

Culture Unbound:
Journal of Current Cultural Research

Thematic Section:
Culture, Work and Emotion

Edited by
Can-Seng Ooi & Richard Ek

Extraction from Volume 2, 2010

Linköping University Electronic Press

ISSN 2000-1525 (www)

URL: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se/>

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Thematic Section: *Culture, Work and Emotion*

Can-Seng Ooi & Richard Ek <i>Culture, Work and Emotion</i>	303
Hing Ai Yun <i>Service Workers: Governmentality and Emotion Management</i>	311
Szilvia Gyimóthy & Louise Rygaard Jonas <i>Branding on the Shop Floor</i>	329
Can-Seng Ooi <i>Cacophony of Voices and Emotions: Dialogic of Buying and Selling Art</i>	347
Johan Hultman & Erika Andersson Cederholm <i>Bed, Breakfast and Friendship: Intimacy and Distance in Small-Scale Hospitality Businesses</i>	365
Erika Andersson Cederholm <i>Effective Emotions: The Enactment of a Work Ethic in the Swedish Meeting Industry</i>	381
Ana María Munar <i>Digital Exhibitionism: The Age of Exposure</i>	401
Richard Ek <i>Epilogue – Towards an Experience Ecology of Relational Emotions</i>	423

Culture, Work and Emotion

By Can-Seng Ooi & Richard Ek

The pursuit of work-life balance alludes to how work and everyday life have become entangled. The demarcation of one's private emotional life against one's professional work no longer holds true as companies want workers to be part of a corporate family and emotional expressions are (selectively) welcomed in the work place. Yet another demarcation is being challenged; as promoted by proponents of the experience economy, consumption has become an act of co-creation or co-production (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Many products are experiential or have experiential components, such as in thrill rides and leading a branded lifestyle. Today, being emotionally demonstrative can be expected at work and a consumer can expect to generate consumption experiences of her/his own. This special section of *Culture Unbound* – Culture, Work and Emotion – is dedicated to some of these boundary-crossing debates.

Let's take a step back. When *The Managed Heart* by Arlie Russell Hochschild was published in 1983, no one expected its impact 30 years later. The concept "emotional labour" is so entrenched in the social sciences that it hardly needs a reference. It is difficult to overestimate its enduring influence (Brook 2009a). It is also impossible to do an exhaustive overview of the concept because the concept has dispersed into a myriad of research streams and adopted in different academic disciplines.¹ One may say that this special section of *Culture Unbound* is yet another example of Hochschild's work being discussed, criticised and advanced.

For some scholars, the emotional labour concept is too close to Marx's alienation theory and therefore absolutist in character (Korczynski 2002; Bolton 2005 & 2009) while others have argued that the concept needs to be more integrated within Marxian Labour Process Analysis (Brook 2009a & 2009b). The concept has influenced additional concepts, primarily "aesthetic labour". This is a concept that highlights management's utilisation of employees' embodied looks, competencies and skills (Warhurst et al. 2000; Witz et al. 2003; Nickson et al. 2005) and raises questions regarding employment discrimination (Warhurst et al. 2009) and segmentation in the routine interactive service sector (Warhurst & Nickson 2007a & 2007b). Of course, the emotional labour concept has also opened up for a gender conscious scrutinisation of the social reproduction and commodification of gender and sexuality (Warhurst & Nickson 2009) in workplace contexts.

Emotional labour, as a stream of research, integrates two themes: the rise of a service economy and an attention towards the investment, and personal management of emotions in workplace situations (Wharton 2009). Acting in relation to

workplace-bound social and cultural norms requires self-aware intentions among the employees, a process that Hochschild refers to as taking place on the “surface” of personality and subjectivity as well as “deep” within the person in question. Especially in service work, in the service encounter (Hochschild uses the case of flight attendants), the employee is normally obliged to show a predestined register of emotional display. For the employer, it is crucial that the employee does not only show these emotional registers on the surface, but really “means it” (deep within him- or herself) in order to optimise customer satisfaction (see also Gilmore & Pine 2007). To Hochschild (1983: 90), if the service workers who are required to display a certain set of emotions do not feel congruent with their feelings, “emotive dissonance” is developed over time. In order to minimise this dissonance, the service worker adjusts one’s “deep feelings”. In this process, the service workers’ feelings are commoditised, and in the continuation, estranged and alienated (Korczynski 2002: 142).

In a recent overview, Amy Wharton (2009) points to two strands of work based on the emotional labour concept, primarily within sociological research. The first line of work pivots around emotional labour as a cipher to understand organizational contexts and the nature of interpersonal interaction in particular kinds of service occupations. The dynamic character of the service encounter in different servicescape settings is here investigated through keywords like power, control, resistance and empowerment (for a recent compilation, see Korczynski & Macdonald 2009). Subsequently, studies of emotional labour extend to a wider collection of interactive but less reutilised occupations like teachers and doctors (Wharton 2009: 152). The second strand of work of emotional labour research focuses more directly on the management of emotions and especially on emotional display across public-private work-family boundaries (also reflecting later work by Hochschild (2003)). Within this area of research, attempts to operationalize and measure emotive dissonance and emotional management as well as pin down tenable consequences of emotional labour are made.

With the advent of the various so-called service, experience and creative economies, human emotions are in the gambit of wealth creation. This dedicated section of *Culture Unbound* shows how the debates have moved even further. We aim at addressing service work in general and the emotional labour concept in particular to the assumption that emotion management and emotion display are not limited to the front-desk or service employee. Rather it is a process that permeates and characterises the service encounter and its physical environment, its servicescape, in its entirety. Many of our discussions are painted into the stitches of the dualistic couplet of culturalisation and economisation, that is, a take on the cultural economy. Here, the economy is increasingly inflected with cultural performances and cultural tropes at the same time as culture is being used in instrumental ways, for instance in the promotion of cities. Thematic areas of investigation have been the new economy, creativity and consumption (Pratt 2004 &

2009). The economy in all its spheres is regarded as an act with many different kinds of goals (e.g. material, symbolic, power-related), and theorised as a hybrid organized around a life-world of emotional register (Amin & Thrift 2007).² In this force field of intertwined cultural and economic processes a number of empirical changes have been attended to. What is especially interesting in this context is the nature of employment and work, like “the rise of flexible work and self-employment, the concentration of freelancing, and causalization of labour, plus the degree of serial contracting and project working, found in the cultural economy” (Pratt 2009: 410).

The concern with culture, work and emotion transcends national boundaries. In this section of *Culture Unbound*, we have examples from Denmark, Sweden, Singapore, the Netherlands and cyberspace. One salient theme here is on service workers. The service industry is highly dependent on its service staff to provide satisfying experiences for customers. Attempts are made not only to make customers feel good, attempts are also made to make employees embody the good feelings they demonstrate to sell services. In other words, when demonstrating their positive emotions in their jobs, workers must also be authentic to themselves. Governing the emotions of employees is not easy, but, indeed, there are ways of doing so. Hing looks at how various employers in Singapore motivate their service workers. These workers are socialised to be excellent service employees by reminding them to have the “right attitude”, that is, they must be willing to be flexible in accomplishing their work. The workers must also be professional, that is, they must be friendly, appear unhurried and be positive towards customers and bosses. Parallel observations are seen in Denmark, in Gyimóthy and Rygaard Jonas’ study of workers in the “Best Butcher in Town”, a project tagline that the supermarket chain Kvickly has adopted for its meats section. Service workers in Kvickly are encouraged to be the shop’s brand ambassadors. Employees should use their initiative and common sense to boost the customer experience. But the new demands on the butchers to relate directly with customers and to appear positive at all times in their job can be emotionally draining and intrusive. The studies by Hing and Gyimóthy and Rygaard Jonas show that workers have to manage their own sense of identity through the demands of their work. With work demanding how they should behave and feel, their own private emotional space is now also being invaded and commodified.

Another salient theme in this collection also deals with services, but in the context of independent business persons providing the extra authentic experience to their customers. Ooi followed an art-loving Dutch couple in Singapore. They visited the workspaces of artists in order to go beyond the staged glitz of commercial art galleries. The encounters between artists and art buyers in the art studios are awkward because the aesthetic and the commercial spheres clash during their encounters. As an established practice, aesthetic value transcends economic value but when artists and art buyers meet to trade, art mixes with commerce. Similarly,

art buyers may be uncomfortable when witnessing the less than glossy, but yet authentic, art practices in artist workspaces. Artists are precarious to reveal too much about themselves, since it might put their glamorous artist image at risk. In sum, artists and art buyers are emotionally ambivalent of such meetings. The awkward moments discourage art buyers and artists to trade directly with each other. The running of a Bed and Breakfast (B & B) requires emotional work too. Hultman and Andersson Cederholm look into the emotional work of a B & B owner. Similar to Ooi's study of artists and art buyers, guests and B & B host find the need to cultivate their friendship during their brief encounters. They must jointly create the friendly and homely atmosphere. Separating the boundary between economic and private activities is a constant nag for guests and host. The quest for the more intimate and authentic experience by guests can result in both emotional satisfaction and ambivalence.

It is natural that colleagues and business partners become friends. But friendship does not necessarily bring about higher productivity in the work place. The subject of managing emotions amongst colleagues has become a business. In the context of increasing productivity and effectiveness, mediators are now at hand to provide guidance on how colleagues and business partners should meet and solve problems. Andersson Cederholm looks at the advent of "effective emotions" in the business world, particularly when people hold meetings. Colleagues, customers and business partners are provided with the tools to bring about higher productivity through more effective ways of emotional demonstration when gathering. The engineering of a corporate meeting culture entails the definition of the right moments to allow for selected emotions to be expressed amongst colleagues, partners and clients.

A new emotional culture is evolving on the Internet. Technology is also affecting how we communicate and express our emotions. Munar examines the practices in the ever increasingly popular social media, such as Facebook and Tripadvisor. The popularity of social media indicates that humans are intrinsically social. Today, millions of people use the Internet to befriend and to keep friends updated. Using Munar's terms, digital voyeurs and exhibitionists complement each other in cyberspace. Strangers become friends, for instance, as they offer advice, suggestions and travel tips through Tripadvisor. Bits and bytes can be a medium for emotional work. Munar's study show how people open up and express themselves emotionally in order to construct their own digital identities. Nonetheless, how one expresses oneself and one's emotions are also guided in cyberspace. Advice is given on how people should write and present themselves. The emergence of digital biographies poses ethical issues. Expressions on the Internet tend to be spontaneous but the ephemeral nature of emotion become permanent and digitalised when expressed on the Internet. It remains uncertain if such records can be deleted! Nonetheless, the encouragement of emotive expression in social media like Facebook and Tripadvisor has a commercial motive. While people can keep in

touch with their friends on Facebook and others tell their travel stories on Tripadvisor, these expressions are the commercial contents of the websites. The public is doing the work for these Internet firms.

In the epilogue, Ek brings the collection of six papers together by revisiting the emotional labour concept. The articles point to the diverse research directions Culture, Work and Emotion can take. More importantly, they also point to the direction in which modern society is heading, where the logic of customer satisfaction, co-production and productivity have made emotions part of work, consumption and wealth creation.

Acknowledgement

Friendship and enthusiastic academic exchanges brought this thematic section of *Culture Unbound* to fruition. In the last eight years or so, the Scandinavia-based contributors met several times a year to discuss ideas and each others' papers. The convergence of minds resulted in this collection. One scholar, Tom O'Dell, was crucial in the initiation and gestation of this assembly of scholarship. Although he has not contributed a paper here, his ideas and encouragement is well appreciated.

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Notes

- 1 By just having a look at some articles from 2007 to 2009, we see how emotional labour is a referential starting point in management (Townsend 2008; van Dijk & Kirk 2008; Rupp et al. 2009), business (D'Cruz & Noronha 2008), leadership (Gardner et al. 2009; Iszatt-White 2009, Newman et al. 2009), sociology (Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2008), medical care and

nursing (Yang & Chang 2008; Gray 2009; Gray & Smith 2009), psychology (Austin et al. 2007; Diefendorff et al. 2008; Humphrey et al. 2008), human geography (Dyer et al. 2008), social work and social policy (Seery et al. 2008; Cheung & Tang 2009), media and communication (Richardson et al. 2008; Zhang & Zhu 2008) and tourism and hospitality (Kim 2008; Wong & Wang 2009).

- 2 For general overviews, see Callon 1998; Ray & Sayer 1999; du Gay & Pryke 2002; Amin & Thrift 2004; O'Dell & Billing 2005; Löfgren & Willim 2005.

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Service Workers: Governmentality and Emotion Management

By Hing Ai Yun

Abstract

That all may be quiet on the shop floor could be a result of governmentality projects. But what lies beneath an appearance of professionalism? I undertook an empirical field study of workers in the service industry to examine contradictory and competing interests of employees and their employers and observed the dynamic constitution of subjectivity in situations of conflict. Based on a study of 56 service workers, this study first looks at the consensual orientation of workers towards their employment, then discusses a number of common demands required of workers in the service sector and investigates how workers deal with these management demands. My investigation of service workers disclose the internalised struggles experienced in their commitment to a prescribed, official image while attempting to maintain, at the same time, an integrous sense of self. By collecting stories of actual situations, I am able to show how patterns of emotion management, effectiveness of governmentality project, and agency work together to shape social behaviour in working life.

Keywords: Governmentality, emotion management, organismic emotion model

Introduction

During the 1980s, terms like “knowledge worker” were bandied about as part of euphoric predictions heralding the “new economy” (Ritzer 1989) and “post industrial capitalism” (Heydebrand 1989; Castells 1996). It was proclaimed that knowledge and organization, rather than physical capital, are motors of change. On the other hand, those focusing on the emerging service economy see health, education and welfare as main elements of economic action (Fuchs 1968), implying that an expansion of the managerial or supervisory class will lead to better living standards and deliverance from the monotony of industrial work. Three decades have since passed and in this current recession, the optimistic predictions of post-industrial society now sound hollow.

This paper attempts to understand the work behaviour of service workers in Singapore, whose service industry burgeoned following the deindustrialisation that began in the 1970s (Monetary Authority of Singapore 1998). The service industry as defined in this paper is based on the profile made by the Singapore Department of Statistics in their large scale survey of service establishments, and includes Wholesale and Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food and Beverage Services, Transport and Storage, Information and Communications, Financial-and Insurance-related Services, Real Estate and Business Services, Community, Social and Personal Services (Singapore Department of Statistics 2008). Where appropriate, I also considered workers from the manufacturing industry as many jobs in the manufacturing sector are really service type jobs and not production jobs (Monetary Authority of Singapore 1998).

My interviews, conducted between 2007 and 2009, drew from a cross-section of these establishments, with half the interviewees from tourism and hospitality, and approximately a sixth each from healthcare and finance. A combination of purposive and accidental sampling methods was used, with the aim of obtaining information from a wide variety of workplaces.

What is clear is that for the majority, work has become less secure, with dwindling pay, increased competition, and increasingly challenging conditions. Yet, the workforce has continued slogging diligently, even obsessively. One may see this widespread compulsion to toe the line as a consequential effect of governmentality. Governmentality, as argued by Foucault, is “an ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” (Miller & Rose 1990: 2).

That employers and the state can hijack the selfhood of citizen-workers is no surprise, what with the effective work of schools, the family, and the commercial system in constituting the identity of workers. Families, the moral educators and emotional props for their children, are often so eager to foster workaholism in

them that aspects of life outside of work come to be perceived as irrelevant. With such conditioning, the young become predisposed to authority.

But my investigation into workers' lives shows that, despite the mandated assimilation of the service worker into a homogenised workforce, governmentality is not accepted wholesale and without question, but instead, is accommodated within a range of individual social desires and interests, with which it interacts in a complex and dynamic manner. Where personal conflicts arose in a given work situation, service workers responded by negotiating an acceptable level of well-being and satisfaction for themselves while doing, so far as was possible, what was expected. Such a compromise is not always achievable, however, so overwhelming are the demands of social authorities for their interests to be given full reign, even to the detriment of the health, personal integrity and family life of the service worker.

