools where the attention on management, psychology and cognitive sciences is stronger than on sociology, and above all, it is the mark of the New Labour’s cultural policy’ (McRobbie, 2011: p. 128). In this background, the compound figure of the artist as a cultural entrepreneur seems to embody the successful combination of self-responsibility, self-motivation, and self-marketing. With the rise of the informational economy and its associated categories, this exceptional yet precarious individual is today demanded of everyone.

Other authors which are not included in the publication *Critique of Creativity* have been rising against the demand of this notion. For instance, professor of sociology Thomas Osborne defends that creativity is pretty much entrenched in simulations, such as compulsory individualism, compulsory innovation and compulsory performativity, and in order to contest this moralising imperative he departs from examples – Gilles Deleuze, F. R. Leavis and Paul Cézanne – that according to him had a ‘philistine’ attitude toward creativity. These authors, according to Osborne, do not claim that there is no such thing as creativity; on the contrary, they are obsessed with capturing it in various ways. But their approaches are not deterministic in the sense of looking at creativity as doctrine or principle to be followed at all costs, rather they seek some sort of indolence or inertia against creativity as such (Osborne, 2003: pp. 507-525).

With a different approach artist and activist writer Gregory Sholette (2011) has appropriated a concept from theoretical astrophysicists, namely ‘dark matter’, to question the creative input of the art establishment. To be precise, dark matter is turned into a metaphor of contemporary art practices that have developed on the margins of the mainstream art world.⁴¹ This ‘missing mass’, as he calls it, is seen as a potential niche of resistance to the system that dominates it and possibly a mass that could help reshape the hierarchies, and eventually the mainstream topography of contemporary art. What Sholette criticises is not only the type of creativity generated by economic factors and disseminated to the field of art in the form of enterprise. Most importantly he argues against the concealment of a creative mass, which according to him, has the potential to engage in artistic-political processes of resistance instead of being usefully productive for capitalism.

Another example of the criticism of creativity can be found in the work of the Dutch research agency BAVO, namely Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels, whose projects have been developed in the context of the gentrification phenomenon. BAVO’s ongoing projects, most of them available online, cover an area which in itself is vast in terms of research because it relates with the marketing of creative cities and housing developments in the Netherlands and in other countries. The criticism of BAVO is directed to the way creativity has become associated with an urban form of lifestyle that integrates all dimensions of people’s lives as a total formula. The increasing expansion

⁴¹Some of the examples include Art Workers’ Coalition (AWC), Artists Meeting or Cultural Change (AMCC), Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D), Group Material, Gran Fury, Guerrilla Girls, amongst others.

of the creative class as the most essential condition for a lively urban culture, stimulated by figures such as Florida reinforced the ‘Americanisation’ of European cities. This ‘Americanisation’ is converted into an atmosphere of continuing regeneration of both creativity and new economic activities, and in the course of these changes the role of the cultural worker is turned upside-down (BAVO, 2006). The creative ethos stimulated in the past years demands that artists should be adaptable and creative, that people ought to cultivate and utilise all natural and human resources, and it is against this scenario, which echoes McRobbie’s description, that BAVO’s entire research is built upon.

Likewise, artist and activist Martha Rosler (2011) describes a clear division of categories between creative (winner) and uncreative (loser) when criticising Florida’s theory of the creative ethos, which according to Rosler, carries the implicit conviction that job categories do provide the only possible source of real agency regardless of their content and their capital. One of Florida’s faults, notices Rosler, is that he brings together artists with managers and IT workers, immigrants and hipsters without noting the differing interests and the choices about where to live.

One could bring more authors and artistic examples with a critical position against the manipulation of creativity as way to balance the countless business books about the importance of creativity as an economic motor of societies. Indeed, the list could be endless, and in all of the sources we would certainly find that the demand for creativity is itself a reason for the growing criticism towards it. But to a certain extent this criticism becomes pointless when we realise that the term is being used uncritically on a daily basis. In other words, there are no job advertisements today for companies or universities slogans that do not require people – potential entrepreneurs – with creative ideas and the ability to think outside the box. Most of the slogans in the various universities aim to establish a link between the labour market and their students. There is a clear intention of preparing future entrepreneurial workers for the creative economy reality outside academia.⁴² This tendency also includes artistic platforms with relevant sociopolitical content to be discussed, such as Creative Time for example. Launched in 2009, Creative Time is an annual conference dedicated to exploring the intersection of

⁴²This is visible for example at Goldsmiths College, where MA courses are entirely dedicated to the study of the fast-moving field of social entrepreneurship and innovation without forgetting the emphasis on creativity. This trend is perceptible as well in Portuguese universities where post-graduate programmes of cultural entrepreneurship are being developed in cooperation with institutions external to the university with the objective to create and stimulate new models of business behaviour for younger generations. This is taking place not merely in business schools, but also in various faculties of social sciences and technology, such as ISCTE-IUL, where AUDAX, a programme directed towards creative entrepreneurship, has been developed in the past six years.

art and social justice. Each year the conference brings together artists, activists, curators and writers to discuss projects and new strategies for social change. In light of its excessive use, the term creativity becomes banal and hollow. As Lazzarato accurately states ‘the concept of creation and its uses are very ambiguous, because what has actually come to pass is a neutralization of creativity [...] For the past twenty years, we have been gradually standardizing creation’ (Lazzarato, 2010: pp.12-13). Indeed, what we have today is a romanticised idea of the term creativity and its superficial appropriation through the neoliberal rhetoric that surrounds it.

Chapter Nine - Artists as curators: The curatorial as organisational practice

The museum, as an institution that produces knowledge, which provides a form of truth, their own truth, it can also be supplanted, counterfeited and confronted with itself. Imagining artworks that are simultaneously museums, all orders are disrupted. It is not the museum who legitimizes the creation, but the creative act who establishes the museum.

Alicia Herrero, The Museum of the Political Economy of art, 2013

9.1. The culture of neoliberal assessment, the curatorial and the new institution positionality

9.1.1. An introductory note

We have seen in the previous chapter how the ideas and statements of canonical figures of the field of art have been appropriated by corporate management to improve professional performance. ‘How to think like a neoliberal’ is a proper slogan to describe not only a guiding manual for expertise, but also all these corporate activities, conduct and processes that rely heavily on specific formulas to guarantee success. Success here is not a feeling of accomplishing a mere task or some sort of mission, but rather an ambitious predisposition to get the most out of quantifiable proficiency and empowerment. However, the slogan ‘how to think like a neoliberal’ has also been temporarily absorbed by those artists who, more than contesting, aim to expose a way of speaking, thinking and behaving that is not questioned given its ordinariness. This means to turn speculation into vulnerability, consensus into disruption, and ultimately, success into failure. These forms of upending the course of action have been examined at the level of discourse inside and outside the workplace. In this chapter, I look at a

more structural level through the relationship between artistic curating, corporations and art institutions, in which artists as temporary curators play a significant role. In this context, the designation ‘artists as curators’ does not suggest an independent or freelance situation, not even the ‘democratisation of the circumscribed professional relations’ as John Roberts refers (2007: p. 184), but rather a posture – artist performing as curator – that allows them (and us) to consider the exhibition site as an art project, and thus to reconsider the boundaries between art, curating, and managing.