This paper will investigate why and how workers are labouring ever harder, despite such difficulties, to achieve company goals. Deploying the tools of Foucault that focus on the productive potential of power, one argues that by a life-long process of socialisation and shaping by a host of agencies, workers have been constituted with new norms of competitiveness, rationality, job commitment, professionalism, customer service and other values which lead to profit-maximising behaviour, and an orientation towards national growth. Discipline facilitated this drive, and helped transform Singapore into a first world country (Lee 2010).

According to Miller and Rose (1990), political power in market economies can be more effectively exercised indirectly as "action at a distance," borrowing and adapting the term from Bruno Latour (1987). The trick is to get subjects to actively govern themselves. Nonetheless, as one unravels the process where workers successfully inculcated with discipline and responsibility strive to fulfil company demands, one encounters a complex process of negotiation which encompasses both automatic responses of the responsible, self-monitoring individual, as well as intentional exercise of agency as individuals make up their own way of coping and handling external strictures and "protocols" imposed on pain of dismissal or a place on the blacklist.

But governmentality projects can never be 100 percent effective. When governmentality fails, respondents will go into the emotional management mode. Emotion management, as defined by Hochschild, is the conscious efforts to control, shape and manage unwanted feelings (Hochschild 1979). Although respondents seem to agree that displays of anger or raw emotions are signs of immaturity and unprofessional, workers have been known to flee wailing to toilet cubicles when riled up enough by workplace incidents. An additional element of emotional management that concerns this study is the enhancement of company profits by "mobilisation, development and commodification of employees' corporeality" (Warhurst & Nickson 2007). Despite managerial jargon of aestheticisation of work, the bottom line underlines all bodywork.

Unlike conventional studies of emotion work/management, this paper will disclose another aspect of emotion management which is not aimed at enhancing company profits, but rather, is carried out for the purpose of helping workers regain their sanity and for the making up of integrous person-hood. The study looks at how individuals negotiate to recalibrate their existing identity when their self-interest is at odds with company demands. Investigation of the use of their bodies to reconstitute and enhance the products they are marketing will be used to illustrate the processes of working on themselves. The dimensions of worklife looked at include the acceptance and negotiation of various employment demands such as tailoring of body work, and incentives that hold them to remain in their jobs despite difficult work conditions.

Effectiveness of Governmentality Projects

In their paper “Governing of economic life”, Miller and Rose (1990) drew attention to the personal dimension of the productive process by alluding to how social authorities construed subjects in ways that tie their personal desires to the employers’ quest for profits. By resorting to technologies of the self such as performance appraisal reports and aggregated charts for ranking of personnel, management is able to access the internal life of workers and align them psychologically to the desires of their firms. By addressing workers as entrepreneurs, employers and the state have seduced the self-regulating capacities of individuals to actively take on their role as obsessive producer-consumers.

Even prior to their entry into firms, students have been conditioned into putting a premium on good performance reports, and to take and crave pride in them. Schools have been accepted as effective social authority in the governmentality project, as evidenced by the general acceptance of their products as candidates suitable for employment in most companies. Nonetheless, companies have also established their own stringent recruitment procedures (a major Asian airline required a few rounds of interviews and self presentations, e.g. in swim wear) to filter out the undesirables, although this is no indication that governmentality projects are not trusted 100 percent. Rather, in limiting recruitment to only those with specified years of education, the implication being that these are the successfully disciplined, companies can ensure that workers recruited will have a minimal acceptable level of malleability and the “right” attitude while “undesirables” who have not been normalised to discipline and conformity will be kept out.

In addition to hiring only workers who are generally co-operative and have a malleable attitude, each establishment also requires that workers adapt to the company’s own peculiar way of defining and normalising them. Where one establishment may allow wildly tinted or dyed hair (e.g. night-clubs), another may prohibit these but instead insist that some other aspect of the worker be shaped according to other given specs, e.g. body size and shape. What is sure is that work-

ers are faced with multiple and arbitrary demands that restrain and constrain the way they dress, shape and size their body, and vocalise their discourse. For instance, in the case of a joint that sells food and alcohol using the waitresses as “bait” (the exact words of a server-interviewee), regular checks are made for body size and facial make-up. Waitresses are even given breaks to freshen their make-up. Company expectations are already communicated upfront during recruitment interviews.

As a result of a company’s recruitment process nearly all low-level workers interviewed have expressed their ideal of doing a “professional” job despite menial pay and miserable working conditions. It’s a wonder how these low level workers could have imbibed the prevailing ideology of professionalism (“that work can and should take precedence in one’s life” [Bailyn 2006: 67]) and yet not demand the remuneration consonant with production of work of a professional standard. Low level interviewees repeatedly mentioned wanting to project a professional image and make the company proud of them. “I should provide a minimum quality work which my boss can be proud of.” “I want to be professional to do well.” “I take pride in my work.”

Such phrases have cropped up repeatedly despite facing daily hassles from nasty customers and bosses. The typical worker’s attitude to work reflects well the requirement of employers that they stay disciplined and “professional”. Said a 30-year old female prison worker, “I tended to be proactive and worked hard because I needed to show people the ‘right’ attitude for fear of being misjudged and dismissed as being inefficient and lazy by my superiors as well as my colleagues.” Frost (2009) mentions that in the Robert Half’s survey, which covered 200 Singaporean respondents, 61 percent still go to work when they are sick because they are scared of falling behind in their work, the highest rate when compared against 6,000 others polled from across 20 countries, including the USA and Japan. Half of the respondents did not want to be perceived by superiors and peers as not working, again the highest rate among those surveyed.

Said a 20-year old male bartender who is hourly rated, “People return to the bar and ask for the bartender that made the drinks for them previously. I want my customers to leave happy and stress-free. In a hectic modern world, sometimes all the world needs is a nice bartender like me”, indicating the successful part of governmentality projects. Servers often do not perceive the conditions as onerous. “The only thing they (bosses) expected me to be was professional when doing my work, and to have a good work attitude.” Ensuring that workers do not have an “attitude” problem means that they can adjust to difficult requirements and accept some degree of suffering and deprivation during working-time. A good example of a co-operative worker is personal banker A (a graduate) who said that after a few months, emotional work expected of her became easier. It was less tiring because it has become “part of me”. She had familiarised herself with the products and would just grit her teeth when irritated by a client.

Besides schools, other social agencies like the media (strongly state-influenced through ownership laws and censorship regulations) have influence over the way people think of themselves. States like the Singapore regime, which is based on one-party rule, have a greater hold over multiple avenues that constitute citizen-personhood, thus resulting in relative uniformity of personhood. Authoritarian states can wreak havoc with the formation of the self, as they are the primary mediators between global capitalism and their people. For instance, the discourse of commerce can be advanced to the extreme to apply to individual personhood. One peculiar recent example refers to the state demand that their people be adaptable in the context of the current, financially induced recession. Where companies are limited in liability, the state demands that Singapore's workers should accept that they could be stretched to the limits. In response to the current recession, Secretary General of the National Trades Union Congress Lim Swee Say coined the term "Singapore Unlimited" for describing the journey ahead to beat the recession. Singapore must not be contented to just be "cheaper than those who are better or better than those who are cheaper" (Oon 2009). The same penchant for dehumanising citizen-subjects was displayed when Minister for Manpower Lee Boon Yang, in one of many attempts to inculcate workers into the ethos of life-long learning, alleged that workers have to upgrade to enhance the "shelf-life of our knowledge and skills" (Lee 2000). He was appalled that about half of workers surveyed had not gone for training over the past three years.

On the surface, workers' pride in their professionalism reflects themselves as self-monitoring, responsible, fulfilled, objective, and autonomous. Primarily, automaticity cannot be assumed, for thoughts of retribution are never far away from the apparent conformity of servers. Frost's (2009) report reveals that Singapore ranks highest globally when it comes to employees checking company e-mails outside working hours, with 26 percent spending on average 30 – 44 minutes a day doing this.

Banker A was able to keep her cool by constantly reminding herself that this could be a spy sent by the bank to evaluate her. "The worst scenario is that I would be sacked." The fact that supervisors are sent on board to evaluate them is also intimidating, said an airline steward. Pressure to perform comes from both vertical and horizontal reprimands: "I will get a scolding from my colleagues and supervisor if I did not do as required."

Despite some success with governmentality, direct coercion such as regular reprimands, scolding, blackening and threats of sacking are still necessary to prod workers back into line. When personal banker X was reprimanded by her supervisor for wearing knee-length pants during the training period, her immediate reaction was one of anger. She could not imagine that she was admonished for not dressing in the required formal attire, which was the usual means of normalising a company's strict requirements onto their workforce.

First and immediate reaction of workers to such demands from management was that it was ridiculous. In the case of personal banker X, formal dressing takes that much more time. She was feeling grouchy and not in the mood to dress up. However, she did not voice her dissent because she did not want to be painted in black colours. She said that her supervisor later explained the rationale behind dressing up formally: it was a form of respect for the client. Banker X accepted that pleasing the client was important for the bank. Workers are encouraged to be respectful as their fate is linked to pleasing the client, which in turn is tied to profit flows into the bank. Companies now use such therapeutic discourse as a strategy to incorporate and maintain the company's image into the worker's personhood instead of allowing workers to just get alienated from management practices that they find difficult to accept.

What happened was that, as a result of her supervisor's intervention and explanation, she adjusted to this requirement by waking up early and preparing all her clothes the night before. She even stuck with the same dress code when socialising with friends during the evenings. She did not want to lose her job over a pair of short pants, she said. Climbing down from their own rationality to assimilate the rationalities of the company is how most workers work their way through company demands on their subjectivity. Some of the rationale taught included the following: "Try not to let it (rude customers) affect you", "everyone around you shares the same feelings", "its part and parcel of working life", "just do it, if you don't do it, you'll get fired". The process of negotiation is not straightforward but highly selective for it involves the real and the unreal. For instance, when comforting themselves, workers said, "sometimes, it's just what you tell yourself, and not really how things really are"; it also involves balancing the costs and benefits as illustrated by the cases below.

Note here that the service industry is not all misery. In fact, many choose to join this industry to experience the many opportunities available for a great variety of social interaction and exciting experiences. An hourly rated, 21-year-old female barista who quit after daily demands for emotional work reached a tipping point expressed it thus:

I will not take up the job again as it pays too little for too much work. Furthermore, I have found other better jobs that pay more as well. I will miss my friends and even the friendly management staff though.

As illustrated above, intense pressure and other alternative means of support will lead to the morphing of the organismic model of emotions to surface the "I can't take it anymore" attitude.

Are company prescriptions onerous? They can be, especially when one considers the youthful age of most respondents. Below, I set out the management demands on their workforce.

Emotion Work in Prescriptions and Standardisation

In the preceding section, I discussed how social authorities have impacted the production of subjectivity although there cannot be any prior determination of their effectiveness. In this section, ongoing construction of personhood by companies is seen in interaction with agency's initiatives in the context of hierarchy and power. I will describe some commonly known behavioural requirements of the service sector like speech restraints, aestheticisation and body work, "customer care", blurring of time boundaries, performance appraisals and traumatic workplaces.

Following Hochschild's definition of emotion management as conscious efforts to control, shape and manage unwanted feelings (Hochschild 1979), this article looks at how workers deal with specific employment demands. Definitely, while the management of emotions is a result of learning from social interaction, there is also a point beyond which the worker would throw in the towel despite knowing that he may also be leaving a vital source of income. Through this, I want to address the lack of studies on emotion management that consider organismic explanations of emotion.

This section will show that while governmentality makes it easier to please management and customers, regular exercise of emotion management by workers themselves contribute to the shaping of personhood. My study reveals that besides shaping to responsibility and disciplined autonomy, the management of emotion is vital to the emotional integrity of workers themselves and is done not only for the maintenance of company profits.

Speech

The first requirement most service companies require of their workers is that their speech should be articulated to set specifications. For instance, it is common in many service establishments to demand that workers speak from a packaged discourse. Workers are taught to utter scripted mantras when interacting with customers. An airline stewardess said that the oft-repeated phrases a steward should learn are "Please", "Sorry", and "Thank you". During the training period, workers would be given notes on appropriate answers for commonly asked questions. To give a touch of the "natural" to scripted answers, servers were encouraged to prepare their own versions of these answers. This is what servers mean when they say they can "play" with the phrase "the customer is always right".

The view of some servers was that, having to repeat the same remarks a few times within a short time could be tedious and torturous. One server went so far as to say that she secretly wished she could play a taped recording of it instead. She said that this was a commonly felt desire of most of her colleagues. However, after many rounds of repetitions, they have come to be "immune" or unresponsive to their repetitive chore and simply reminded themselves that they should do a

good job and maintain the company's reputation. "Frankly, I took some time to get used to all the rules: the do's and the don'ts." Some servers were more malleable whilst others needed more time of about a few weeks or months to adjust. To speed up their adjustment, servers like personal banker A would practice in front of the mirror at home.

Apart from scripted discourse, the tone of responses should be light and at a higher octave so as to come across as enthusiastic and chirpy. Says a call centre worker:

I would keep up my tone of voice to sound enthusiastic whenever I sense myself going down. I know customers would be affected by my voice, so I remind myself that every call has a chance. Even for the last customer of the day, I must still sound like he/she was the first customer for the day. I must motivate myself to sustain and encourage myself. At the end of the day, it's difficult to remain cheerful. I feel my voice is just a front. As team leader, my lot is worse, I got to cheer everyone up and "Never say die".

Maintaining a note of cheerfulness throughout the day can be tiring. However, "I can keep my cool if I remind myself that the company has secret shoppers/callers spying to evaluate us," said personal banker A.

Aesthetics

Servers are often considered as part of the display furniture in public view. According to a stewardess from a major Asian airline, stewardesses represent the company "just like packaging on a bottle of champagne".

Where dressing is concerned for these airline stewardesses, personnel should turn out "well-groomed". Nothing should be flashy nor should hairstyles be "funky". In addition, only ear studs are acceptable. As for footwear, only specific colours and types are allowed (e.g. for sales promoters, only black or white shoes are acceptable and only covered shoes are allowed to avoid display of uneven toes). Portrayal of the face should be friendly and smiling; acting friendly is part of the work role. "I make it a point to carry a smile throughout the working day, no matter how gloomy is the day," said a bartender.

Servers should also maintain a consistent body shape and tone to reflect the company's corporate image. These were already used at recruitment points (a female manager said that three other male managers had to approve the "looks" of servers before they were accepted and offered the job of server) but later, these aspects were regularly held up as part of appraisal indices. This has resulted in one server going for plastic surgery to firm up and enlarge her breasts. For stewardesses, requirements for aesthetics include good complexion, a minimum height of 1.58cm, slimness to fit into the tight uniform, and no tattoos. The stewardess of the airline is part of the product for sale as she is represented in every company advertisement.

Similarly, a server at a night joint said she had to keep trim so she will not out-grow her tiny uniform of tank top and very short shorts. Her job description, to put it crudely, is to bait, “entice” or lure people into the club, pander to their desires, and get them to drink lots of alcohol.

Looking cool and crisp

On top of all the other work, service workers have to appear unhurried and cool. Said a part-time waitress,

I have too much work. I have to serve customers like bringing the food out to them, and also set the table for them. I have to also make the drinks, wash the dishes sometimes and do cashiering duties as well. All these services have to be provided in a prompt and efficient manner, accompanied by a smile, especially when I am dealing with the customer.

When they are stressed as a result of too much work, they have to appear cool and collected, and not give way to spontaneous outbursts of anxiety or frustration. Experience helps them grow competent and comfortable with the job. “As the days went by, I got used to the customers’ responses. When I became more competent, I made less errors and I felt better about myself too, thus there were less negative emotions for me to cope as well.”

The Customer is King

Early and initial encounters with nasty customers have resulted in high levels of frustration and irritation. One employee had to hide in the toilet cubicle to calm herself down. Another, a barista, recalled that she trembled with fear and burst into tears the first time she got shouted at by a customer for bringing out the food late. For all the emphasis placed on the social construction of emotions, many instances of server provocation led to extreme reactions that illustrate the limits of emotional management and the start of the organismic model of emotion. She was comforted by the supervisor and was told to think of the customer as a bastard and to ignore him. Later on, other staff who joked about the rude customer and ridiculed him with names comforted her. Even the boss who asked her to keep a smile joined in. This seems to be the normal and common procedure where camaraderie was mobilised to help servers handle damaged emotions caused by rude customers. With such therapeutic discourse, servers are channelled to see customers as the bully, and the companies as devoid of any blame.