In the past decades, the neoliberal way of thinking and its interconnected policies have considerably permeated the field of contemporary art: artists, curators, and art institutions, directly and indirectly, make up part of this ideology. This totalising tendency of neoliberalism is visible, for example, in the industrialisation of artistic creativity as a tool of corporate enhancement and economic growth, in the introduction of managerial procedures in cultural policies, in the privatisation of public art institutions, in the pervasiveness of the art market and its related forms of patronage, and so on. Despite these scenarios, the pressure of neoliberal culture is contested on different levels. For some artists, it is questionable to have a critical posture if you are in some way entangled with the institutions or linked to outsourcing activities, and so the option is to look for radical modes of working outside the mainstream. Others prefer operational modes that, although apparently complicit with institutional structures, give them enough freedom of movement to also be critically involved with institutions. These later postures – more complex and less straightforward – are considered here from the point of view of the artist as curator, who identifies the limitations of working within institutions, but still recognises the need to counterpose them. A series of performative, discursive and organisational experiments took place in the last decade, which not only subverted the exhibition space and the categorisation of certain practices seen as incorporating the canon, but also altered the circumstances of artistic/curatorial stances in relation to the act of managing.

Managing is not a strange term in contemporary art practices. If artists’ proximity to management in the 1960s-1970s has been seen as an expectable corollary of post-Fordist working conditions, management is entrenched today as a wide-ranging form of organisation of various activities in different spheres of society. The previous chapters have showed us that the borders between contemporary art practices and corporate management have been gradually disseminated. This means both a change in terms of vocabulary and mindset. In the curatorial framework, it also means a change in

managing tasks. The changing characteristics of the curatorial – a transdisciplinary practice that comprises a series of tasks, such as organisation, coordination, communication, mediation, delegation, assembly and display – confirm its tendency for managing. Such tendency cannot, however, be understood as a total acceptance of management methods, but instead as the need to reassess what does it mean ‘to work’ within the neoliberal system in conjunction with cultural, educational, economic and social changes. It is here that the difference between the practical side of management and managerialism as an approach to work becomes more fractured. The first is seen as the required expertise to accomplish a series of functions, and the second, as a set of strategies used to optimise professional performance, including measurement and monitoring. But what really distinguishes the two terms is the conviction behind the conduct. Mark Fisher described managerialism as ‘combined authoritarianism with social and political chaos’ – crucial to the formation of what he has called ‘capitalist realism’, that is to say the prevalent acceptance that there is no alternative to capitalism (2017). For Fisher, the alternative must not come from neo-anarchist stances, but rather from an internal restructuring of management. In this chapter, the approach to managing or organisation in the context of curatorial practice is analysed through the repositioning of the artist/curator in relation to the art institution and vice versa. Here, we are closer to artistic/curatorial practices that choose to manage their contents and methods. While this could be questioned as an act of complicity, in this framework artists as curators can decide what kind of organisation they want to engage with or to produce their ‘own institution’.

The role of art institutions in the development of cultural/artistic models of production has been the object of extensive analysis. From Max Weber to Pierre Bourdieu, the body of literature in sociology and cultural theory on art institutions is wide-ranging.⁴³ Although Weber did not formulate a theory of art institutions, his work in general offers a prolific source of knowledge concerning the symbolic meaning of institutions and its evolution in relation to economic changes. Bourdieu (1990, 1991, 1998) in some way deepens Weber’s line of thought on this matter by developing the idea of ‘social order’, that is a system that links structures, such as institutions, to customs, practices and relations of power, thus reinforcing certain patterns of behaviour.

⁴³Other authors can be named that directly or indirectly have written about art institutions and museums, such as Craig Owen, Douglas Crimp, Tony Bennett, Walter Benjamin, just to name a few.

Within this social order, Bourdieu developed three key concepts: habitus, capital and field.

Indeed, the critique of the museum was a defining discourse of the 20th century, which included avant-garde artists, as we shall see in a moment. In the late 1970s, the sociological studies about the organisational structure of institutions gave way to a theory called ‘new institutionalism’. The term formulated by John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977) focused on the influence of institutions on human behaviour through norms, rules, and other frameworks. A more recent line of research within new institutionalism explores questions about the nature of institutions, the process of institutional change, the dynamic of structure-agency relationships, and the connection between institutions and other analytical concepts, such as rationality, strategy and culture. Sociologists Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell call attention to the various approaches on institutionalism;

[...] institutionalism has disparate meanings in different disciplines; and, even within organization theory, “institutionalists” vary in their relative emphasis on micro and macro features, in their weightings of cognitive and normative aspects of institutions, and in the importance they attribute to interests and relational networks in the creation and diffusion of institutions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: p. 1).

This diversity does not prevent them from following a tendency of institutionalism (neo-institutionalism) that focuses on organizational analysis, namely ‘the ways in which institutions complicate and constitute the paths by which solutions are sought’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991: p. 11). Besides shaping the behaviour of agents, according to the authors, art institutions in this framework share similarities with other organisations even though they have progressed in different ways. The authors aim is also to tackle the reasons for an art institution to emerge in a specific context, how they interact and affect society.

In the past decade the term new institutionalism emerged in the field of art to question the traditional role of art institutions by confronting them with the changing nature of curatorial practice. The term was used by Scandinavian writer Jonas Ekberg (2003) to discuss a number of contemporary art institutions that were developing structural changes in connection to political and social frameworks, such as Bergen Kunsthall, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Platform Garanti Contemporary Art Center in Istanbul, among others. The term was also borrowed by

Nina Möntmann (2007, 2009) to rethink the role of art institutions from a curatorial-practice based perspective in tune with discursive and participatory tendencies of curatorial positions. Since then a whole generation of curators have adopted experimental modes of production and display of artworks based on new-institutionalism. For example, curator Charles Esche has used it to trigger an experimental relationship of art institutions with temporariness and its impact on the social/public space; curator Maria Lind began a reflexive examination about the relationship between the social field, institutional archive material and curatorial activity. For curator Simon Sheikh the current critical discussions around institutions seem largely propagated by art directors and curators who, rather than being against the institution, aim for the internal transformation or solidification of the institution (Sheikh, 2009: p. 30). Given the shift in terms of subjects who now perform the critique of art institutions, debates around new institutionalism have increased to the point that it was seen as a possible replacement for the canonised practices of institutional critique. However, besides the discussions around this proposal, the excessive use of theoretical aspects of new institutionalism in curatorial practice is criticised by curators, including Möntmann, for whom, a critical distance of the term is indispensable in order to get a more concrete evaluation of its integration, reception and outcomes (2007).

In the framework of the critique of institutions, we should not forget the seminal contribution of Benjamin Buchloh. Interested in a historical perspective, Buchloh situates his reading of art institutions in historical narratives, embracing the contradictions between them and recent artistic trajectories. In his influential text on conceptual art, *From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions* from 1990, Buchloh theorises the term ‘institutional critique’ – the questioning of the art institutions involvement in the production, display and commerce of art, which can be traced to early avant-gardes, in particular to Marcel Duchamp. As examined in Chapter Two, Buchloh outlines art movements, from conceptual art to minimalism, that went through the process of questioning the role of institutions, focusing on the works of artists such as Hans Haacke and Marcel Broodthaers that turned out to be key references for the ‘aesthetics of administration’, especially Haacke. The eventual disappearance of the space for critique inside the museum as a legitimising institution in capitalist societies would entail instead its interiorisation into artistic practices leading to what is now canonised as institutional critique.

A recent generation of art theorists has also been revising the term institutional critique in light of the global transformations of contemporary life. In the preface of *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, Raunig and Ray noticed that there is a renewed interest in institutional critique within the field of art. They argue that since the 1960s-70s, institutional critique has been diffusing into new directions by a recent generation of artists and theorists that interrogate the relationship between contemporary art, institutions and society (Raunig and Ray, 2009: pp. xiii-xiv). The essays of the book⁴⁴ discuss this diffusion both in terms of theory and practice, reflecting on the genealogy of the term and its subsequent canonisation in the histories of art. They also widen the spectrum of present and future possibilities for critique while attempting to reinvent the term outside the heaviness of the canon. For Stefan Nowotny, the canonisation of artistic practices of institutional critique is in fact a paradoxical effort because the very term canon ‘belongs to the institutional structure that institutional critique critically refers to’ (Nowotny, 2009: p. 21).

The next step then is to examine in what way recent practices differ from former critical artistic activities that target institutions. Given the heterogeneous character of the examples, instead of departing from specific categories like new institutionalism and institutional critique, the aim is to be guided by artistic projects that explicitly consider and reframe what institutions might be from within, through and beyond.

9.1.2. An interpretation of art institutions through art projects: Carey Young’s *Welcome to the Museum* and *Follow the Protest*, Alicia Herrero’s *The Museum of Political Economy*

Looking to the processes of the artists examined until now, there has undeniably been a movement from the outside to the inside of the art institution. But this movement is not exclusively related to a possible critique of art institutions. These artists also bring elements for a critical examination of the three-way liaison of the art institution, the corporation and the artistic/curatorial in its relationship with the viewer. In the face of this challenge, a question emerges: considering the growing complicity between art institutions and corporations abiding by the neoliberal agendas that rule them, how can

⁴⁴Some of the essays include Brian Holmes, ‘Extradisciplinary Investigations: Towards a New Critique of Institutions’, Isabel Lorey, ‘Governmentality and Self-Precarization: On the Normalization of Cultural Producers’, Simon Sheikh, ‘Notes on Institutional Critique’, Stefan Nowotny, ‘Anti-Canonization: The Differential Knowledge of Institutional Critique’, amongst others.

artistic performativity act upon or even attempt to change the institutional conditions it often appears to serve?

The art institutions chosen to be examined here are related to the corporate environment for different reasons. In fact, we can assert that some of the examples escape to a more conventional characterisation of what a museum may possibly be. It is not only the art institution as a whole that is under the scrutiny of these artistic projects, it is also the exhibition site itself. For instance, the Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis has commissioned two artworks to artist Carey Young, through which the inside space of the museum is transformed into a corporate workplace, namely a call centre. Since its beginning, the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (Helsinki) has been an active partner in realising cooperative projects with corporations, including Deloitte who made an offer for an artist residence in their office building in Ruoholahti, Helsinki. As seen previously, Takala's piece the *Trainee*, which resulted from this partnership, raises interesting issues about producing a work in a place that is not neutral (corporate workplace), and then displaying it as a video installation in the art institution. Finally, with a different approach, Argentinian artist Alicia Herrero conceives a 'museum' without a fixed place entitled *Museum of the Political Economy of Art*, a working in progress since 2010 that explores the relationship between arts and capital within the neoliberal system that defines it.

Carey Young's pieces, *Welcome to the Museum* and *Follow the Protest* from 2009 [fig. 14 and fig. 15] commissioned by Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis, make up part of an ongoing project about corporate systems called *Speech Acts*. The components of production of the two pieces in the exhibition space are quite identical: audio recordings, call centre software, direct dial telephone connection, telephone, chair, and table. The difference between them is that *Welcome to the Museum* includes a script written by the artist and a professional call centre agent sponsored by a company based in St. Louis, which also provided the software for the exhibitions. In *Welcome to the Museum*, the viewer/caller is invited to call to a answering system commonly used by organisations, while being confronted with an artificial environment with succeeding steps, which the caller can (or indeed must) pass through. Besides including fictional departments, this fictitious work-museum-corporation makes also available to the customer/caller a series of activities that can be undertaken by applying for an internship at the 'museum' – a recent version of this work-exhibition make part of the exhibition *During the Exhibition the Museum will be Closed* (2015-16) at the Museum

für Neue Kunst Freiburg. *Follow the Protest* displays the same corporate atmosphere but introduces instead a type of documentary material, namely recordings of interviews and speeches recorded by Carey Young at the G20 action protests in London. The aural experience based on real life protests contrasts with the aseptic environment that often characterises the corporate workplace, but it is also meant to destabilise the guiding lines that run throughout the show. For the artist, these works of the series *Speech Acts*, and the show as a whole, act as negative spaces which reflect, invert and critique the exhibition site while alluding to the corporatisation of culture (2009).



Fig. 14

Carey Young, *Welcome to the Museum* (2009), part of installation view



Fig. 15

Carey Young, *Follow the Protest* (2009), part of installation view

The notion of performativity is central to the practice of Young, and the viewer is both a key agent and a player of the performative act in the exhibition space. By designating a function to the viewer that at times goes beyond mere presence – some of the artworks would not have the same effect without the viewer's intervention – the artist involves the viewer in her criticism of the museum and the corporation. In so doing, she is in full control of the exhibition space as well. The site is consciously disrupted; the coldness and dryness of the corporate environment transposed to the museum transforms the boundary between them tenuous while unveiling the exhibition site as a space of sovereignty. In this sense, it is not the exhibition space that legitimises the artistic act, but the artistic act that establishes the space of the exhibition.

Young's approach often echoes the art practices of the 1960s-70s, especially Conceptualism. For instance, *Welcome to the Museum* takes as a reference Marcel Broodthaers's piece *Musée d'art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (*Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles*), a four-year-long fictionalisation of an art institution that aimed to question what exactly was the reality of the museum. In 1968, a group of students and teachers occupied the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, among them Marcel Broodthaers. They proclaimed the possibility of bringing art to all and to make it

more participatory; also they demanded the creation of a contemporary art museum in Brussels. Three months later, the fictional museum was inaugurated in Broodthaers' private house-studio in Brussels as a platform for intuitional critique. Between 1968 and 1972, Broodthaers constructed the fictitious museum divided into various sections – documentary, literary, cinema, financial, figure, publicity, 17th century, 19th century, and so on – and different registers of institutional and administrative disciplines in relation to artistic practice. Broodthaers' critique of the institution included the questioning of symbols and their artistic function, the deconstruction of ideological connotations and the conceptual rehabilitation of images and historical objects. As art historian Douglas Crimp states,

Two fundamental aspects of Broodthaers' initial museum installation, both relating directly to other facets of his work, are crucial: its focus in the art work's institutional framing conditions and its fascination with the nineteenth century [...] Conflating the site of production with that of reception, Broodthaers reveals their interdependence and calls into question the ideological determination of their separation: the bourgeois liberal categories *private* and *public* (Crimp, 2000: pp. 209-210).