It was common that servers find emotional management physically tiring initially. Personal banker A said she was burnt out everyday due to the expenditure of energy, such that the minute she arrives home, she would crawl into bed; all she would do during her off-day was to rest. But after a few months, it was less tiring, and has even become part of her. To banker A, the most difficult part was to have to spend a long time explaining to clients the details of certain products and get a rejection in the end. Colleagues would gather around to complain about

such “naggy” clients. Though she at times thought of herself as hypocritical, she now sees it only as role-play.

The uniform sometimes helps servers get outside of themselves. An airline steward said to “think it’s you in the uniform”, which was to symbolise the uniform as some kind of protection. Wearing uniform also boosts a person’s confidence, said a sales person. The smile has also come to symbolise “a protective cover”. One can also hide behind the “Colgate smile” even though you may be cursing and swearing underneath said a female personal banker. A server at a major coffee outlet, who admitted that she can still say “come back again” though she was seething underneath, reiterated a similar concept. She just plasters a smile on her face and secretly hopes the difficult customer never returns.

Conversely, working experiences have helped change the personal life of some workers “for the better”. Personal banker A said that friends and relatives have observed that she has moderated her “hot” temper. After a time, she has also got used to the role-playing. “It’s a cloak personal banker A puts on”, she alleges. She sometimes takes a breather from personal issues, otherwise she can get overwhelmed by emotions. But a difficult work situation can have a compensatory element. One is the variety of clients one meets, which adds to the zest of working life. No two days are the same, a familiar refrain for many servers.

The lack of outlets for spontaneous emotional expression during working time has caused workers to develop a hard crust to protect their sensitive heart. However, as a necessary part of the process of maintaining their emotional balance, waiters would be discriminating and still keep the soft and natural responses, but only for “deserving” customers.

It got to a point when I became nonchalant (Mestrovic’s [1998: 97] artificially contrived “authenticity industry”) I couldn’t care about them anymore. But, the better customers, I give a lot of attention to. Smile sincerely, smile a lot and give extra attention to their needs.

To keep their sanity, servers know they have to protect their sensitivity and responsiveness and not just turn hard. “In the service sector, the main thing is to let your customer be satisfied no matter how they may treat you, I finish what I have to do, get the deal and move on.” With successful training and socialisation, servers derive satisfaction and fulfilment when customers are happy and satisfied. Said a server facing difficulties, “It does help when happy customers give me a sense of satisfaction”.

Initially, when they are not used to managing their emotions, reprimands from customers can affect them the whole day: “My feelings were really bad. A mixture of anxiety and sadness can drag on. It affects my mood to work for a few days because of low self-esteem.” One server referred to the Chinese concept of *siong* or “internal injury”. He was careful to allow emotional hurts to surface, but only at the appropriate time, so as to avoid the risk of such “internal injury”, which he feared may be incurred if his hurt was allowed to be stored inside.

“I want people to see my service as friendly and down to earth. I strive to make both myself and them comfortable to be around each other,” said a male server working in a shoe outlet. “Sometimes, it’s just impossible to satisfy all the customers when they are rowdy and refuse to adhere to regulations.” Elsewhere, a ferry-ride attendant said, “I strive to practice professionalism and yet remain approachable.”

End of Time

In the context of modernity, in general, and capitalism specifically, time has been made a scarce commodity and as a consequence, natural breaks in time (e.g. toilet and meal breaks) have been erased. New and rigid time regimes have been instituted (Segre 2000) as the dominant culture. The worker becomes totally cut off from themselves and live only for their work. “Only targets and ranking matters, nothing else,” said a security guard of an international hotel chain. “Don’t bring your personal matters to work. That’s being professional too.”

During this time of recession, when staff cutbacks are the norm, employees are expected to work overtime during peak periods. It is a common grouse that leave has been arbitrarily cancelled despite its prior approval.

In a Japanese restaurant studied, even though waitresses would be paid twice the normal rate for returning to work during their leave days, it irritated them that their plans for socialising and leisure had to be interrupted or aborted. Where travel had been planned they had to suffer a financial penalty by way of cancellation fees for hotels and airline bookings. When such arbitrary actions occur regularly, workers would take turns to go on MC. The manager was not perturbed as he has a ready pool of temps that he can call upon to help out.

Said a 58-year-old product tester at a computer manufacturer,

Because our project was late and needs manpower to help out, I was asked to cancel my leave even though it was already approved by top management. I am quite disappointed and unhappy as my plan gets disrupted but I have no choice, as it will be hard to turn down the request.

The line between personal and work has thus been totally blurred. It is difficult not to comply because governmentality says that good servers are co-operative, so they have to respond to customer need. However, servers also recognise their own need for rest, which has to be respected too. They also know that the needs of the customer can go on endlessly and should they collapse from overwork no one will bat an eyelid. Moreover, the wage is relatively low, and even if they work non-stop, they would hardly see any recognition in terms of wage increase. For the combination of these reasons, workers are often torn by these many demands on their time and energy and therefore often feel discomfited and pulled in different directions.

Appraisal and Reward

The pervasiveness of appraisal systems has produced a competitive environment that has concentrated workers' attention to only their job. In a call centre where sales numbers were recorded and updated frequently, workers had to put up a front and focus only on the job at hand. To help her survive, a 26-year-old telemarketer in a bank had this to say, "I play a game with myself and push myself to get absorbed with the calls. This helps me forget my personal troubles so I am in a better mood to do my work." All the energy of workers must be devoted to their work and nothing outside of work should distract them from their job focus.

I share the stress of targets with my friends. I draw out the targets and crush and destroy them. I find excuses for not reaching the target so I do not blame myself. Our sales record for previous month would be our benchmark. The aim is to double that progressively every month.

The larger portion of variable pay in services has added to the compulsion to work, regardless of health considerations. On top of the hourly pay, there are the commissions and bonuses. According to a personal banker, she sets for herself a target to achieve within a specific period of time as she wanted to show her performance capability. The commission given by the bank acted as a form of motivation to put in that extra effort to clinch deals. Awards were also offered for "top performer of the month". All these schemes act to drive them to work harder and bear with all the stress and unhappiness occurring during work.

Because bonuses are theoretically unlimited, it drives workers to stretch their personal resources to the extreme, resulting in "burn out" and self-destructive behaviour. Fatalism is commonly used to excuse self-destructive behaviour like working till odd hours continuously. Said a 20-year-old male account executive: "What to do, its part of my job." Fatalism points to their individual weaknesses and shared sufferings and not to systemic moral failure that kills workers by unreasonable and extreme demands on the human body.

A young designer working for a local franchisee of international fashion brands said that she typically works a 13-15 hour day. She was unable to even get out of bed a week ago and had to spend a week to recuperate. She explained that her boss and partner insisted to stay late for work and do not ask the other workers if they are tired. Even though their work was completed, for fear of disappointing their bosses, the workers continued to sit around, hoping their bosses would stop chatting and pack up.

Despite the blurring of the boundary between self and the company, workers can still look forward to the end of the work process. Said an airline stewardess, "I remind myself I have a flight to complete, a meal service to complete, a smile to put on, never mind if it's fake. It's only a few more hours and I get to be alone and free." Because of the end of time, it can no longer be used as a reference

point. Instead, the work process has become the measuring yardstick as it has an end point.

Traumatic work places

In her paper on sex work, Sanders (2004) describes how sex workers to dissipate threats of dangerous workplaces use humour. My study has found similar support for laughter as a strategy for lightening a weighty atmosphere amongst medical workers.

For two 18-year-old student nurses studying at the polytechnics, having to perform the “Last Office” (the cleaning and dressing of a corpse, before presenting it to the family) was intimidating although other accompanying nurses were present. Initially, watching senior nurses doing the job wearing serious or expressionless looks and sometimes even appearing scared, these youthful workers were equally fearful and sad. The body could be covered with blood, vomit or be severely mutilated (as in some suicide cases) but they were taught to respect the bodies and even say “sorry” when they have to do something to them. However, after they had handed the corpse to the juniors, the seniors started bantering around trying to scare the juniors with body parts. This was when the nurse interns realised that bantering and laughing can help add cheer to their workplace and dissipate their fear. For a 32 year-old male doctor stationed at the Emergency department, gory visuals could not be easily dispelled and could affect an objective diagnosis but his part-time magician job helped alleviate the disturbing images of torn up and bloody patients.

Medical workers have to confront images of death in their line of work, and the expectation of it would have provided them a constant opportunity to learn to deploy humour as a defence against the morbid. Other worker-servers with less preparation were unable to utilise such emotional mechanisms when encountering traumatic workplace events, like the hospitality server who had to clean up the remains after a guest who threw himself from the 58th floor of a hotel. Those who witnessed the grisly aftermath got so disgusted and nauseated they had to quit. “The spine was protruding... you automatically want to touch the back of your own neck and go ‘ouch’. It was like staring out at us,” said a guard who had worked 17 years in the hotel.

I was initially fascinated but when I got home, I had to tell myself to stop thinking about it. As for another body that landed in the swimming pool all bloated and blue-black, I couldn't sleep for days despite the counselling provided.

Workplace Dynamics

The multiplicity of workers typically staffing service-oriented workplaces brings with it clashes of personality and emotional sensitivities that have to be managed in accordance with the expectations of propriety and professionalism. Govern-

mentality and agency both play a role in this push-pull dynamic, as I observed in an interview of workers in a Japanese restaurant.

Generally, to the workers, the hardest part of the job is not dealing with customers but with the “boss”. Worker-servers interviewed invariably considered their direct supervisor as the “boss”, regardless of the ultimate authority within the company.

The aforementioned notion of the end of time and the focus on the customer are elements that most bring out tension in the workplace between workers and the “boss”. In the recent downturn, businesses are failing and jobs are being lost at a steady pace, putting increasing pressure on workers and employers alike to do their best for less.

There is a thin line between what further demands workers can stomach, in terms of extended work hours, returning to work upon cancellation of leave, and to what extent they will persevere as a matter of self preservation. Employers have a strong hand, given the current labour laws which makes it relatively easy to hire and fire, and the lack of any minimum wage requirements. What is more, much of the workforce in service-oriented positions are open to easy replacement as the pool of available workers to fill these relatively menial jobs increases with the open immigration policy.

I observed that worker dissatisfactions were seldom vigorously expressed; it seemed the most damaging action a member of the workforce could take to “get at” the “boss” or employer was to report sick. It deprived the employer of necessary manpower, even if only temporarily, and this invited many workers to push their luck to the limit. In this regard, I noted from my interviews instances of a mobilised, strategic response: workers would take turns to report sick, so as not to jeopardise their jobs, which were likely threatened if they had done so *en masse*. One cannot be sure if such a decision was a result of governmentality – in this case, continuing even in “rebellion” to act with some sense of professionalism, to not harm the image of the employer – or merely a survival move.

Concluding Thoughts

This paper set out to investigate issues relating to governmentality and emotion management by studying the work behaviour of 56 workers in the service industry in Singapore. While governmentality has succeeded to a certain extent, by compelling agents to imbibe the desires of social authority into their hearts, the effects can be said to be relatively impermanent. When confronted with issues that demand behaviour contrary to the one they were conditioned to enact, there is pause and a considering of whether their socialised response was to their advantage or appropriate. There is no inevitable automaticity to their response. In effect, agents do try to carry out the demands of social authorities, failing which they will try to craft less socially acceptable behaviour they themselves are more comfortable

with. Despite the compromises made, none of the workers interviewed said their job destroyed their sensibility, though the going was rough.

Due to the unexpected results of the study, the focus expanded to consider what other forces and props were necessary to ensure that behaviour demanded by governmentality was forthcoming. Threats to economic survival were the most effective levers for reinforcing effects of governmentality. But the bounty of social enrichment that the workplace could afford to workers – through new and unexpected encounters with the diverse multiplicity of customers, and the camaraderie of their own – also contributed to their willingness to accept and fulfil the requirements of jobs otherwise considered less-than-ideal, and thereby conform to prescription.

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Branding on the Shop Floor

By Szilvia Gyimóthy & Louise Rygaard Jonas

Abstract

Service branding is a particular form of emotional management, where employees are regarded as adaptable media, who can be trained to convey corporate values while interacting with customers. This paper examines the identity work of butchers during the brand revitalisation campaign of Kvickly, a Danish supermarket chain. During the implementation of the “Best Butcher in Town”-project, Kvickly’s shop floor becomes an engineered servicescape where the norms of good salesmanship must be performed. By documenting the disloyal behaviour of butchers, we demonstrate that the affective commitment towards corporate brand values is closely related with self-enactment opportunities of occupational communities. Total service-orientation threatens butchers’ perception of autonomy and may therefore result in the emergence of resistant sub-cultures.

Keywords: Occupational communities, brand ambassador, Coop Denmark, affective commitment.

Introduction

Supermarket managers and employees should not be anxious about making mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes once in a while. The most important is to experiment with new things and to learn from our mistakes, so as to improve all the way. [...] I firmly believe in people and therefore I'd appreciate a company where managers delegate responsibility to their subordinates and let them solve problems – within, of course, the frameworks of a supermarket chain concept. This is the main managerial philosophy that I will adhere to in my daily work in Kvickly. I believe in performing better as a team, as long as we, the leaders dare to delegate and if you dare to take responsibility. Responsibility for increasing our sales and turnover in every single supermarket.

This does not mean that we will now have 82 individual stores in our chain. On the contrary, we must strive for a more consistent profile and uniform standards across all stores. The first task will be to ensure that the store lives up to the Kvickly '08 concept. Thereafter may the creative process begin. [...] I hope that you will embark on this journey, where we think of motivation, inspiration, well-being and where we dare to delegate and take responsibility. It's all about the "good salesmanship." (Kvickly Kort & Kontant, internal newsletter, 2007, author's translation)

These were the first words of the newly appointed director of a Danish supermarket chain, Kvickly, inviting all employees to fortify the corporate brand. The senior management of Kvickly opted for starting this strategic process from the inside, that is, they intended to raise employees' awareness of the brand by creating a collective identity – prior to launching an external market campaign. The term "good salesmanship" in the newsletter above refers to the co-operative roots of ethical trading – intended to serve as an idealistic common platform for everyone across the organisation. The director appeals to employees to take pride in being associated with Coop (the supermarket "with a heart") as well as to take responsibility on all levels – from procurement to marketing and customer contact. Furthermore, besides the usual mantra of value-based emotional management, he also addresses the significance of the spatial context – "the store" as a stage – within which the creative processes and brand enactment may unfold.

Kvickly is one of five retail chains within the corporate brand Coop Denmark (owned by FDB, the Joint Association of Danish Cooperatives), and it has grown to be a problem child within the past decade. The retail market had become polarised along two essential competitive parameters: (low) price and (high) quality, and Kvickly found itself stuck in the middle without a clear profile and a red bottom line. Moreover, Coop, Dansk Supermarked and other retail chains in Denmark are increasingly identifying themselves as being a part of the service industry, which is perceptible in novel brand strategic approaches. The Kvickly '08 concept may thus be regarded as a reaction to contemporary market trends.

Since 2006, the strategic focus was to revitalise Coop as a master brand behind its five retail brands, including Kvickly. Internally, this entailed creating visibility around Coop's brand essence, "responsibility" as the *raison d'être* of the whole organisation. Responsibility furthermore embraces four core values, namely: care,

novel/creative thinking, honesty and influence¹ [omtanke, nytænkning, ærlighed og indflydelse], referring to the cultural legacy of the cooperative movement. The cooperative movement is entrenched in Danish collective memory; hence the internal campaign was deliberately connected to the authentic history of the small farmers' associations, building on Coop's ideals (supporting environmental consciousness, healthy diet and local products) as a differentiating parameter against other supermarket chains. A central aspect of the Kvickly '08 concept was to embed these values among employees so that they would perform accordingly in their daily work.