Instead of works of art, Broodthaers displayed plinths, lights, and he showed the whole context of displaying artworks in the museum except the artworks themselves. Broodthaers saw in 'the romantic dispositive of the 19th century the root of contemporary attitudes about art and culture and its alienation from social reality institutionalise by the museum' (Crimp, 2000: p. 212). After remaining at Broodthaers' house-studio for one year, the installation was then transported to various cities, including Antwerp, Cologne, Düsseldorf, and finally Documenta 5 in Kassel, curated by Harald Szeemann.

The importance given to exhibition formalism (design) in the modernist period⁴⁵ gradually gave way to the significance of the concept implicit in the exhibitions. The 1960s marked the beginning of a new consciousness of the artist's autonomy vis-à-vis the traditional spaces of legitimacy. Along with the activity of curatorship, attention would be given to the relationship between artwork and the concepts behind exhibition.

⁴⁵During modernism the experimentalism around the exhibition site reached its peak. The design of the exhibition space during this time was more connected to the formal aspects of the exhibition site, namely the relationship between the artwork, space and viewer. One example of this experimentalism is Marcel Duchamp's iconic exhibition *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibited at the Whitelaw Reid mansion in New York in 1942. With the help of friends, Duchamp erected a string web covering the entire interior of a room, which was richly furnished with decorations, thus creating a site-specific installation.

Broodthaers' *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles* was the second indicator of such change, following Claes Oldenburg's, *The Store* (1961).⁴⁶ At a moment when the role of the artist as curator was being restructured, Broodthaers and other artists went further by transforming themselves into curators, administrators, managers, museum organisers, all in one. In this regard, Young's relational critique of art institutions, as I call it, needs to be understood *in relation to* but also *in contrast with* the sociopolitical motivations that led conceptual artists in the 1960s-70s to want to be outside the art institution. Contrary to these artists, Young takes quite seriously the aesthetics of administration, which turns her approach more ambiguous than those taken by conceptual artists. While Broodthaers' *Museum of Modern Art* can be seen as a lawless almost anarchic reinvention of the museum, Young confronts the institution with its own legal measures by transforming the exhibition space into a corporate workplace. The staging in the Museum of St. Louis is meant to be fictional only to a certain extent as it aims to reflect the growing influence of corporate culture in art institutions. Young's former experience as a worker in multinational corporations facilitates this ambiguous connection between both worlds.

Young's works also enable us to see how museums have mutated in relation to the artist's positionality, especially if we contrast this with former artistic positions and institutional responses. For instance, in 1971, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum censored Hans Haacke's solo exhibition six weeks before its scheduled opening because of his work *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*. Through a series of documentation and photographs, Haacke targeted the real estate holdings of Harry Shapolsky, one of New York City's biggest slum landlords, questioning the dubious transactions of his business between 1951 and 1971. For fear that showing the work could result in a legal action against the museum, Guggenheim's director, Thomas Messer, did not allow the event to take place, and as a result, curator Edward Fry was fired for his support of Haacke's work. A long list of signatures by artists and critics was circulated to support Haacke and condemn publicly the decisions of Messer (Buchloh, 2003: p. 60). In 1981, Haacke ended up including his work on Shapolsky at his solo exhibition at the New Museum of Contemporary Art,

⁴⁶The artist rented a shop in Manhattan, where he fabricated daily pieces for selling, including dresses, hats, bottles. Also, several performances took place in this space, parodying the commercial aspect of the traditional exhibitions. *Store Days* (1961) and *Ray Gun Theatre* (1962) are two examples of those *happenings*. In a different line of Broodthaers' fictional museum, *The Store* worked as a real anti-institutional manifesto.

entitled *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, which eventually became a renowned piece for institutional critique. And in 2000, he showed a piece named *Sanitation*, as a direct reaction to art censorship in the context of the Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art in New York.

This eventual acceptance was already an indication of the mutation of the museums, which became stronger after the 1980s when the investment of the private sector in the arts came to be particularly active and omnipresent. According to cultural expert Chintao Wu, the effort to foster private support for the arts, including art institutions, is a predictable outcome of the economic and cultural policies implemented by neoliberal governments throughout the 1980s, and an effect of the expansion of corporate power itself.⁴⁷ The pro-entrepreneurial atmosphere created by the Reagan and Thatcher regimes significantly helped corporations in their efforts to push their agendas. But it was also the corporate willingness for ‘sharing a humanist value system with museums and galleries, cloaking their particular interests with a universal moral veneer’ (Wu, 1998: p.31). Alongside a decrease in state responsibility for funding, the museum building boom and the expansion of international shows epitomised by the term ‘global art’, museums of contemporary art have been compelled to readapt themselves to new circumstances, and this means to reshape partnerships with corporations.

Indeed, the period in between the 1970s and early 2000s is of most importance to understand that Young’s work has other references beyond those of conceptual practices. American artist Andrea Fraser whose work focuses on the manner in which the artist embodies and reproduces the structures of the art institution, went a step further by claiming that the movement between an inside and outside of the institution is no longer possible, since the structures of the institution have become totally internalised. A position that Fraser began to take almost as a manifesto in her seminal work *Museum Highlights: A Gallery Talk* (1989, 1991, 2011) in which she leads/performs a visit in the Philadelphia Museum of Art embodying a fictional tour guide named Jane Castleton. The ‘tour’ was meant to be a parody of the explanations usually given by docents in museums, resulting in a sarcastic discourse about taste, architectural specificities and general assumptions about art within a growing economic atmosphere. As Alberro asserts in the introduction of the book *Museum Highlights*,

⁴⁷For example, the most prominent tobacco industry player in visual arts sponsorship in UK in the 1980s was Imperial Tobacco, launching its annual Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, and since the 1990s, the Tate Gallery Collection has been sponsored by BP (Wu, 1998: pp. 34-39).

‘Fraser does not critique just the institution of the museum, she also analyzes the type of viewer the museum produces and the process of identification that artists embody’ (Alberro, 2007: p.xxvii). For Fraser, the art field in general became so close to the art institution that everything done outside no longer has an effect on the inside and vice versa. Although maintaining the same degree of performativity and parallel interests concerning the critique of the art institution, I do not think Young’s approach follows Fraser’s determinist view, rather it exposes and reverses the disciplinary structures through which art in institutions comes to be mediated by involving herself (as an artist) in the conditions under which institutional criticism is taking place. This involvement is concretised by intentionally imposing a corporate/managerial mechanism that is usually instituted by the museum. A level of ambiguity allows Young to move between those spaces or to refuse clear boundaries between art and corporations, but this also places her unconditionally both as a player and a target of those criticised conditions.