The Kvickly '08 concept also reinvented the frames for the customer-service worker interaction; including the revamping of the physical servicescape as well as the attitudes of contact personnel. Kvickly '08 included – among others – the implementation of “The Best Butcher in Town”-project, which intended to reconfigure the entirety of the butcher shopping experience, by grooming both spatial and employee “parameters”, following the prescriptions of experience design (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Diller et al. 2005; Boswijk et al. 2007). Introducing such a performative space in a supermarket is relatively new, as it contradicts the whole notion of the self-service universe, where the traditional focus is on effective transactions of FMCG (fast moving consumer goods). In the past, employees – apart from cashiers – scarcely interacted with customers and the promotion of goods and advertising banners and displays conveyed special deals. Kvickly '08 was meant to radically change these practices, requiring *all* employees on the shop floor to foster long-term customer relationships. The newsletter above witnesses how executive leaders attempt to communicate a service-oriented culture by claiming delegation of authority.

The mastermind behind Kvickly '08 was the Marketing Department, and a cross-divisional “taskforce” – also including the Human Resources Department – was assigned with implementing the internal branding campaign. This entailed strengthening employees' affective commitment to the *corporate identity* and to initiate a cultural change resulting in a specific behaviour driven by the four corporate values. The challenge was defined as: “to turn staff into effective and proud service workers” by imposing the bread-and-butter of customer-orientation disguised in Coop's ideals of care, creative thinking and honesty. A series of internal training modules were launched to empower Kvickly's front line staff to become *brand ambassadors*. Cashiers and butchers were instructed to use their “common sense” in the service encounter, and even to initiate personal conversation to boost the customer experience.

Service branding is a particular form of emotional management, where employees are regarded as adaptable media, who can be trained to convey corporate values while interacting with customers. Arguably, internal marketing in a service firm is about socialising the individual service worker into an employee culture defined by the senior management (Schwartz 2004), that is, “to

change workers into the kinds of persons who will make decisions that management would approve; and to ensure predictable employee reactions in variable work situations” (Leidner 1993: 18). In other words, employees are domesticated (Parello-Plesner & Parello-Plesner 2005) to stage corporate identity consistently. Kvickly’s shop floor becomes the space of pastoral subjectification (see this theme section’s epilogue), where the norms of good salesmanship must be performed. The goal of this paper is to explore the implementation of a specific component of the Kvickly ‘08 concept (namely, “The Best Butcher in Town”), by documenting the reluctant identity work of butchers as members of a particular *occupational community* (Van Maanen & Barley 1984) and as disloyal brand ambassadors. In order to problematise this process, the analysis draws on both marketing and social identity theory.

Perspectives on Service Branding

Internal branding in a service firm may be approached from several theoretical perspectives. This section reviews the main tenets and commonalities of service marketing and corporate branding field, and concludes with identifying white spots in the management of emotions within a customer-oriented organisational culture.

Front line employees are recognised as strategic resources in market communication. Service marketing regards them as being part-time marketers (Grönroos 2007), and this field is particularly attentive to the link between employee commitment and delivered service quality as well as customer satisfaction. The corporate branding literature refers to employees as brand ambassadors or brand champions (Ind 2004); and the notion of “the living brand” envisages an ideal employee who internalises organisational values in her way of life. Hence, both fields advocate employee commitment and dialogue-based leadership as a key to achieving organisational goals – inspired by the managerial principles descending from McGregor’s human relations school (McGregor & Cutcher-Gershenfeld 2006). It is argued that if brand visions are communicated to employees in the right way, these will integrate corporate values in their professional identity and will behave accordingly (Karmark 2005).

However, the normative ideals of employee involvement are rarely discussed through empirical examples, let alone, provide guidance in practical challenges. How do employees identify with the brand? How do they become emotionally committed? How to leave the idea of a factory of emotions, where brand meanings are delivered by human media (Hochschild 1983), and instead, foster a meaningful relationship between employee and employer with both parties equally contributing to a dialogue? Even though service marketing adheres to the ideals of dialogue-based leadership, the dialogue itself has so far received scant attention.

Within the past decade, marketing theory has been reinvigorated by the idea of a service-dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch 2004), which claims that value emerges during the service encounter and it is co-created between customers and front-line staff. Following this line of argument, service brand meanings do not exist *ab initio*, rather, they emerge as social constructions situated in a specific service interaction. Still, the branding process on the shop floor, describing how customers and service workers co-shape and actualise brand meaning, remains unrevealed. Corporate branding is an equally prescriptive field of marketing, yet, it acknowledges the paradox of organisational identity. As Hatch & Schultz (2002) demonstrates, perceptions of the organisational self (i.e., “who we are”) held by senior managers and other stakeholders’ (employees, sponsors or customers) may be divergent and even incompatible. In order to reduce these perceptual gaps and to align the entire organisation behind the corporate brand, executives are offered decontextualised toolkits. For instance, the *five cycles of corporate branding* describes how to develop and manage various phases of organisational identity (Schultz 2005). As these models are developed to serve strategic leadership objectives, they do not explain what role the corporate brand may play in the employee’s identity construction. Neither corporate branding, nor service marketing, recognise that individuals produce their own understandings of social reality; probably because marketing traditionally deals with inanimate goods as brand media. Hence, internal conflicts and cultural change (which is not senior management-induced) do not exist in the world-view of services marketers. While it is well documented how a market-proof “corporate story” is conceived in the marketing department, still little is known about how the brand is connected to the daily activities of employees. Although there is a growing body of brand management literature which studies the symbolism and emotional relationship between individuals and brand meanings, the focus is exclusively on the identity construction of customers (see Fournier 1998). There have been so far no attempts to describe how service employees affectively relate to the brand and how does this relationship influence their professional work identity and job loyalty.

In order to explore the (missing) link between meaning in work-life and service brand management, we are informed by postmodern theories on organisational culture (Hatch & Cunliffe 2006). This allows us to view the organisation as a complex entity, consisting of diverse sub-cultures (Martin 2002). Viewed from this particular perspective, organisational culture and organisational identity are ongoing sense-making processes formed by employees as much as by middle managers and top executives (Ogbonna 1992: 75). Job position is an important part in the personal identity construct; hence the choice of workplace is often based on how well the corporate community matches one’s self-image. As Salamon (2003: 24) notes: “Employees are no longer working for a living, but working to find identity” (our translation).

The commitment of individual employees can be pursued by interpreting specific behavioural patterns contrasted to what is deemed acceptable within an organisation (Schwartz 2004). But who sets the standards for acceptable behaviour? Within corporate branding, employees are deemed “disloyal” if their service performance does not live up to customer expectations or brand book specifications (van Rekom 1997). Nevertheless, as long as the employee-brand relationship remains unrevealed, so will the reasons for employee resistance and reluctance to become brand ambassadors.

Culture and Identity Work in Kvickly: A Methodological Statement

Our ontological point of departure for discussing employees’ affective commitment is that of social constructivism, seeing individuals as active contributors to the social construction of reality. Hence, commitment can be approached from a relational perspective, as a sense-making co-shaper of organisational culture and sub-cultures (Wenger 1998; Weick 2001).

Our analysis will examine the occupational communities of butchers as a sub-cultural unit instead of individual employees. Occupational communities entail one’s nearest colleagues, and the role performance of individuals are steered by what is socially acceptable within this group – instead of a formal and detailed job description provided by the Human Resources Department. Identification with brand values becomes affected by the extent to which sub-cultures may enact themselves within the brand framework. Disloyal behaviour makes sense; as a manifestation of resistance against the organisational identity claimed by top executives (conceptualised in the so-called culture/vision gap by Hatch & Schultz 2003). This notion is crucial for the methodological choice; the source of employee commitment or disloyalty must be found in the context of sub-cultures’ self-presentation.

The analysis is based on a Goffmanian framework, and it seeks to understand how strategic alterations to a retail service brand change the work-life of a sub-culture in a retail organisation. The empirical analysis focuses on the identity work of Kvickly’s butchers, a strong occupational community within Coop. Based on employee interpretations of Kvickly’s operative codex, as well as enactments of the new Kvickly ‘08 service concept for butchers, this case will highlight and explain gaps between the corporate brand vision and the behaviour of butchers.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data presented in this paper is built on conversations with Coop’s director of Human Resources as well as ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979) with Product Area Managers and participant observation sessions with head butchers in Kvickly. One of the authors has listened to various internal presentations of the “Best Butcher in Town” project held for supermarket managers. Furthermore, the target group of this internal branding process, butchers, was followed for several

months in two different Kvickly stores. The empirical work was inspired by ethnographic methods to reveal what (de)motivates butchers to emotionally commit themselves to the brand and to the claimed identity (“Best Butcher in Town”). Our story of the butchers has been stitched together from observation sessions as well as informal chats by the cooling boxes or over the worktables. Before presenting the empirical material, we would like to set the stage by briefly describing the particular organisational context of Kvickly as a workplace.

Kvickly’s Organisational Culture

On the outset, Kvickly’s organisational structure follows a professional bureaucracy, where store managers control service quality delivered by their subordinates through the operations handbook “Rhythms and routines” [Rytmer og Rutiner]. At the same time, due to Kvickly’s organisational roots (the cooperative movement), commercial operations are decentralised, and the ideal of “good salesmanship” is translated into the freedom to match local demand in procurement and offers. This leads to a more organic organisational reality, which is better geared at being customer focused. Kvickly is a typical example of a customer-oriented bureaucracy (Korczyński 2002) characterised by a management paradox: the organisation is steered along bureaucratic rules and procedures, but store managers adhere to a value-based leadership philosophy. This philosophy also entails that employee groups in various divisions are involved in the implementation of new brand strategies. According to theorists, such an approach may ensure affective commitment and identification with the company’s corporate values (Schultz et al. 2000).

Cheney (1999) discuss the link between the interaction of organisational culture, structure and market conditions in the context of contemporary cooperative enterprises. Owing to its sheer size as a national retail chain, Coop Denmark faces problems in achieving cultural homogeneity, while market demands necessitate internal rationalisation and uniformity, bureaucracy and centralisation of certain decisions. The problem with increasing power centralisation is that the internal social dynamics based on historic ideals and culturally rooted democratic traditions will be lost in favour of operational objectives. In the struggle for a strong market position, Coop Denmark must balance between productivity and subjectivity as a competitive parameter, and the Human Resources Department should achieve this balance (Roldsgaard 2008: 7). Thus the HR department simultaneously draws on tools that make operations more efficient and productive as well as tools aiming at increasing employees’ empowerment and well-being (ibid.). In addition to this double-edged sword, the HR department is now also involved as a strategic partner of training brand ambassadors, being in charge of entwining the claimed organisational identity with the self-presentation of individual workers.

The Status and Organisational Self of Butchers

For many years, the butcher department was functioning as a secluded workroom in the back-end of the warehouse, and as such, butchers have been physically isolated from customers and other employees. As they were not expected to service customers directly, they were allowed to adorn the “production hall” with personal items, for instance, by hanging “pin-up calendars with naked women” on the white-tiled wall. Butchers would work together closely around the cutting table (placed in the middle of the room) during the entire day, and they had come to know each other well by working as a team. They would use humour as a particular socialising tool, for instance, when an apprentice once cut steaks in different sizes, the whole group was “making internal jokes of him for some days”. At the same time, butchers are segregated from the rest of Kvickly’s staff, not only physically, but also temporarily – meeting at work earlier than others. One of them even claimed that “it is not natural” for other colleagues to enter the production hall. This isolation is further manifested in daily practices, where butchers leave early and do not feel responsible to participate in other operational activities in the supermarket. One of the butchers confesses that there is an asymmetry of contributions: “We butchers are a bit pig-headed, at least, I am. The greengrocer lady often comes by to help to refill the coolers, but the butchers are not very good at helping others in the house.”

Creativity and craftsmanship skills are central to the performance of butchers. They often described a delight of producing “home-made” specialities, such as grill-sausages or goulash, which also underscores the importance of professional development in an apprentice-master relationship: “We have started to produce home-made salami here, because we are allowed to do that locally. And the apprentices really enjoy being a part of it.”

Besides leading the butcher’s department, the head butcher is also a member of the executive team and formally reports to the supermarket manager. However, this formal hierarchy has been neglected for years, owing to the professional skills and irreplaceability of butchers: “A butcher can always put cans on the shelves, but an employee on the floor cannot slice steaks”. The formal authority of the supermarket manager was not respected; “It is less problematic to do without the supermarket manager than the head butcher for one day”, and supermarket managers themselves would rather avoid daily dialogue with them unless it was necessary (i.e. unless turnover goals were achieved). In other words, the butchers’ autonomy was in fact greater than they were entitled to in formal job descriptions. As Van Maanen and Barley (1984: 335) notes: “To the extent occupational communities succeed in convincing themselves and others that they solely command the expertise necessary to execute and evaluate their work, they gain autonomy and discretion.”

The exclusive position of butchers had been radically changed between 2004-2006, marked by a rationalisation process implemented through the entire Kvickly

chain. In order to cut costs, many head butchers (being on the top of the payroll) were made redundant, and at the same time, “centrally packaged meat” delivered by Danish Crown was introduced. Instead of local production of ham chops, butchers were now in charge of ordering meat via the computer software, “Automatisk Disponeringsprogram”, an activity that did not demand greater skills than basic IT-knowledge. As one butcher commented resentfully: “The new apprentices are quite good at computers, but they are bad at their craft.” The traditions of craftsmanship were repressed in favour of efficiency (Ashforth & Mael 2004: 301); and work processes become standardised. A former head butcher commented this economising period:

... Those smart calculations did not consider that being “a butcher” is a 4-year-long education. To buy centrally packaged meat meant that we were deprived of our craftsmanship. And it’s not very motivating to go to work, when the only thing you do is to open cardboard boxes and put goods in the cooler.

The emphasis on the length of the education is a metaphor for the professional identity of this occupational community, which is a key to understand the impression management of “being a butcher” in Kvickly. Butchers clearly differentiated themselves from the ‘employees on the floor’, who follow a much shorter internal training programme. Along with the scale economic advantages of centralisation, butchers could no longer differentiate themselves from others by means of executing skilled work or significantly different daily routines. Professionalism was no longer a needed or acknowledged competence, which entailed that butchers have lost status compared to the rest of the employees whose abilities were compared “to those of a conveyor belt worker” (i.e. opening boxes and filling up the shelves).

Furthermore, the length of the education was also a source of internal differentiation among butchers themselves. During the fieldwork, it became clear that there is a social stratification between “craftsmen” and “production people” – the latter referring to butchers taking their education after the introduction of centrally packaged meat. One head butcher saw this as a professional degeneration (complaining, at one instance, about apprentices who were no longer able to arrange pork chops in the right order). These and other incidents are signs that may jeopardise the *impression* the head butcher desired to offer to customers about himself and his team (Goffman 1959). The emerging schism between “right and false butchers” shows a heterogeneous occupational community, characterised by conflict and adversary intra-group images (Wenger 1998). Miller and Van Maanen (1988) report a similar heterogeneous sub-culture among commercial fishermen, differentiating themselves from non-traditional colleagues on the basis of their education and job contract. Hence, seemingly homogeneous occupational communities may also foster an internal social idealisation, ascribing uneven roles to different members *within* the sub-culture. Furthermore, it can be concluded that being an “authority” is a social construction rather than a formal and static organisational title (cf. Marshall 2000). For the head butcher, authority does not

stem from formal leadership qualifications (Ulrich & Smallwood 2007), but from the craftsman's skills, which used to be taken over by apprentices. The head butcher is (by Goffman's terms) a team leader, who must define and maintain a stable impression of his entire team, including staging the brand vision and coaching new members to perform accordingly. However, he feels set aside and claims that butchers will all be trained as "production people" in the future.

Our analysis reveals that the butchers' dis/identification with the Kvickly brand is partly attributable to their social self (identification with other butchers in their department) and partly to their role identity imposed by Kvickly. This role identity is not related to the self-image of butchers, rather, it is a generalised role (a butcher dummy) that the individual employee is expected to perform as brand ambassador. In the example above the head butcher distances himself from the new practice of ordering centrally produced meat, as it forces a new role identity onto him which is clearly in conflict with his self-image as a craftsman. He is dissatisfied with centrally produced meat obstructing the impression of a local butcher in front of customers, but more importantly, these artefacts may dismantle his status as an expert in Kvickly's organisational hierarchy.