It is a fact that the role of the art institution has altered the position of the artist towards it as well. The growing franchising of museums as architectural icons, such as the Guggenheim, the MoMA or the Metropolitan, spread quite rapidly while private corporations began to flourish in countries where an absence of state funding of contemporary art still persists⁴⁸ – predictable outcomes caused by the consolidation of economic globalisation. In this regard institutions became more reliant on commercial activities. The Contemporary Art Museum of St. Louis and the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki do not have the aura of those iconic franchised museums. They exemplify however a recent wave of medium-sized institutions highly dependent on private funds and aiming for plural activities beyond exhibiting. This includes, amongst other things, building partnerships, platforms of research, interpretative programmes and performative projects. Another characteristic is the production of

⁴⁸The most paradigmatic case is China, where a large part of contemporary art institutions are highly dependent on corporate investment. For instance, Louis Vuitton is one of the main supporters of Chinese contemporary art, particularly in sponsoring collective and individual exhibitions. Given Hong Kong's status as a hub of fashion and art in Asia, the Louis Vuitton art bookstore exhibition space in Hong Kong establishes a bridge with other similar spaces in Tokyo, Taipei and Singapore. On the other hand, the MOCA Shanghai has been extremely receptive to the sponsoring of exhibitions by corporations such as Adidas and Ferragamo, most certainly because its long-time director is also a wealthy entrepreneur from Hong Kong who deals with diamonds. However, the causes for the Chinese government's deficient support of contemporary art are different from other countries. The Chinese government has an ambivalent posture in relation to it: on one hand, it sees contemporary art as a potential attraction for international tourism – the 798 art district in Beijing is an example – but on the other hand, it perceives contemporary art as a tool for political activism, thus dangerous for the government's system of censorship. This information is founded on my personal experience in China between 2005 and 2009.

journals for publishing their activities. Additionally, in the case of Kiasma, various rooms are reserved for the organisation of corporate events.

Accordingly, the artist, art institution and corporation raise interesting issues when it comes to the materialisation of partnerships on concrete projects. In the context of Takala's piece *The Trainee*, we have seen that Deloitte commissioned a project for an artist residence in their office building in Helsinki. The Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art acted as an intermediary between the corporation and the artist, who accepted the residency. We have seen that Takala's presence in the corporation was in fact a bizarre residency in terms of process with the artist refusing to behave in a manner expected in a corporation. The awkward behaviour took place with the acknowledgement of Deloitte's managers, working as a test to see how the employees would respond to a situation that challenged their routine. The fake internship functioned as a game subverting the rules of those that worked there. One of the most important aspects of the project, which in my view is intentionally left open, is the extent to which the administration managers truly recognise themselves in the normative behaviour of their employees, or in other words, do they really identify the critique of a certain corporate mentality that the artistic process unveils? By extension, the role of Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art is crucial in facilitating the 'game' of what appears to be more an entrapment rather than an internship.

All of these thoughts about 'who is playing what' cannot be avoided while seeing the video installation. Institutional negotiations are normally set between what is visible and what is invisible. Daniel Sherman and Irit Rogoff (1994) observe that museums incorporate an inevitable and invisible correlation between what they aspire to represent, to provide to the public and political forces. We can sense this invisibility in the relationship between Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art and Deloitte, that something escapes the viewer's comprehension. Notwithstanding the backstage negotiations, looking to Takala's project, and also to Young's work, it is perceptible that while art institutions share objectives intrinsically linked to corporate agendas either for a matter of convenience and/or survival, it is also sensed that institutions have become more adaptable to artistic projects. The apparent institutionalisation of some artists has brought another level of complexity to the relationship of the artist, institution and corporation, but at the same time it has surpassed the binary oppositions of inside or outside, namely the artist as antagonistic of the institution.

Artists can also reproduce the mechanisms of an institution, and through the process give shape to their own form of organisation. This is the approach chosen by Argentinian artist Alicia Herrero in the production of a ‘museum’ that gives evidence to the relations of power that operate between art, business and economy. *The Museum of the Political Economy of Art* [fig. 16 and fig. 17], a work in progress built in chapters since 2010, is an itinerant installation of a museum that assembles its own concepts, documents, objects, and eventually, its own actions. Shown in various locations from South America to Europe, the museum without a fixed place makes up part of a series of projects named ‘Art & Capital’ (since 2010) about the connections that art establishes with corporations, the art market, business and neoliberal economy as a whole. One of the works exhibited as part of the museum is called *Action Instrument Box* (2011), a consultancy room surrounded by various objects such as graphics, journalistic articles and notary documents. In the exhibition space there is also a video in which a woman offers a performative presentation of a box containing documents. Through a detailed explanation and inflated gestures the advertising performer invites the audience to collect and produce their own evidence-objects, an excerpt which I transcribe as follows:

Good afternoon! I would like to present to you the newest product from the Actions Market & Money consultancy: *Action Instrument Box*. With this set of 10 action instruments, you can uncover and gather your own revelations and evidence with which to cast critical and legal judgment on the current rules of the art market. Actions Market & Money is the first ever consultancy specialising in imaginative and research activities. It was founded to research the impact of the market, business and money on our perception of art (Herrero, 2011).



Fig. 16

Alicia Herrero, *Action Instrument Box* (2011), video still

Reminiscent of Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* (1964) – how to assess something as art – *Action Instrument Box* intersects the consumer side of art with legal aspects of the art market, but is meant to also be a parody of the theatrical atmosphere of consultancy agencies and auctions. In other correlated works, titled *Suite Action Drawings* (working in progress since 2008), Herrero expounds this thematic. Between 2008 and 2010, she spent some time in auction houses recording the statements and performative actions that constitute the apparatus of 'art as spectacle' in the Debordian sense of the term – the spectacle as representation of society in which relations between commodities have supplanted relations between people (Debord, 1967). She then drew those same theatrical operations, including the data and prices of the works sold in the auctions, while simultaneously recording herself doing those actions. In doing so, the artist implicates herself by self-managing her position as an artist, viewer and participant altogether in institutional contexts in order to unveil the apparatus that normalises the experience of art.