Staging "The Best Butcher in Town"

Butchers were given a central role in the Kvickly '08 repositioning strategy. The vision was to rethink the store concept, daily operations and routines for the entire meat department. The claimed identity, "Best Butcher in Town" emanated from senior management and has radically changed the *communicative staging* (Arnould et al. 1998) of butchers' daily work. They were provided a new, common set of symbols, such as uniforms (consisting of a blue shirt, white apron, name tags and a bowler hat), a themed stage (a butcher's corner in each store, open towards customers), as well as new product brands accentuating provenance and quality (Bornholm Poultry, Premium Beef, Five Manors). These symbols were intended to generate an illusion (Hochschild 2003); *as if* the customer-butcher interaction was taking place in a small butcher's shop. It was believed that employees would find it meaningful to enact the local butcher as a professional self, and thus, they would be highly committed to representing corporate values when talking to customers. In practice, butchers were expected to deal with customers as if they were close acquaintances. As the corporate director expressed: "You are not buying meat in Kvickly, but from Brian". Knowing the butcher by his first name also suggests an illusion of intimacy with customers, and deep acting skills (Hochschild 1983) were emphasised throughout the project:

During the "Best Butcher in Town" training we wanted to change the image of a butcher being a big, fat, surly guy hiding back-stage to that of a jovial person who dares to come out and meet customers. If a customer goes around and looks for a rump, then the butcher should approach him by saying (clears his throat): "I can see that you are interested in buying this rump. If you wish, just call me, and then I'll

clean and prepare it for you so that it is ready to go in the oven, when you get home.” (...). The butcher should be able to find out what is going on in the customers’ head when they walk into a Kvickly. What does the customer expect from this encounter, what do I expect? If they can be one step ahead and give them more than they expect, customers will be happy.

This excerpt is not only an illustration of the dramatic role shift (from back-stage productions to front-stage service), where butchers are supposed to impersonate the brand in the service encounter. The rhetoric question, (What does the customer expect from this encounter, what do I expect?) forces the butcher to reflect upon the task of initialising Kvickly’s corporate identity starring the role of brand ambassador. Previously, customers had to ring a bell in order to invoke a butcher from his back-stage “cave”, but now he is onstage as the servicescape is designated for customer interaction. Goffman (1959) discusses the link between the personal front (looks and behaviour) and stage, which, in combination may strengthen the impression a team or an individual wishes to make. Both the head butcher and an apprentice told us that the “live butcher concept” would enable them to better advise customers about preparation. They argued that they would be able to shape the sensory experience at the customers’ dining table, instead of “just” striving for making an enticing visual impression (neatly arranged packages) in the cooling boxes. This line of thought rhymes with the concept of brand touch points (Davis & Dunn 2002), which maintains that customers’ impression of Kvickly’s service brand may not only be influenced in the supermarket, but also before shopping and during consumption at home.

Obstructing the Best Butcher in Town

In the supermarket where this research was conducted, butchers had just finished the fourth and final training module of the “Best Butcher in Town” and were admittedly positive about the concept itself. During their training period, they had become familiar with the new assortment of Kvickly products. The apprentices as well as the head butcher were proud of these products as “the best on the Danish market”. They were also trained in customer orientation and reflected upon their new role on the stage: “we must think about how customers would feel about this” and, “we have learnt that customers would need 10 good impressions to put one bad experience out of mind.” However, it soon became clear that focusing on satisfying the customer requires a dramatic effort: they must compromise their own views in favour of letting the customer be right. The confrontation between customer integrity and butcher authority may result in conflict. As one butcher recounted:

There was this man who complained about the Bornholm Poultry and compared it to an average chicken. I explained him that there were miles between a chicken from Bornholm and other poultry, because they are fed and bred differently. Then he claims that both were just as dry and he could not taste any difference. So I told him: “well, it’s because you are not competent enough to savour **difference**”.

According to Goffman (1959), a *face-to-face*-interaction between customer and employee is framed by two elements: 1) the information held by the two parties of each other and 2) a mutual understanding of (or agreement upon) “what is going on”. In a face-to-face-interaction, both parties invest themselves in the relationship, weakening the conception of the self to arrive upon an agreement (ibid.). The new personal front of the butchers (e.g. uniforms differing from the other employees) was designed to underscore their craftsmanship, positioning them as more knowledgeable in the staged interaction with the customer. However, superiority is set aside in an absolute customer-oriented logic: “Here, the customer is always right; you cannot tell him that he’s an incompetent cook”. The interaction to be played along the scripts of “Best Butcher in Town” is overruled by the ultimate customer authority paradox. However, the butcher in this case chose not to hold back his professional pride (wounded by the customer’s critique of the Bornholm Poultry). Instead, he attempts to make an impression by sharing his knowledge about the product, expecting to reach upon an agreement (an acceptance of taste differences). Reading along a symbolic interaction framework (Goffman 1959: 3), the butcher’s reactions are driven by the goal to make a favourable impression about himself and his profession, as well as to demonstrate that he has high thoughts about the customer – so none of the parties lose face (Goffman 1959: 18): “When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them.”

The butcher invests a “part of himself” in the interaction in order to maintain a mutual respect (his own respect for the customer, compelled by Kvickly, must be reciprocated by the customer respecting his professional judgement). However, the customer’s negative response bears no sign of respect, as he only focuses on his own sensory experiences (“both [products] were just as dry”):

(He) acts in such a way as to destroy or seriously threaten the polite appearance of the situation, and while he may not act simply in order to create such dissonance, he acts with the knowledge that this kind of dissonance is likely to result. (Goffman 2004:36).

The situation collapses, and the butcher’s retort (in Goffman’s terms, “involuntary expressive behaviour”) signals his emotional dissonance (Hochschild, 1983). He creates a new act (a framework for the interaction) and changes tactics. The butcher redefines the power relationship (breaking the corporate spell about “the customer is always right”), to claim cynically his own superiority as a connoisseur of poultry tastes. He is no longer a cordial conversation partner, but someone who is recklessly resolute to save his own image, thereby losing control over the impression he wanted to create in the first place.

This is not just one isolated illustration of how butchers think about customers’ gastronomic expertise in general. One head butcher declared that given the excellent quality of Kvickly’s meat products, the real reason behind complaints is

the insufficient cooking skills of customers. “However, we cannot tell that to the customer; they must get two bottles of wine and two extra steaks instead”. This quote clearly refers to the gap between the façade butchers bear front-stage (the customer should feel that he is right), and their own true viewpoints. Butchers must now perform a double emotional labour in accordance with Kvickly’s *display rules* (Hochschild 1983) – as a branded butcher dummy and a frontline service worker, they are engaging in both *surface acting* and *deep acting* (ibid.).

However, the Bornholm Poultry incident also reveals a different type of emotional labour. The butcher has, in fact, initiated the role he plays, in order to stage his professional self. As Ashforth and Humphrey (1993: 94) notes, “the service agent may naturally feel what he or she is expected to express without having to work up the emotion in the sense discussed by Hochschild”. His sarcastic reply may be a sign of his “central salient and valued identity” (ibid.: 97); customer-focused on the surface, but a craftsman at heart. However, it may also be interpreted as the gap (disagreement) between the butcher’s and the customer’s expectation towards the service encounter. The “customer doesn’t even know that there is a butcher in Kvickly, so it can be all the same” said one butcher. Apart from the material (substantive) staging of the concept as a butcher’s corner, “The Best Butcher in Town” is not widely marketed externally. This leads to customers not reciprocating the interaction, because they simply do not realise the prospect of personal encounter on the shop floor. Hence, the proposition of temporarily delaying brand implementation (with internal communication preceding external campaigns, cf. Pitt et al. 1999) may have severe practical consequences for value co-creation in services.

Discussion: The Affective Labour of Butchers

Kvickly’s approach towards involving butchers in the implementation of Kvickly ‘08 and in building a collective organisational identity is designed to appeal the butchers’ preferred self-image (“Best Butcher in Town”). The professional pride of butchers is acknowledged as a strategic resource to get individual employees perform conforming Kvickly’s brand goals. However, as exemplified by the snapshots above, butchers do not automatically become brand ambassadors, neither is there a unanimous script in the brand book, describing “how” to be a butcher. Our case reveals that butchers do indeed adhere to customer-orientation as a proper state of mind (cf. Hochschild 2003: 7), but there is a barrier when the butcher is implicitly expected to overrule his professional identity and to “draw on a source of self that [he] honour[s] as deep and integral to [his] individuality” (Hochschild 2003: 7). Hence, the daily impression management of the brand is a journey paved with hurdles of personal, social and professional development.

Ironically, some of the hurdles are created by the new training programme, which, besides communicating a common corporate vision, also intends to set

new standards for an already existing sub-culture. These directives dismantle the self-image of butchers as they do not take into account the historical and current social identity of this occupational community. Today, Kvickly is moving towards a service-oriented culture, from “skills with things to skills with people” (Mills 2002: 182). The mantra of “customer is first”, including customer safety is seemingly a common goal for head butchers and top executives alike. Responsibility is signified by specific markers (such as “best before” – dates or centrally packaged meat), which simultaneously frustrate butchers, as they are at odds with their sense of autonomy. It is because butchers wish to protect their status that they deliberately “forget” to discard overdue products or re-order centrally packaged meat. The most significant barrier for the internal branding process is thus the fear of losing grounds in the social hierarchy of Kvickly (and being downgraded to the level of unskilled conveyor belt workers). Consequently, the external demands of service-orientation threaten occupational communities’ perception of self-control and may therefore contribute to the foundation of resistant sub-cultures (Van Maanen & Barley 1984).

Yet, customer orientation may only succeed if butchers’ self-image is aligned with the designed impression created by the marketing department. In the service encounter, employees’ self-reflexivity is an important condition of consistent communication of brand identity. Our case suggests that commitment is not so much related to the content of the job or job processes as such, but whether or not work processes make sense related to the self-image of butchers. The option to produce local specialities make sense, while centrally packaged meat does not, as these latter do not acknowledge the community’s professional skills. The gap between Kvickly’s vision of customer orientation and subcultural behaviour is also accountable to a terminological confusion. While Kvickly executives speak of service culture and service branding, butchers still perceive their workplace as a production universe. To facilitate butchers’ performance along “the Kvickly way” requires, that the meaning of words like “expertise” and “creativity” must be explicitly associated with customer advising and culinary knowledge instead of production-based craftsmanship.

Conclusion

The most important mission of internal branding and affective commitment is not to impose corporate values onto individual employees but, rather, the managing of professional identities in groups (Sennett 2007). The study of Kvickly’s internal service branding process revealed that it severely affects the identity of butchers. Occupational communities – their role and the status of their professional competencies in the supermarket – are central bricks in the puzzle of an organisational “us”. The significance of individuals’ actions on a workplace develops through the relationships they foster with others – and occupational

communities strive for power and status within the social hierarchy of the firm. As individual employees' behaviour are more related to their nearest work team values than that of the corporate identity, brand managers must deal with a differentiated culture consisting socially constructed organisational identities. This requires that internal branding must be approached more democratically; by acknowledging occupational communities *before* putting a top-steered strategic process into action. Affective commitment can be understood as a sense-making negotiation process between advocated brand values and the team's self image. Hence, the main conclusion is that the employee becomes a committed brand ambassador to the extent s/he – as a member of an occupational community – may strengthen his/her own ideal self-image and whether the occupational community perceives a high degree of self-control in doing their job. In addition, this conclusion confirms Sennett's notion (2007) of employees becoming less committed to workplace realities, which are beyond their control.

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Notes

- 1 Using the word “responsibility” signalises the general trend towards ethical trading and environmentally friendly products. Influence refers to having a say about consumption preferences and ultimately, affecting social trends in an “ideal” or ethically desirable direction.

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Cacophony of Voices and Emotions: Dialogic of Buying and Selling art

By Can-Seng Ooi

Abstract

The importance of galleries as go-betweens for artists and art buyers is acknowledged in art world research. Using a Bakhtinian dialogic approach, this article examines social encounters of three artists, two art buyers and one gallery sales executive in Singapore. Specifically, it looks into the social interactional dynamics of artists and art buyers when they trade directly. Situational ambiguities and emotional ambivalence arise during such meetings from the different expectations and demands that are imposed, which have the effect of placing the parties involved in conflicting social contexts. For instance, when art connoisseurs and artists discuss aesthetics, monetary value is not of primary concern, nonetheless when they want to trade, commercial concerns become central; this can lead to discomfort between the parties. Similarly, art buyers may want to go behind the scenes to know more about the artist and the art practice; getting away from the glitter of the commercial gallery and into the modest art studio for an authentic experience may reveal too much for visitors; such experiences may break their illusion of the glamorous artist. This article looks at the microscopic interaction between artists and art buyers and shows how the ambiguities and ambivalence that can be generated by their encounters become constraining factors in encouraging artists and art buyers to trade directly, by-passing commercial art galleries and dealers.

Keywords: Art world, art markets, art mediators, dialogic of art, Singapore

Cacophony of Voices and Emotions: Dialogic of Buying and Selling art

Buying and selling art can be emotional. This article examines the social processes involved when artists, buyers and gallery managers engage in discussing, selling and buying art. Their negotiations and discussions are emotionally-laden. Social ambiguity – where a social situation is unclear to individuals and they wonder how to behave and relate to each other – is common, as art buyers and art sellers shift between the aesthetic sphere and the commercial sphere during their transactions. Emotional ambivalence or mixed feelings are part of socially ambiguous situations.

This article documents the experiences of a Dutch couple in Singapore – Laura and Nico (unless stated the actual names of respondents are not used). I interviewed and followed them on their journey to acquire works of art in the city-state. I also interviewed the artists, Victor Tan and Chng Seok Tin (who granted permission to use their actual names). Interviews were also conducted with Karen, the sales executive of a commercial art gallery, Tree, which Laura and Nico visited during their quest to expand their art collection. Wong, an artist represented by Tree, was also interviewed.

This study is steeped in the art world research tradition. This stream of research addresses art quality and value within social settings. The relational dynamics amongst various art world stakeholders, functioning within social structures and institutions, generate the commercial value, popularity and recognition of artists and art works. There is a system of gatekeepers, mediators, intermediaries and institutions that structure the art world and construct consensus on art quality and taste. The starting point is that a work of art has no value in itself; various values – aesthetics, prestige, social, historical, political and economic – are generated and maintained through the art world (Adorno & Horkheimer 1972; Becker 1984; Zolberg 1990; Throsby 1994; Schulze 1999; Currid 2007: 388–389; Thompson 2008; Madoff 2009). Museums, galleries, collectors and artists collaborate, even manipulate, to maintain prices of works of art, perpetuate the status of art in society and define what constitutes good art (Albrecht 1968; Wolff 1981; Becker 1984; Bourdieu 1996; Bonus & Ronte 1997). Works are also popularised and commodified through the system (Adorno & Horkheimer 1972; Thompson 2008). Art has become a means to socially differentiate and stratify society (Bourdieu 1996; Bonus & Ronte 1997; Grenfell & Hardy 2007). Art quality and value may seem to lie in the eye of the beholder but the eye is socialised, as persons acquire aesthetic tastes. So, groups of individuals learn to appreciate art in their own social milieu. The status of art and artists are acquired through the social system and processes of internalisation.

Studies have shown that commercial art galleries and art dealers serve important functions between artists and art buyers. For instance, Becker (1984: 108-119) and Thompson (2008) showed how dealers form symbiotic relations with collectors. Dealers train appreciators to be collectors and inculcate pride and confidence in displaying one's taste and social status through art. At the same time, having bought works, collectors can trust their dealers to continue to champion the represented artists. Also, working with "independent" critics and auction houses, dealers and collectors develop a consensus on the aesthetic and commercial value of art works. In another study, Abbing (2002) explained why most professional artists remain poor. Many people, including artists, are trained to think that art and commerce do not mix. Artists should be purely creative; commercial interests should not dictate them. As a consequence, public funded support is expected, demanded and often given. Many artists have come to accept their relatively poor economic state of affairs and have devised their career in this frame of mind. Since artists are not supposed to be overtly interested in commerce, galleries and dealers step in to facilitate the commercial tasks of the art market.

While acknowledging the mediating functions of art dealers and art galleries, it may be asked why artists do not attempt to educate their own potential customers, change their own mind sets and learn to market their own works. Similarly, why do art buyers approach commission-seeking art dealers when they could save money by buying works directly from artists themselves? In fact, many artists and art buyers do so. But fulfilling the roles of the commercial art galleries and dealers is easier said than done. As will be shown in this article, the so-called obstacles also come from the microscopic interaction mechanisms. This article aims to present some of the mechanisms in the art world that give relevance and importance to galleries and dealers. This case study will highlight the social and emotional challenges facing artists and art buyers when they interact face-to-face and trade. As will be elaborated later, their interaction is highly influenced by views that art should not be appreciated through monetary value and that good artists are only marginally concerned with selling art. Such views are not easily reconciled with the wheeling and dealing that an art transaction often involves, and the result is an awkwardness and tension that hinders the parties when negotiating a direct sale. At the social interaction level, commercial art galleries and dealers offer a way to art trading that is less socially ambiguous and emotionally ambivalent, making the experience of buying and selling art more pleasant for artists and art buyers.

In using the dialogic perspective, this article maps out the intricacies of selling and buying art works. The various parties have to navigate from the emotional appreciation of art to exchanging money for art. These processes display a cacophony of voices and emotions. In the next section, I will discuss the dialogic perspective. Subsequently, the case of Laura and Nico is presented. By accentuating emotional ambivalence and social ambiguities, this paper points out various constraining microscopic mechanisms in the art world.

Dialogism

The dialogic perspective originates from literary theorist Bakhtin (1981, 1965/1984, 1986). His works on literary texts have been appropriated into the social sciences (van Loon 1997; Gardiner and Bell 1998; Ooi 2002). The dialogic perspective accentuates social multiplicity and dynamic processes. It offers a set of concepts and vocabulary to present social phenomena in a dynamic and yet systematic manner, with the emphasis on social multiplicity and interplay. Just as importantly, the dialogic perspective accentuates the tensions of order and disorder in the social environment.

For this paper, to accentuate emotional ambivalence and multiplicity, a number of dialogic concepts, namely heteroglossia, polyphony and carnivalesque, are used. Heteroglossia points to the multiple contexts existing in social situations (Bakhtin 1981: 325–326; Holquist 1981: 428; Vice 1997: 18–44). Heteroglossia or multiple contexts are embedded in the art business. A social context entails a common understanding of what constitutes appropriate behaviour and how social actions should be interpreted. So, for instance, at the broad level, art business assumes at least two different social contexts. In the circumstance of art appreciation, pricing is usually not the main dimension when discussing aesthetics. The aesthetic experience may be subjective and emotional, or rational and technical, but the value of the work is usually not judged by the price it commands in the art market. In fact, in what Abbing (2002: 34) terms the “denial of the economy”, an obsession with price may destroy the aesthetic experience. As a popular set of discourse, overarching commercial intent by an artist would suggest a corruption of the creative art-making process and as a result, the works created would be rendered less-than-art. Commercial intent is seen as detrimental to the art making process. On the other hand, the art market is a commercial institution; artists sell their works and collectors buy. The art sale arena is essentially a commercial one. A commercial gallery, for instance, is intentionally staged to entice buyers. Many artists and collectors know the rules and behave accordingly in the aesthetic mode but awkwardness and tensions arise when the meeting switches to business exchange. For instance, when an artist sells his own art, in wanting to show a disinterest in the worldly commercial sphere, the artist may refrain from being enthused with the potential sale although the artist may be inwardly excited. In each situation, there is a social order in which people know how to behave appropriately. There is disorder when contrasting social contexts meet. Heteroglossia highlights the clash of contexts when people interact in social arenas.

Closely related to heteroglossia is the concept of polyphony. Polyphony highlights multiple voices (Bakhtin 1981: 331–336, 1986: 112–113; Vice 1997: 112–148). When a point of view is being articulated, there is also an overarching voice or the voice of the narrator. Just like in this article, my voice is omnipresent even though I do not use the personal pronoun in most instances. In text, dialogism draws our attention to the voice of the author. In social interactions, individuals

may marginalise their own voices and instead invoke other voices in their arguments and opinions. For example, when an art dealer says that “the price is determined by the market”, it is an attempt to marginalise the dealer’s own interest and giving a voice to the so-called “market”. The actual voice is still the dealer’s because the dealer constructs the argument and narrative. The concept of polyphony reminds us of who constructs arguments and whose voices are used and whose are hidden during social exchanges. Voices that are marginalized are also important. Together, the voices articulated by one party shows the politics of the conversation. The dialogue amongst different parties, the cacophony of voices, illuminates the social complexity, ambiguity and ambivalence in the situation.

Carnavalesque alludes to the seeming disorder and yet orderly proceedings of the carnival (Bakhtin 1965/1984; Stallybrass & White 1986). The concept accentuates multiple cultures and spheres of activities in the art world, which cannot be totally managed, suppressed or controlled. The concept of carnivalesque brings together heteroglossia and polyphony. Multiple contexts and voices characterise social reality. A person holds different, even contrasting views and carries a repertoire of social behaviour. Because a person can behave differently within the range of appropriate behaviour, the outcome of the interaction remains uncertain. For example, an art buyer may want to know an artist and visit the studio to have a more “authentic” appreciation of art practice. Art making practice can be messy and disorderly, in contrast to the sleek and staged presentation of finished works in commercial art galleries. The reaction of a visitor to the revealed grubbiness of the art studio, the lack of glamour in the creative process, is coloured by any preconceived idea he may hold about what the working space of an artist should be. Subsequently, as expectations meet or fail to meet, and impressions conflict, the visitor may be in awe or be disappointed with the visit. Artists, on their part, seek a “balance” between being open and honest in presenting their workspaces while, at the same time, maintaining the image and mystique of themselves as artists; this “balance” is not defined. Individual artists and art buyers are not sure of the outcomes of their encounters as they all have their personal preferences and interpretations of the situation. The experience of visiting an artist studio to go behind the scenes and to buy art is fraught with social ambiguities and emotional ambivalence. The social situation, like in the on-goings of a carnival, can take off in different directions as persons interact. Individuals involved may feel happy and frustrated as the dynamic carnivalesque social situation emerges.

As a framework, dialogism opens up discussion on social complexity. But unlike a functionalist integrative ontology – although the dialogic approach does attempt to simplify – the aim is to organise the complexity rather than to reduce the complexity. As a result, the case in this paper will accentuate the multiplicity of social contexts and voices in the interaction between artists and art buyers. The tensions between order and disorder will also be highlighted. Emotional ambiguities and ambivalence are predominant. Using Bakhtin’s dialogical framework, this

paper addresses some complex ways in which art, emotions and money come together through the case of Laura and Nico buying art in Singapore.

Laura and Nico Buy Art in Singapore

Laura and Nico, a married couple, are Dutch university professors working in the Netherlands. Nico was in Singapore for the first six months of 2008, visiting a local university. Laura also visited the same university but only for two months. Both of them are my friends. Because of my research on the art world in Singapore, we started talking about local art and artists when we met in Singapore.

According to Laura and Nico, they collect paintings and sculptures that they like, not so much for investment but for enjoyment and decoration. The works must also be affordable and reasonably priced. Their appreciation of art is multi-faceted; they refer to their emotional responses, the techniques and ideas behind works and also their evaluation of the price. Their perspective on particular art works is also shaped by their knowledge of the artist, and whether they have met the artist before and their chemistry with the artist. Before making a purchase, Nico often searches for information on the Internet about the artist and earlier prices of works sold.

In my conversations with them, they recalled how they acquired various pieces of art over the years. Nico has meticulously documented their various pieces into a booklet. They recalled affectionately the specific pieces they acquired at flea markets, artist studios, galleries and small shops. Going behind the scenes into artist studios is special to them because they can get closer to the artist and understand the artist's works better; these experiences are, in their own words, "more authentic". They were glad when I wanted to introduce them to a couple of artists and visit their studios in Singapore.

Visit 1: Laura and Nico Visit Victor Tan at the Telok Kurau Studios

The first artist studio Laura and Nico visited with me was Victor Tan's. Laura and Nico met Tan a couple of evenings earlier at an exhibition, during which I introduced them. Over drinks, the first meeting was friendly and animated, as we discussed the art scene in Singapore, the Netherlands and Denmark. We also exchanged views on art and the art business.

Tan's studio is on the fourth floor of the Telok Kurau Studios, a government-supported art housing complex. The studio is about 50 square meters. The black walls contrast well against Tan's stainless steel wire sculptures; from a distance and at first glance, one might mistake the sculptures as being made from wire mesh. There are hundreds of sculptures of different sizes in the studio. Most of the sculptures are human figures in different poses – standing, sitting, walking, jumping. There are also figures of birds, trees and abstract shapes. The figures come in different sizes, ranging from a few centimetres tall to over four meters high. For

the first-time visitor, one fears knocking down sculptures while navigating through the labyrinth. In the middle of the room, there is a raised platform on which Tan makes his sculptures.

The guests looked around the studio curiously, peering into the workspace of the artist. They were amazed by how Tan could create sculptures with bales of stainless steel wires. Laura and Nico asked Tan about his works and stories behind various pieces. Tan was forthcoming with his tales. For example, Tan explained that a series of baby sculptures was inspired by the birth of his niece. Tan is also visually impaired and he explained how he accidentally started making sculptures with wires: he could not draw because of his handicap in art school, so the then school principal encouraged him to try other media to “sketch”. He tried using wires and that eventually turned out to be his medium of artistic expression, even though he majored in ceramics.

After about 30 minutes, we decided to visit another artist, Chng Seok Tin. Her studio is on the ground floor of the art studio complex.

Visit 2: Laura and Nico Visit Chng Seok Tin

Chng is also visually impaired. In her 60s, she has received the highest national accolade for an artist in Singapore, the national cultural medallion. When we visited, she was working on a series of prints and preparing for an exhibition in Taiwan. A friend and helper, Kate (not her real name), was with her. Chng welcomed us warmly. Chng’s studio was once the servant’s quarter in the complex. Chng was putting two paintings in the sun when we came calling. She explained that termites infested the two paintings and she was “drying” the pictures. After I introduced Laura and Nico to her, we went into her studio. Most of her works were stacked and kept in two rooms.

Chng gave Laura and Nico catalogues of her works. She also explained that she required help in making her prints because she is visually impaired. Chng also writes, composes music and paints. Chng is more proficient in Mandarin but speaks and understands English. Kate and I helped in the interpretation at times.

Laura saw a painting in the catalogue that interested her. She asked Chng if it was still available. Chng laughed uncomfortably before saying that the painting, together with other art pieces, was destroyed by termites. After looking around the cluttered art studio, Laura and Nico were shown her new series of prints. Nico took particular interest in a series called “Development of wind”. This series shows a picture of long grass blowing in the wind, with a bird flying in the sky. The composition and the style makes the print look like a Chinese brush painting and yet western in character; the blend of the East and West appeals to Nico. The series consists of nine pieces: three prints, one Artist’s Proof (A/P) and five test prints. The series was meant for the exhibition in Taiwan. While appreciating the series, Nico wanted to acquire a copy. Nico cautiously navigated the art-business heteroglossic situation; he first praised the works, indicated that he is touched by

their aesthetics and then with enthusiasm, asked if the prints are for sale. Chng smiled, paused to indicate that she is not overly excited on selling but said, “artists need to make a living too”.

Nico looked at the “Development of the wind” series for some minutes, compared the various prints and was most interested in the A/P. An A/P is usually not for sale, Chng explained, because it is the artist’s favourite. But would Chng part with this A/P? She smiled hesitantly and said “yes”. Chng then detached herself from the price by stating that the sum she has quoted is the “market price”. Never comfortable to bargain with the artist, Nico looked at the print again and decided to acquire it. And after a moment of reflection, in a carnivalesque turn of events, Nico spontaneously proclaimed that he wants to buy the whole series of nine pieces. Nico thought that he could display all pieces, showing how the creative process emerges in the series! He asked Chng to think about his proposal. Nico said that he will not bargain with her, and asked her to give him an offer for the whole package, instead of for individual pieces. If he could not afford the lot, then he would just buy the A/P. Chng was agreeable and seemed pleased. They agreed to communicate via email. All parties, including myself, were excited. After taking pictures and having some discussions, we left.

Nico and Laura were glad for the honesty and authenticity experienced in Chng’s studio. Behind Chng’s powerful works, they saw a very competent artist who overcame her physical disability. They were however also uncomfortable with the fact that some of Chng’s works were destroyed by termites and that her space seemed disorganised. Nico nonetheless loved “Development of wind” and wanted to acquire it.

Back to Tan’s Studio

We returned to Tan’s studio. On our way, Nico talked enthusiastically about acquiring Chng’s series. We were supportive of his taste and choice. Laura and Nico were again looking around Tan’s studio. They showed interest in acquiring Tan’s works. Nico cautiously broached the subject of a commercial transaction and asked Tan whether the works are for sale. With an uncomfortable smile, having to step into business dealings, Tan replied positively. Tan also added that he normally would ask visitors to go to the galleries to buy his works. He would then not have to deal with the commercial transaction. The buyer would also know the prices of his works in the market.

While Tan stated his “normal” practice and reluctance in doing a direct sale, he also alluded to the exceptions he would make. He would only sell to friends who are aesthetically excited about his works; unspoken in the clarification is a hint that Laura and Nico prospectively qualify. In putting primacy on the aesthetics and friendship spheres in the heteroglossic situation, Tan has used his criteria for direct sales as a social marker of how he views the buyers; he would prefer to relate to them as friends and art connoisseurs, not as customers.

Nico was interested in a figure climbing out of a wooden frame. Tan said that was not for sale because that was his last piece in the series. Tan mentioned that he could however make another piece for them. That was not acceptable to Nico; he felt that the buyer should not usurp the artist's right in creating and editioning his work. Laura asked about another figure and that was also not for sale. Nico pointed to another and met with the same response. "Are there any for sale?" asked Laura in a jovial but exasperated voice. "Yes", replied a laughing Tan, "but you want those that I want to keep!"

In a later interview, I asked Tan why he did not sell any pieces to the couple. Tan said:

It was a coincidence that they picked some of the sculptures that I have strong feelings for, or there is significance for me in keeping them. This has happened before. If I said "yes" to selling them a long time ago, they would not have seen them.

I also feel that buying and selling art is about synergy, [...] there is a need to have some chemistry between the two parties. It is not just me pushing a sale but also depending on the buyer. To have someone appreciate my work is more important than one buying my work because friendship is more important to me. It is not like if they don't buy my work, then they are not my friends. I like to spend time with them. Actually when people email me to buy my work, I ask them to go to the gallery first. Look at those there. If they want to come to have a look and want to have a chat, they don't have to buy my work from me. Galleries [offer the] mood for selling and buying. Willing parties come together.

I rather be friends than talk about money. [...] I say the price and wonder if they will be offended. It's a dual effect. I feel uncomfortable to sell and they feel uncomfortable buying [...] That's why I like to let galleries sell my works.

Essentially, Tan was uncomfortable and ambivalent about selling his works directly to buyers. He wanted to see and portray himself as an artist first and art seller second. By voicing himself as a friend (versus that of an art seller) in cases where he does sell, Tan personalises the process because the commercial transaction is then actually a favour for a friend. Tan was also afraid that the price he named might make him sound money-minded. It would be easier if the buyer obtains his works through the galleries that represent him.

Coffee After Our Visit

After the visit to Telok Kurau Studios, Laura, Nico and I went for coffee. In the absence of the artists, we talked candidly about the experiences earlier in the afternoon. Both were happy with their experiences of going behind the scenes in the studios; the artist work spaces were very different from the glitz of a commercial art gallery. Nico was clearly excited about acquiring Chng's series of prints. He liked the character of the prints, in the sense that they look like Chinese paintings, but are prints. Laura and Nico however felt somewhat sorry for Chng because her works were not stored properly. Laura was upset that termites had destroyed the piece she was interested in. Laura and Nico felt that every work by an artist

should be precious, like one's baby. Knowing of her handicap, they knew that she needs help in getting organized. They respect her works and admire her for having received the national cultural medallion in Singapore. I also asked Nico how much he would pay for the series of prints. Nico thought that Chng should not charge him for the test prints, while he would pay full price for the rest. That is a fair discount, he thought.

Laura and Nico have a good impression of Tan too. They felt that Tan, in his late 30s, is confident and he knows the future is his. They also felt that Tan's studio was overwhelmingly crowded. Nico was drawn to those figures that depict motion. He said that Tan's aesthetics rests in the portrayal of "movement". Switching to the commercial aspect of their encounter, Laura and Nico were a bit confused and wondered if Tan was truly interested in selling his works to them. They asked to buy three pieces and were told they are all not for sale.