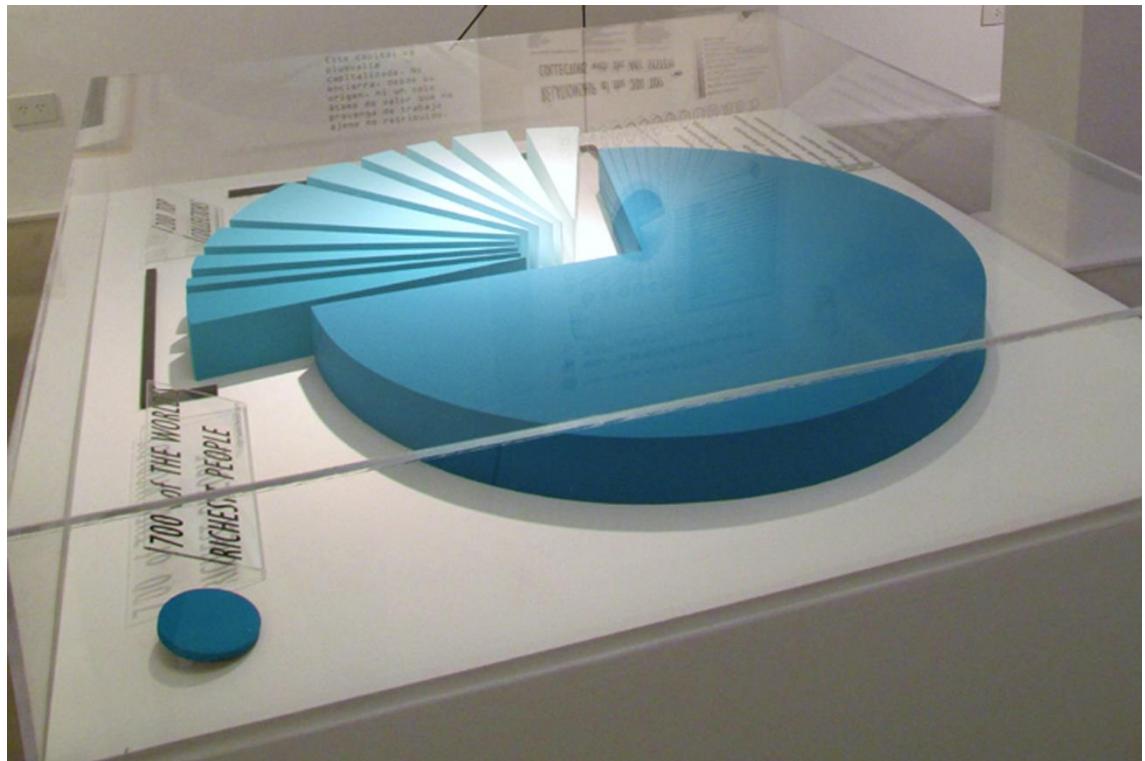


Fig. 17

Alicia Herrero, *The Museum of the Political Economy of Art* (2010 -), chart, part of installation view

The artist as someone implicated in relationships of institutional power is meant to call attention to the contradictions of what it means to be an artist within a capitalist system. The echoes of Warhol's work and the traces of his persona in Herrero's construction of the museum are crucial to emphasise the contradictions as Warhol combined attitudes that were thought to be entirely opposed: he was a bohemian but also a self-made business man. The possibility of combining different stances either for a matter of honesty and/or necessity carries the inevitability of belonging to the system, but it also carries a sense of awareness and self-determination to deal with capitalist reality. Through a performative ongoing process, Herrero places herself amidst these contradictions. The use of the term 'political economy of art' acquires herein a symbolic meaning as a way to emphasise the production and the distribution of goods, objects and services that takes place between institutions under capitalist regulations. Already in the 19th century, the art critic John Ruskin deliberated on the term in the publication *Political Economy of Art* from 1857, as a form of management beyond money and market, attempting to 'fit art production and consumption into both labor and marginalist economic models (Codell, 2008: p. 28).

The position of the artist as someone antagonistic of the art system and by extension against art museums or even in favour of their destruction⁴⁹ gradually gave way to the museum as a stage and the artist as performer. The *Museum of Political Economy of Art* stages documents, images, objects, texts and performative actions to create an inclusive relationship with viewers. This theatricalization of the museum changes our perception of what a museum is supposed to be. The absence of a fixed place or the idea of the portability of an artwork-museum is not new. Between 1935 and 1941 Marcel Duchamp developed a project titled *La Boîte-en-valise* (*The Box in a Valise*) which consisted of a series of unfolded boxes with reproductions and black-and-white photographs of selected artworks identified by title, dimension and date, easily carried to be exhibited in different places. In fact, Duchamp and other artists were struggling to find their own position within the institutional system of art by making use of a large dose of irony.

Duchamp together with artist and collector Katherine Dreier, and Man Ray were looking for a centre to promote avant-garde art. In 1920, they founded an art organisation named Société Anonyme, Inc. in New York. Dreier wanted to call it ‘The Modern Ark’, but Man Ray suggested instead the French name Société Anonyme, Inc. which translated into English would read ‘Incorporated Inc.’ or ‘incorporated corporation.’ Since Man Ray was not fluent in French it is not certain if he really understood its meaning. Both Duchamp and Dreier however embraced the ironic inference of the name, and Dreier added the subtitle Museum of Modern Art: 1920. For a period of ten years, the organisation functioned as the first museum of modern art, showing exhibitions, organizing lectures, and performance events. In 1926 they assembled the second International Exhibition of Modern Art, thus introducing what was considered to be the latest European avant-garde art to American artists, art professionals and the general public (Clark, 2001: pp.4-7).

Even if accidental, the name given to the Société Anonyme Inc. had a clear double meaning: it was meant to function as a language game in a Dada style but it also suggested the degree to which these artists played with the museum of art as a corporate entity, particularly Duchamp. His feelings in relation to the art museum are clearly exposed in a letter to patron Jacques Doucet, where Duchamp emphasises his aversion

⁴⁹One of the most radical examples of this feeling is Kazimir Malevich. In his short text ‘On the Museum’ from 1919, he writes against the intervention of the Soviet government in the recuperation of art collections in the imminence of being destroyed by civil war. Of course, Malevich’s position is of someone that is in agreement with the Russian avant-gardes of his time, that is to say he was more against state control and supportive of an artistic reformulation rather than supporting the destruction of artworks.

for art exhibitions and that he would prefer not be involved in them (Naumann and Oblak, 2000: p.152). In an interview, Pierre Cabanne confronted Duchamp in relation to his partnership in Société by reinforcing Duchamp's antagonistic position toward the idea of collecting artworks for a museum and by extension the institution of the museum itself, to which Duchamp replied that he did it for friendship with Dreier and Man Ray, and above all to help artists to be shown somewhere (Cabanne, 1987: p. 58). Within this context the name Société Anonyme Inc. for the museum was meant to function as an ironic criticism of both the art institution as a corporate entity and the artist's acceptance of that designation on behalf of a greater good, namely the internationalisation of modernist artists – a position that was seen, however, with suspicion by artists in the 1960s. For artists Dan Graham, Daniel Buren and especially Robert Smithson, Duchamp was merely using art institutions to redefine objects as commodified artworks. As Smithson asserts 'Duchamp is involved with the notion of manufacture of objects so that he can have his little valise full of souvenirs [...] It is a complete denial of the work process and it is very mechanical too' (Flam, 1996: p. 310).

Even though it materialised in a different historical-cultural context and has differing formal components, the artwork-museum conceived by Herrero shares a common purpose with Duchamp's project: to subvert the institutional authority of display and to alter the aesthetic/corporeal experience between the viewer and the artwork, which to this it could be added, the very disruption of the notion of artwork turned into an everyday object. There is however a huge difference between them. The phenomenon of the internet has brought new angles to our relational experience of the museum and the artwork. Virtual platforms and websites have extended the scope of possibilities of the museum allowing an experience at a distance that was not possible before. The options of interaction are dependent upon the technological characteristics that each museum makes accessible to the public. Herrero's presentation of the museum does not correspond to the high-tech virtual reality (VR) that produces an illusion of space, but it disrupts the traditional structures of museums in general as it allows at a distance a reflection on the relationship between documentation, performativity and the working process. At the same time the boundaries between art production and art exhibition are erased under the gaze of the viewer. To a certain extent the websites of museums, such as *The Museum of Political Economy of Art*, have become the *in-between* space that grants the viewer access to the backstage of an artistic process and to the staging of its end result. With this process the artist creates a museum without a

fixed location, a museum that relies greatly on the staging of all its elements, on the ‘economy’ that keeps them together. It disrupts traditional structures and rules by providing its own self-narrative in which the performative plays a key role.