Our after-visit discussion contrasts against how Laura and Nico behaved during the visits. As they immersed themselves into the private workspaces of the artists, Laura and Nico were always mindful to demonstrate their appreciation of the works and of being allowed into the studios. They did not discuss the quality of the art works based on monetary terms with the artists. In other words, Laura and Nico behaved cautiously, showing respect and appreciation and not insulting or offending the artists when they navigated through the heteroglossic situation of art versus business.

Email Correspondence and Acquiring a Work From Wong

A few days later, I met Laura and Nico. Nico received an email from Kate on behalf of Chng, listing the price of each individual print in the series, with full and "discounted" prices. The whole series was too expensive for them. During their face-to-face meeting, the discussion was informal. Chng was happy to sell. They felt it strange that the email was formal, and each print was priced individually. Nico had asked for a packaged deal. Nico said:

It is interesting that the prices listed are higher than were mentioned in the studio but with a discount. [Giving discounted prices] is very unprofessional, I would say, because we don't buy by seeing whether there is a discount or not.

Nico felt uncomfortable that he was perceived to be a bargain hunter. After Nico received the email, he went to visit Chng in her studio. He wanted to acquire the A/P. He thought they had an agreement: if he does not buy the whole series, he would just buy the A/P. But Chng refused to part with the A/P. Nico found the whole incident puzzling and hoped that he had not offended Chng. Chng eventually explained to me that she wanted to use the print for the exhibition in Taiwan. She had not taken a picture to document the work. It was also Kate who liaised on her behalf with Nico; Chng did not know the exact details. Kate later explained to me that she thought she followed Chng's instructions. There was confusion and misunderstanding, resulting in the rather messy and unpleasant situation.

Regardless, Laura and Nico told me that they acquired a painting from an artist, Wong, through an art gallery. Laura and Nico stumbled across the gallery, Tree. Laura saw a tulip painting that she liked but it was reserved. The gallery's sales executive – Karen – said that she could ask the artist to produce a similar one, with some changes. Laura, with her view on artistic integrity, was aghast. Laura was shown a catalogue of Wong's works and was drawn to one particular piece. Karen then suggested that she could bring the couple to Wong's home and studio. Karen called up the artist and they took a taxi there.

During the visit to Wong's home, Laura and Nico became fond of Wong. Laura felt that she, in her own words, "clicked" with the artist. Karen was asking Wong to take out works to be shown to Laura and Nico. Wong was, on the other hand, asking Karen to allow Laura and Nico to look around and take their time. He unwrapped paintings and turned them at different angles, so that Laura and Nico could enjoy. In contrast to Tan's and Chng's, Wong's works are meticulously packed and documented.

Laura noticed that there was a massive commissioned work being done. She mentioned that the work looked complete. Wong said that the client would probably think so too but he felt that there was still something more but did not know what that was. Laura and Nico also saw a painting hanging over the door. Wong noticed their interest and said immediately that the painting is not for sale. Laura and Nico felt that Wong is not comfortable telling them the prices. Laura found that Wong encapsulates a sense of aesthetic expected of an artist. Karen was the one doing the selling. Inadvertently or otherwise, in the heteroglossic situation embedded in the visit to appreciate art and to sell art, Karen was handling the commercial aspect of the visit, while Wong focused on the aesthetic discussion.

Wong's studio is separated between the workspace and the display space. That is a professional set-up, according to Laura and Nico. To the Dutch couple, unlike Chng and Tan, who seem only to create works, Wong takes his works to the packing and selling stages.

Eventually, Laura saw the piece from the catalogue. After seeing the actual painting and meeting Wong, she likes the picture even more. To Laura, there is a Zen-like character in both the painting and the painter. She asked to go home and contemplate before deciding on a purchase. That was not a problem. A few days later, Karen told her that the first piece that she liked was on the market again. Laura asked Karen to bring the one from Wong's house to the gallery, so that the two pieces can be compared. Laura and Nico eventually decided on the piece from the house. Without rational reasons, the Zen-like painting grew on the Dutch couple more and more, and the tulip painting less and less. The one they bought cost S\$6000 (€3000), while the other S\$10 000 (€5000); the couple admitted that the price was also a factor. Price did affect their decision; they could afford the dearer one.

Laura and Nico also told me about their encounters with Karen, when they visited Tree. Nico felt that Karen had a kind of naivety and simplicity that helped in selling art. She is chatty. To them, Karen seems to think that Laura and Nico would buy more pieces. She kept asking, “You don’t want to buy the other?” As a result, Laura thought that Karen has many rich customers. Karen seems to have limited knowledge about art, according to Nico. For example, Nico noticed the artistic signature of Wong in his paintings – a few dark brush strokes found in almost all his paintings – and pointed that out to Wong. Karen interjected and pointed out instead the artist’s name-signature at the bottom of the painting. Wong then said that Nico was referring to his artistic signature. To Laura and Nico, Karen may have an unpracticed eye, but she is good at selling. Karen revealed her sale tactics to me in an interview:

We always say the things that the customers like to hear [she laughs]. So always say nice things about the paintings. For example, one lady came the other day and walked past the shop three, four times and finally came in to take a look at a painting. This square painting really caught her eye and she liked it very much. Since the lady doesn’t have enough space for the painting, she was wondering if she should buy or not. Then I told her that lots of customers like the details in the painting and I also told her that every time she looks at the painting, it makes her feel happy. The customer agrees and said, “Yes, I feel happy when I look at it”. That’s how we try to convince customers.

With little ambiguity in what she has to do as an art seller, Karen embodies the commercial agent in the art world.

Wong’s View on Laura and Nico

I interviewed Wong a couple of weeks after Laura and Nico bought his painting. Wong described himself as a “very local” artist because he lived in Singapore all his life and has no overseas training. He graduated from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts while in his early twenties. He does both traditional Chinese ink paintings and also western paintings using oil and acrylic. Of late, he has been working with mixed media, including sand and gold paper. Based in Singapore, he finds himself mixing Chinese and western traditions in his works. The blending of the East and West comes naturally to him because of his Chinese background and his major in western art. My conversation with him was conducted in Mandarin. Laura and Nico felt that his art is special because, in their eyes, it blends eastern and western traditions. The mixed media (oil and sand) painting they bought was of a hill protruding out in the open space, but on closer examination, reveals a side profile of a face speaking to the heavens. Wong explained to me that the picture refers to a Chinese legend in which a warrior asked the heavens 100 questions. That is why the painting is titled “Talking to the sky”.

It is very rare that customers visit his home. Laura and Nico’s visit was agreed upon because of their interest. Wong said that Laura and Nico are the best type of customers because they know what they like. While he does commissioned works

for hotels, banks and private homes, he likes to work without the dictates of art consultants and interior designers. He wants to express his own feelings in his creations; he has also moved away from his training in photo-realistic paintings. His current works are mainly abstract and semi-abstract. With an idea in his head, the painting emerges as he works on it without knowing the exact outcome. Laura and Nico seem to resonate with him, Wong said, because they pick out the paintings that he himself likes. Also, unlike many local art buyers, Wong did not have to explain much about his paintings to Laura and Nico. Wong is aware of the heteroglossia or conflict of contexts if he has to sell his works himself; he maintains his aesthetic aura by letting Tree represent him in the commercial field.

By marginalising the customer in Laura and Nico, the voice of friendship is articulated by Wong. In our conversation, the encounter with Laura and Nico was framed as establishing friendship. Wong said that he enjoyed talking to them, discussing art and ideas in his works. It was not important that they bought a painting. Wong said that Karen is keen to push for a sale during the visit and that created some awkwardness for him. On the other hand, Wong admittedly knew that Laura and Nico were ready to buy.

Tree and Wong have a good relationship. Wong appreciates Tree's support although the gallery is making money through him. The gallery is professional and is able to do the marketing and documentation of his works. Marketing and administrative skills, as Wong admitted, are lacking in him.

Discussion

The case presented above highlights a number of emotionally-laden social processes in art buying and selling. The artist and the art buyer straddle different social arenas as they engage in art appreciation and transact commercially. I will highlight two dialogical arenas in the discussion.

The Authentic-Staged Line

In contrast to commercial art galleries, visiting artist studios offers behind the scene insights into artists. Talking to the artists, seeing how they work and knowing artists' views will add different dimensions to understanding particular art works. Laura and Nico admitted that they do feel more compelled to buy when they visit artists in their studios. Artists know that persons visiting their studios are potential customers. But as the case shows, the social interaction between artists and art buyers can be uneasy and the outcomes uncertain. Nico recalled his visits:

We have a very nice time at Tan's studio. You also feel that you actually have to buy something. [...] But] it was unclear in Tan's studio what was for sale and what was not for sale. Interesting that the pieces we are interested in, Tan wants to keep them. So there is something special in those pieces.

Then we went to Tree and subsequently Wong's home. It was a completely different experience, in the sense that Wong's [home] gallery is completely separated from his studio. It was nicely maintained with the décor. He was more professional [even in his own private working space]. He made a clear distinction between what is for sale and what is not. We got a present from him, something made of clay, even though we didn't buy anything [then]. And we have an open and nice discussion.

Karen is an amazing person. She has a [sincere] naivety in selling because you would not get the idea that you are pushed by her or she is telling things which are not true. [...] She lets the buyers take their time to look at the art and she tries to figure out what the buyer wants.

Laura and Nico, I observed, felt uncomfortable and ambivalent when they see the artists' workspaces as disorganised or works stored improperly. They were dismayed by the destruction of some of Chng's works by termites, one of which they had wanted to acquire. In Wong's case, Tree have helped him document and pack his works; that gave a good impression to Laura and Nico. These reactions revealed an expectation by Laura and Nico that art be revered from its inception, and not only upon its launch. The professional standards of a commercial gallery in its careful handling and showcasing of art, for which Laura and Nico have high regard, arguably conditions such a line of thinking. The staged gallery standards seeped into the disorderly reality of an artist studio, giving rise to mixed feelings. They nevertheless avoid being rude during the visits; they did not criticise the artists during their visits. They behave appropriately in the studios, by showing respect and appreciation of the art works, exchanging views on art, asking questions about the artists and not evaluating the art works through monetary terms.

Catering to the desires of visitors to know them better and yet to present themselves in a good light is a challenge for artists. Negative judgements may be made if artists reveal all aspects of their practice. But if they were to tidy up their spaces and selectively reveal positive aspects of themselves, visitors to their studios would have a false impression. Essentially, Laura and Nico's experiences are layered. They crave and enjoy having the veil over the creative process lifted, but they cannot help but evaluate what they are allowed to see in accordance with their own value systems.

The quest for the authentic experience by visiting artist studios, but with a desire to see artists practicing art in an organized and staged manner allude to the heteroglossic clash of the unkept artist studio and the primed up art gallery; the art studio is a private work space and should not be staged and the commercial art gallery is a publicly staged space to entice art collectors. These conflicting demands inadvertently come together when art buyers want to visit art studios while inherently expecting art gallery practices.

The Art-Business Crossing

Many artists and art collectors believe artists should be concerned primarily with their creative production. Their art works should not be dictated by commercial

potential as profit-driven art is often looked upon dimly by many, though there are also those who would challenge this view. Regardless, Tan, Chng and Wong all try to separate the process of creating art from selling art. Mingling these activities closely would be seen as a commercialisation of art and unacceptable to many artists. Laura and Nico think so too. From my observations of Laura and Nico, they were always first to cross into the business arena with the artists. They initiated the process by asking if works are for sale before inquiring for the prices.

As this occurs, the parties inhabit the dual contexts of art and business simultaneously. This heteroglossic situation results in a quandary. Tan, as described above, was visibly uneasy about selling his works directly to Laura and Nico, feeling that it risked compromising his integrity as an artist. Laura and Nico, in turn, did not want to press him into making a sale. When faced with this awkward situation, Tan attempted to recalibrate the social dynamic: he emphasised those qualities he saw in Laura and Nico – taste and cordiality – that appeal to his value system. In so doing, he indicated that they were people he could bond with. Befriending them would assuage his unease and make him more amenable to selling to them; any such transaction would then honour his policy of only selling directly to buyers who he considered friends. Subsequently, Nico had several friendly meetings with Tan over the weeks and trust and understanding was built. Nico eventually managed to buy a work from Tan, a piece that Nico did not notice on the first visit. And out of goodwill and friendship, Tan gave Nico an additional, “incomplete” piece. Acquiring these works from Tan was protracted.

Chng, in contrast, took the unambiguous step of making a formal offer to Laura and Nico through an email, stating the “market prices” and the “discounted prices” of her works. It was considered too expensive by Nico and a deal did not take place. They did not bargain or negotiate the prices face-to-face. Further, Chng rescinded the original agreement for the A/P. The episode was uncomfortable for the artist and the art buyers. They did not know how to continue their communication with each other; Laura and Nico wondered how Chng viewed them, and vice versa. The awkward dynamic of the art-business crossing remained unchanged. But in March 2010, Laura visited Chng again, partly on my initiative. Laura wanted to acquire a print for Nico’s birthday. The visit ended with Chng giving Nico a print of Laura’s choice. Goodwill was fostered, but no commercial transaction took place.

From Laura and Nico’s perspective, their acquisition from Wong was the least complicated. The commercial exchange was unambiguous and they did not worry about how to proceed in acquiring the work. The deal was settled through Karen and Tree. The meeting with Wong was polite and friendly, without the artist having to mention any prices. Wong discussed art, his works and his background, essentially establishing a friendly relationship with Laura and Nico. The commercial transaction, made through Karen, was clean and clear cut. Karen’s relationship with Laura and Nico was basically a commercial one and Wong’s relation-

ship with Laura and Nico stayed within the art and aesthetic arena. Wong did not have to cross into the commercial sphere directly and personally.

These three contrasting art-buying experiences highlight the carnivalesque outcomes of heteroglossia or multiple social arenas. In straddling between the aesthetic and commercial spheres, Tan and Chng invoked the voices of the market and the gallery to justify their prices. They were also uncomfortable when talking prices with Laura and Nico. As for Wong, Karen was Wong's commercial arm. The result for Laura and Nico was that the transaction with Wong and Karen was smooth and uncomplicated. That was not the case with Tan and Chng.

Conclusions

Art world research has shown that the value of a work of art is not inherent in the work itself. There are stakeholders that maintain prices and define tastes. At the start of this article, I briefly discussed a few mediating roles of commercial art galleries and dealers in the art world. They also add costs to artists and art buyers. Some artists and art buyers do appropriate the functions of the art mediators but as the case presented in this article shows, social ambiguities and emotional ambivalence mar the microscopic interaction between them. When cast alongside the established norms of how artists and art buyers should behave, and what to expect, these ambiguities and ambivalence become constraining factors in encouraging artists and art buyers to trade with each other, bypassing art galleries and dealers. Heteroglossia highlights the clashes of multiple contrasting social contexts when artists and art buyers trade. This article concludes with two points.

One, many art buyers appreciate art works by learning more about the background of and even having personal experiences with the artist. They desire the authentic encounters with artists by going behind the scenes but as the experiences of Laura and Nico demonstrate the visits to artist studios may shatter the professional image of artists. Artists may be perceived as unprofessional if they work in a less organized manner, so it is risky for them to allow visitors into messy work studios. Despite their desires, visitors may not hold consistent views and may not appreciate the work circumstances of individual artists. Art buyers like Laura and Nico also carry with them preconceptions of a professional artist and inevitably impose these expectations when they go behind the scenes. As a result, their experiences are bittersweet. They are ambivalent; they adore certain artists and their works, but at the same time they are dismayed by their chaotic art practice. In contrast, commercial art galleries shield the grubbiness of art practice from the public.