The alleged self-institutionalisation of artists like Alica Herrero, Burak Delier, Carey Young or Pilvi Takala often materialises through the legacy of avant-garde artists, placing them in an ambivalent position: as critics of institutional-corporate-market structures and participants of those same structures. Ultimately there is a privileged side of this inside. The self-institutionalisation allows them a strategic position to hire and delegate, to criticise and legitimise the exhibition site, or to disrupt more conventional procedures. The self-institutionalised artist can to a certain extent be compared to what Feher names ‘portfolio managers’. In the context of his analysis, these are individuals that make investments and decisions on behalf of others, match investments to objectives, and value themselves. Basically, Feher describes a new form of being a manager or an entrepreneur in the context of financial institutions (2014). Certainly, his definition unveils a criticism to the neoliberal system; as such it carries a negative connotation. But there is also an optimistic inference concerning a new character that is able to appreciate the artists’ role from within despite the injurious aspects of the system. It is this self-reflexive tendency that characterises the self-institutionalised artist.

9.2. The problem of skills

At this point it is important to recall that a great portion of corporate management in the past years has created high expectations around artistic skills. We have seen that the growing investment in them is strictly dependent on performative efficiency, on how artistic qualities can help stimulate organisation on the corporate setting. The demand for skills in management conveys also a series of prerequisites like creativity and innovation to improve decision-making processes or to manage change and renewal. At the same time, it is important to underline that the artists included as case studies in this research work directly or indirectly to disrupt corporate methods and speeches, to unveil their vulnerability, to confront them with their own artificiality and self-representation, ultimately, to annul their expectations of artistic skills. In the face of these contrasting positions, how can we interpret the meaning of artistic skills?

To answer this question we cannot ignore that ‘skill’ became a tricky term in the field of art. Its trickiness is related with two fundamental changes: a shift of the artist’s relationship with his/her work (inside and outside the studio) and consequently the function of artwork. A revision of this is made by art theorist John Roberts in his book *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* from 2007, where skill and deskilling are redefine through the changes of the artist’s relationship to his labour. For Robert, this involves an analysis of the kinds of labour contained in artworks. Central to Roberts’ argument is that Duchamp’s readymade⁵⁰ has become the focal point of different kinds of labour, namely productive labour and non-productive labour, which eventually narrowed the gap between art and non-art. According to Roberts, Duchamp’s readymade strips out the traditional basis of art by breaking the link between handcraft and skill.

Roberts’ interpretation of the readymade leads him to establish what appears to be a parallel between artistic and economic/managerial processes of deskilling, in which human skilled work is replaced by new forms of technology operated by semi-skilled workers. This parallel however is gradually deconstructed by Roberts, for whom the deskilling in art after the readymade does not represent an absolute loss of ‘artistic sensuousness’, that is to say a loss of sensorial, concrete experience. Duchamp’s process has instigated instead a new set of artistic skills based on immaterial skills, which

⁵⁰Emblematic readymades include *Bottlerack* (1914), *In Advance of a Broken Arm* (1915) and *Fountain* (1917).

according to Roberts, should not be seen as reducible to a practice of speculative thinking. As he contends in a recent article,

[...] the readymade may have stripped art of its artisanal content, but this does not mean that art is now a practice without the hands of the artist. On the contrary, art's emancipatory possibilities of art lie in how the hand is put to work in relation to the techniques of copying and reproducibility, and not through the subordination of the hand to such techniques (Roberts, 2011: p. 43).

It is this multifunctionality of the hand detected by Roberts that remains central in contrast to capitalist labour processes severely restricted, subordinated and predetermined. In this way, the process of skilling-deskilling-reskilling in the readymade opened up, questioned and expanded the circuits of authorship so important for the early avant-gardes. For Roberts, the real challenge for contemporary artists does not primarily lie in the appropriation of the readymade but in the interpretation of skill-deskilling-reskilling in a time of economic and technological changes, and increasing corporate control. In this regard, for him, artistic practices after conceptual art continued to explore the distrust towards skills by means of copying, replicating and simulating, which eventually gave way to a multiplication of artistic identities, namely the artist-archivist, the artist-curator, the artist technician, the artist-producer, and so on. Roberts is critical of this composite figure of the artist, which for him does not carry the subversive potential of those earlier avant-garde practices. However, he justifies that this critique does not intend the annulment of the historical avant-garde or the nostalgic memory of conceptual art, but rather aims for understanding what these neo avant-garde practices today actually comprise, namely the artist as a manipulator of performative strategies in a world of proliferating substitutions and simulations (Roberts, 2011: p.45).

Roberts' reading of the readymade touches upon a key aspect, namely that processes of skill-deskilling-reskilling should be seen as artistic responses to their own (dis)place under capitalism. This means that artists need to redefine and manipulate their own skills by intentionally deskilling and rejecting traditional competences and training. The fact is that, over the past 50 years, many artistic practices – conceptual art, post-conceptualism and down to relational aesthetics – have been approaching deskilling by adopting processes in which the body of the artist and also the body of others play a fundamental role as material work in redefining the boundaries between art and society. As art theorist Boris Groys (2010) claims, the artist's body itself became a readymade.

Multiple ways of outsourcing places the artist in a managerial position, and yet as seen before, this is driven most of the time by different motivations than those of management. The artists included in this doctoral research might provide a service to corporations, however it is a service that has the potential to distort their own artistic practice, and at the same time, has the chance to destabilise the managerial practice of others. This is not to say that artists do not have skills, rather as long as they acquired them, they also have the possibility to displace, reject or render them obsolete.

Conclusion

In response to the first research question, what kind of mechanisms should be enacted by contemporary art as a means to challenge corporate influence, this research has worked towards disassembling an oversimplified view of art as a model to be inspired and used by corporate management. At any moment was the possibility of denying a mutual benefit, that artistic practices also have an interest in the corporate world as the material subjects of their own work. Therefore, it became important to show different ways of artists engaging with and/or reacting to corporate influence, and above all, the different goals of their projects.

The case studies examined intentionally destabilised the dynamic forces of corporations and disrupted the very meaning of productivity and skilled work. On the other hand, I also focused on art-based learning experiences, approaches fostered by sectors of the field of art orientated towards arts and business research that use art for strengthening the bonds between artistic processes and management perspectives. In this regard, the study conducted by Ariane Berthoin Antal (2011) to evaluate the benefits of such engagements divulges the joint institutional effort of different fields – arts, social sciences and management – to solidify the collaboration between art and corporate management. However, looking to Antal's report and the intentions behind the processes of evaluation, a hypothetical scenario turned into a question comes to mind: how do we assess the artistic interventions used here as case studies if they aimed for an opposite result of what is required in those partnerships evaluated by Antal, namely their success? Should the term evaluation even be utilised for these contemporary practices? This is an aspect that is worth thinking. These contrasting methods not only help to corroborate the diversity of the art field, they also complicate the very definition of what an artistic model might possibly be.

A review of how artistic and corporate modes of production intersected historically was fundamental to understand the nuances of their interplay. The analysis revealed a symbiotic yet tense relationship liable to change rapidly and unpredictably following the specificities and discontinuities of historical circumstances. In face of the 1960s economic paradigm shift and a turning point in the relationship between artists and corporations, it was important to ponder on what the movement of art and corporate management signified in the past two decades. I intended to show through a series of

references and art projects that this movement, which took shape over the course of the 1990s, is intrinsically related to performativity and language.

In the case of contemporary art, a shift occurred from performance to the performative, in which statements and actions could interfere in a situation and change the course of events. This does not mean that performance ceased to exist or that both terms do not overlap, but rather that the performative turned out to be more suitable for situations that exceed a mere live performance by the subject. In this sense, the recent uses of the performative in art have more to do with managerial trends in the general economy, which channel artists to outsource, delegate, and act upon capitalist structures. In the case of corporate management, an internal debate remains about the questionable veracity of performativity in economics, and consequently its possible misapplication outside economics. As such, corporate actors ‘acting as artists’ and artists ‘acting as entrepreneurs or managers’ ask for a differentiation of intents. My aim was to show that performativity is often put into practice with different purposes in various situations. In the case studies presented there is an artistic intention of practicing performativity as a strategic approach, whereas corporate actors, although attempting to strategise performativity, end up capitalising on it. Certainly, strategy should not be seen as an exclusive artistic approach and capitalisation as being exclusive to corporate management. But the difference between the two rests in the possibility to choose not to be capitalised or to be able to withdraw some sort of capital. The term ‘de-capitalise’ in business inevitably has a negative connotation, implying a sense of loss in the form of deprivation or disinvestment.

The corporate processes of ‘jamming’ and ‘brainstorming’ examined in different moments are embodiments of a clear capitalisation of performativity. The first is taken from jazz improvisation and advised as an artistic process to reject extensive preparation or predefined arrangements to better understand, stimulate and improve the creative side of business. The second is usually presented as visioning sessions common to management consultants who are encouraged to think from a new perspective (outside the box). Language, intuition and imagination are essential in the construction of hypothetical scenarios, or moments that Mark Fisher describes as the belief in a world where the most banal work can become creative and artistic. The fact is that both jamming and brainstorming manifest a regulatory way of managing creativity individually and collectively to obtain results. In this respect, Pilvi Takala’s performative interpretation of brainwork has revealed that it is not easy to improvise in

workplaces where discipline no longer needs to be administered exclusively by managers but has also become a system of employees' self-management.

As seen, a key element that shapes artistic performativity is irony. In the projects examined there are no clear boundaries between daily uses of language and assertions proper for fictional or theatrical scenarios: a real text is adapted to a fake talk show, a real internship is converted into outlandish dialogues, a consultants meeting ends up being divulged as an inane discourse, real speeches are adapted and staged as false conferences, and so on. The inversion of an action, idea or statement by means of irony is meant to achieve a particular effect. This means that irony is put into use by these artists intentionally with an objective in mind, namely to disturb corporate modes of production and thinking, to expose linguistic insubstantialities, and ultimately to unveil corporate modes of being ironic as well. The teasing mode of consultants interrelating with audiences and clients is at times akin to management authors' playful mode of creating a bond with readers. However, this type of irony at play in management finds its reason most of the time in the absurdity of expressions, in the intent to persuade, and above all, in the conviction of the objectives proposed. One can conclude that, in these moments, irony transpires in corporate management abstractly as an idealist concept whose intentions are not entirely successful as consultants and managers think.

Another important aspect has to do with the type of corporation. In the examples given we have seen that, in the case of both Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT) and Xerox PARC, technology is a productive ground to explore as a common language between artists and employees. Since then, partnerships between art and technology, more specifically digital culture, have become almost a commonplace. What distinguishes EAT and Xerox PARC collaborations from those developed at Deloitte and Quickborne Team is the degree of involvement of the artists through communication. At PARC, there was a shared understanding between artists and scientists to find productive forms of dialogue for the realisation of scientific projects. At Deloitte and Quickborne Team, on the contrary, the lack and/or the disturbance of language communication between artists and employees remained essential for the objectives of the projects. The problem of communication either as a premeditated tactic or an ethical approach on the part of the artists was fully integrated as part of the placement or internship at the corporations. This leads me to conclude that the domain in which the corporation functions is crucial for the type of collaboration developed at

the workplace, and most certainly for the level of artistic resistance that emanates during that time.

At a certain point in the research, it became vital to know in what manner corporate managers understand these projects in which they end up being confronted with their own artificiality and self-presentation. What is their feedback to those critiques in projects they actually support and collaborate on? I asked this question to Nina Möntmann, the curator of Harun Farocki's film *a New Product*, to which she replied:

Quickborner consultants attended a discussion with Harun Farocki and an economist, where they were harshly criticised, mainly by the audience. But their reaction was very professional; they comment that they were surprised by all those critiques and will take their time to think about them. It is clear that they are working inside their neoliberal bubble, and inside this reference system they want to make it easier for people to cope with it, but apparently without any critical distance (Lourenço, 2016).

I asked the same question to Pilvi Takala, to which she replied:

I am not surprised that Deloitte chooses to embrace some aspects of the piece and ignore others. Even if on a personal level some of the staff at Deloitte would also understand the critique, I would not expect them to state that anywhere officially. Neither have I made attempts to make my collaborators see how the piece is read in other contexts, while remaining honest about my intentions and experiences regarding the project (Lourenço, 2016).

As seen formerly, many of those negotiations between artists, institutions and corporations are kept private away from the viewer's sight and comprehension. We will never know if a manager and a coworker are being truly honest about what was revealed in a project and if they were really satisfied with the results. Each project has its own purpose, each corporation has its own rules, and each partnership has its own specificity. In this sense there is no clear and unique response to how artistic strategies can alter the way corporate actors think about artistic practices. However, this opens the discussion to the way these projects with distinct approaches can turn upside down the idea of a 'model' to be followed – a model of artist, a model of practice, a model of work. What we have seen are divergent interpretations of what is a model of work or skilled work between art and management in the so-called new flexible economy. At the heart of the artistic projects analysed in this research there is a clear intention to

undermine work, to disrupt a preconceived idea of work, and ultimately, to interfere with or reveal the limits of managerial work. Perhaps the biggest mistake of corporate management is the incapacity to perceive that art by its very compound nature cannot be managed with the same type of tools that are appropriate for managerial and corporate training. This does not mean that art fails at the responsibility of self-managing, rather that it has the possibility to refuse it. It is this state or fact of *being possible* that marks the difference between art and corporate management performative stances.

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