Two, artists and art buyers may have similar understanding of what art is and share common interest in art trading but crossing from the aesthetics to the commercial in the heteroglossic situation can be clumsy and often generates discomfort for all parties. To many, artists who are overtly and primarily concerned with

the commercial value of their creations often draw criticism because they have compromised the ideal of pure artistic expression. So, while artists do sell their works directly, they should not appear too eager. A compromise, as shown in Laura and Nico's experience, is for the artist and the art buyer to fraternise and build trust; when there is goodwill and friendship parties need not bargain, and gifts and discounts may even be offered. To Laura and Nico, Chng may have crossed too aggressively into the art business sphere with the email but meeting after nearly two years later, the gesture by Chng to give Nico a birthday gift generated a level of goodwill. Karen, as a sales executive in a gallery, explicitly sells art; there is no ambiguity. At the end of the day, it was easier for the Dutch couple to relate to Wong. The protracted and uncomfortable encounters of buying art directly from artists make such forms of acquisition cumbersome. It is easier to buy art from the commercial art galleries.

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Bed, Breakfast and Friendship: Intimacy and Distance in Small-Scale Hospitality Businesses

By Johan Hultman & Erika Andersson Cederholm

Abstract

Through an analysis of the narrative of a Bed and Breakfast (B & B) and art gallery owner, the emergence of intimacy as a commercial value in the hospitality industry is illustrated. This is a formation of economic value where economic rationality as a motive for commercial activity is rejected. Simultaneously though, a different set of market attitudes are performed by hospitality practitioners in the course of everyday interactions with customers, and a tension between emotional, spatial and temporal intimacy and distance is uncovered and discussed. It is concluded that commercial friendship is a more complex issue than what has been acknowledged so far in the hospitality literature. A continued discussion of intimacy in hospitality will therefore affect the cultural understanding of emotions, identity and lifestyle values on the one hand, and business strategy, value creation and markets on the other.

Keywords: Hospitality, intimacy, distance, performativity, boundary work, lifestyle entrepreneurs

Introduction: A Hospitality Paradox

In service economies, the relationship between economic and social exchange is often close. Sometimes there is no distinct boundary between them. Service interactions are transformed into experience products and a form of commercial friendship might emerge (cf. Price & Arnould 1999; Lashley & Morrison 2003). Although this kind of friendship has been regarded in the literature as a specific type of instrumental marketing relationship it has several characteristics in common with other forms of friendship, notably affection, intimacy, social support, loyalty and reciprocal gift giving (Price & Arnould 1999: 50). The term commercial friendship implies that spatial and temporal boundaries between private/public and non-commercial/commercial have become subjects for negotiation in certain commercial service contexts (see Sennett 1993; Seligman 1998; Hochschild 2003). Bed and Breakfast (B & B) businesses in rural tourism – a business sector identified in the literature as a significant part of the hospitality industry (Lee et al. 2003) – highlight how a growing service economy reorders these boundaries. The B & B industry typically features small firms that sometimes combine the basic service of accommodation with added-value experience offerings such as horse-riding, nature experiences, stone-oven baking, painting courses and similar activities. Many of the operators of these businesses can be called lifestyle entrepreneurs, striving for a correspondence between their own lifestyle values and those of their guests (Ateljevic & Doorne 2000; Andersson Cederholm & Hultman 2010). When the correspondence between host and guest lifestyle values is the basis for the commercial enterprise, economic activity becomes situated in the intersection between intimate and commercial life spheres.

Earlier research on lifestyle entrepreneurship in rural hospitality has shown how qualities such as more family time and the attraction of specific localities are crucial motivating factors (Shaw & Williams 1987; Ateljevic & Doorne 2000; Getz & Carlsen 2000; Andersson et al. 2002; Getz et al. 2004). Lynch (1998:332–333) reports that emotional motives such as “meet interesting people”, “like to cook for people” and “makes me [the host] feel good” are generally rated as more important by B & B hosts than economic motives. This indicates a need to contextualise small-scale hospitality businesses in relation to the development of a critical understanding of the hospitality industry (cf. Lugosi et al. 2009). This is a dynamic empirical field and the boundaries and characteristics of a critical hospitality research agenda are simultaneously contested and articulated (Ottenbacher et al. 2009). From a cultural analysis perspective, small-scale rural hospitality businesses are interesting in two ways. First, these businesses are framed by a wider social and cultural context articulated through rhetoric markers such as “the good rural life” and “a living countryside”, indicating values of social embeddedness and sustainability.¹ Quality of life and locality are thus important aspects of lifestyle entrepreneurship (Marcketti et al. 2006) and business success is typically defined

in ways that differ from growth-oriented economic measurements (Reijonen 2008). Practices associated with economic rationality – such as strategic work to gain competitive advantages – are often explicitly rejected (cf. Ateljevic & Doorne 2000; Di Domenico 2005; Helgadóttir & Sigurdardóttir 2008).

Secondly, however, the rejection of economic rationality carries within itself a new set of attitudes towards the market. In the formation of a hospitality discourse this has consequences for how hospitality can be conceptualised both as a phenomenon and as an empirical field of critical research. At the same time as the business rationale expressed by lifestyle entrepreneurs is frequently explained in explicit contrast to that of large-scale firms, small-scale hospitality businesses are driven by values that are increasingly becoming promoted as business ideals for large hospitality firms. As an example of this, a recent issue of the globally distributed lifestyle magazine *Monocle* was dedicated to the “Heroes of hospitality”. Here the heroes – “the players reshaping the travel sector” (*Monocle* 2010, cited from front cover) – were asked to pinpoint what was missing from modern hotels and what were going to be strategically important factors in the future. A majority of these informants answered that qualities such as “earthiness”, “authenticity”, “human feel”, “the human touch” and “personality” were missing. Important issues for the future of hospitality businesses, consequently, were expressed as becoming “smaller, simpler, always cosy”, that hotels should be more inviting towards locals to use its lobbies, bars and restaurants, that they should become “more focused on emotional values”, that hotels must become explicitly integrated and central to their local environments and communities, and that they should move towards “old-fashioned inn-keeping” (*Monocle* 2010). In the same issue, the author Alain de Botton annihilated any distinction between the economic and the social by stating that “A good hotel is an embodiment of the act of love: love understood as a commitment to the wholehearted care of another human being”, and that few hotels “are able to promote proper sociability” (*Monocle* 2010: 105). Consequently, the formation of a hospitality discourse contains a paradox. Small-scale businesses traditionally understood as being driven by emotional rather than economic motives are becoming the ideological and perhaps even strategic role model for a rapidly expanding and hyper-commercial industry.

Commercial Homes and Commercial Friendship

In rural lifestyle entrepreneurship where traditional conceptualisations of economic growth and the market are dismissed, lifestyle values are marketed as commercial propositions aimed at predominantly urban consumers. Personal values are translated into economic values. The physical site of business for these entrepreneurs is often the home (see Di Domenico & Lynch 2007). The home of the host is transformed into a commercial home (Lynch & MacWhannell 2000; Lynch et al. 2009), and this commercial home becomes the site where boundaries between personal and commercial values are launched into a process of negotiation. Hosts

are not merely providing accommodation, activities and service in the traditional sense, but also the set-up for guests to socialise with each other and with their hosts. In some cases, socialising is developed into specific business concepts offering guests recreational and self-developing social interactions as part of the commercial product. This is the setting where we will apply the concept of commercial friendship.

Commercial friendship is a term used by Lashley & Morrison (2003) to describe sociable relations between hospitality producers and guests. Such relations are seen as a result of explicit strategic considerations on part of the producer in an instrumental manner. In this way, normative service marketing literature argues that commercial friendship is of great strategic importance (e.g. Grönroos 2008). But in light of the motivations and negating attitudes towards economic growth expressed by lifestyle entrepreneurs, such an understanding is not enough to make sense of the formation of a hospitality discourse. So in addition to its strategic implications, we propose to look at the concept of commercial friendship from another perspective. We will argue that it emerges from the negotiations of boundaries between personal and commercial values in real-time social encounters between hosts and guests, rather than preceding the host/guest relation. It follows that strategy in lifestyle contexts will not imply the same thing as strategy in instrumental business contexts. To date, there is a lack of empirical research discussing how emotion is understood and transformed – in situated social interactions – into values possible to calculate on a market (but see Callon & Muniesa 2005), and the whole issue of emotions and the political and economic importance of emotions is an underdeveloped research focus. Anderson and Smith (2001: 7) notes that: “emotional relations tend to be regarded as something apart from the economic and/or as something that is essentially private, and does not substantially infuse the public/policy sphere”. The formation of a hospitality discourse and the emergence of discursive practices of hospitality in commercial settings makes it necessary to re-think boundaries between the “economic”, the “political” and the “emotional”. To accomplish this, we first turn to the economic sociology of Georg Simmel. Then we draw upon recent discussions about the temporality and spatiality of emotion, specifically as manifested in the dynamics between hosts and guests.

Intimacy and Distance

This analysis of hospitality practices deals with the social and normative construction of what are commonly presumed to be subjective experience values, and how these are constructed in an interactive process between hosts, guests and society (Granovetter 1985; Zafirovski 2000; Steiner 2009). Tools for the analysis of value and value creation as social processes, and the contextualisation of value creation, are offered in Georg Simmel’s *The Philosophy of Money* (1900/2004). This classic in economic sociology showed how the construction of economic and non-

economic values is a relational process. From this follows that values can be understood as being performed in host/guest interactions. This is contrary to dominant service marketing theory where values are seen as preceding and thus scripting host/guest interaction. Instead we understand performativity as the continuous becoming-in-action of values and norms (see Edensor 2001; Perkins & Thorns 2001; Bærenholt et al. 2004). The issue of value and values is a tricky one. We are not concerned with the construction of taxonomies of values as such, but it is necessary to categorise values in some conceptual manner since translations between different kinds of values are central to the analysis. To Simmel, economic value is one value category among others, for example aesthetic, moral and cultural values (Simmel 1900/2004; Cantó Milà 2005). Economic value is the category most objectified, manifested in practices of monetary exchange. It follows that the notion of distance is central in Simmel's analysis and a crucial aspect of value realisation. When distance is introduced between a subject and an object, desire emerges and later develops into the concept of value. Distance places the object in relation to other objects (Simmel 1900/2004: 59).

By making distance a central part of the analysis two issues need to be addressed: time-space and emotion. A sociological understanding of distance usually means social or even abstract aspects rather than tempo-spatial ones. But by conceiving of hospitality in a way that makes boundaries between commercial and non-commercial spheres a matter of negotiation, the distinction between the social and the tempo-spatial begins to break down. It then becomes appropriate to find a way to bring social and time-space dimensions together, and here we find support in the field of emotional geography. Distance and intimacy, as well as in-betweenness, are central aspects of geographies of emotion. In the hospitality industry, social relations are arguably a central product dimension and not merely vehicles for product deliverance. Service encounters, in common with the concerns of emotional geography, are all about "the emotions that people feel for each other and, more extensively, for places, for landscapes, for objects in landscapes and in specific situations." (Pile 2010: 15). Commercial friendship in the context of a commercial home can then be explained as an encounter between a person and another person or people; or in the encounter between a person and their environment, whether through travelling, dwelling, reading, ageing, consuming, covering or whatever...this space between...is easiest to ally with a politics of caring, and the production of caring...environments. (Pile 2010: 15).

Thus, in combination with intimacy and distance in economic sociology, the in-between time-space relating hosts to guests as defined in emotional geography serves to further frame the formation of a hospitality discourse and markets of sociability.

Boundary Work

To see how distance and intimacy are performed in a situated, commercial context we use the concept of boundary work (see Gieryn 1983; Nippert-Eng 1996; Allen 2001; Åkerström 2002; Goode & Greatbatch 2005; Zelizer 2005). This refers to ordering practices, which create, maintain, and recreate cultural and/or cognitive categories, in our case categories related to time-space, social relations, emotions and values. We focus on the borders between what are considered economic and non-economic spheres – more specifically borders between personal values on the one hand and collective values possible to transform into commercial values on the other, but also borders between host and guest time-spaces – and illustrate how these are performed in lifestyle entrepreneurship. In this regard, our analysis ties into the concept of emotional labour as discussed by Ek and Ooi in the introduction of this special theme issue of *Culture Unbound*. Emotional labour was introduced by Hochschild (1983, 2003), who studied emotional work in service labour where the service provider – often a woman – is expected to evoke positive emotional responses in the customer. The concept is used in studies of service interactions with a clear asymmetrical power relationship with no or little mutual emotional response, where the service provider gives (or sells), and the customer takes (or consumes).

Emotional labour could under certain assumptions be used to describe the everyday business activities of a B & B host, but at the same time it should be acknowledged that lifestyle hospitality is embedded in a different context compared to earlier analyses of emotional labour. The relationship between hosts and guests in the small-scale tourism and hospitality industry features emotions such as joy, disappointment and irritation. For management-driven emotional labour, surplus value is created but it does not necessarily, or even at all, benefit the emotional labourer (Constanti & Gibbs 2005). The case of small-scale tourism and hospitality firms, where the business is built upon lifestyle motifs, is different. Lifestyle businesses do not display the same asymmetrical relationship between provider and guest, as for instance the relationship between air-stewardess and the passengers (Hochschild 1983), and the expectations on professional roles are not scripted from the same kind of management perspective (see also Bærenholdt & Jensen 2009). For the lifestyle entrepreneur, emotions evoked by interactions with customers coincide with the commodification of personal lifestyle values, since togetherness and in-betweenness are not only social values but also commercial ones. The surplus value created then becomes difficult to separate from other kinds of values, economic or otherwise. Emotional performativity among lifestyle entrepreneurs is in other words embedded in different tempo-spatial and social contexts compared to managerial hospitality. Furthermore, the emotional work performed by lifestyle entrepreneurs is commonly discussed in relation to a cultural and economic context where rurality connotes “the good life” through the potential for social embeddedness and environmental stewardship, which are values with great

power of attraction on a tourism market. One important condition underpinning lifestyle-based economic activities is a social discourse encouraging entrepreneurship and the development of small enterprises (Berglund 2007), particularly in rural areas (the Association of Swedish Farmers 2009). The societal support for starting a business may encourage new modes and ideals of self-development and identity construction by making a living through emotional work that differs in important respects from asymmetrical emotional labour. This development contributes to the norms and ideals of lifestyle entrepreneurship, and legitimises the emergence of specific values that are attractive in the hospitality industry.

The Performativity of Distance and Intimacy

We will proceed to examine everyday practices and the business narratives of lifestyle entrepreneurship by an analysis of how personal and commercial values are socially constructed through emotional performativity. We will visit the commercial home of a lifestyle entrepreneur – Lisa – and focus upon how practices characterised by specific emotional qualities are performed (the empirical material has also been used in Andersson Cederholm & Hultman 2010).

The Empirical Study

Lisa runs a B & B combined with an art gallery by the shore of a lake, at the outskirts of a middle-sized town in Southern Sweden. Lisa is in her fifties with grown-up children and grandchildren. She is divorced since some years back and lives by herself in a small and picturesque cottage. We have chosen Lisa as a case study because her narrative and her business are ideal-typical – in the Weberian meaning of the term – of a lifestyle entrepreneur in relation to approximately 20 other informants in rural tourism and hospitality businesses that we have conducted open-ended interviews with during 2006-2008. These interviews were part of a research project with the aim to unpack and analyse practices and processes where formerly non-economic natural and cultural values were transformed into commercial attractions. In this way, lifestyle entrepreneurship can be seen as one form of enactment of how tourism has gained strength as a force of rural economic, social and spatial restructuring. For our analysis, this is important in the sense that it illustrates how hospitality practices order space and social relations – not only in the micro-scale but also in wider societal contexts. Lifestyle entrepreneurs, as an integral part of tourism, are “world-makers” (Hollinshead 2008, 2009) and this in turn is important for an understanding of the meaning of emotional performativity in the hospitality industry.

The interviews have been conducted in an “active” manner in the sense that we have paid attention to *how* respondents give answers and present their narratives, not only to *what* they say (Holstein & Gubrium 1997). In Lisa’s case, she gives primacy to values and qualities such as the small scale, close contact and commu-

nication with guests, the emotional importance of the specific locality, intimate knowledge of surrounding areas, and a focus on issues of care-taking. During the interview with Lisa, she led us around her home, garden and atelier, discussed artefacts – such as objects, environments or vistas – of particular importance for her business and several times she related particular situations and instances to specific places.

Drawing Boundaries and Generating Intimacy

Even though the hospitality performed in Lisa's business is characterised by homeliness, it is still different from the practices of a private home. According to Lisa, warmth and spontaneity should appear to customers as surprises. This is illustrated through anecdotes on how Lisa finds a sofa for the unexpected guest, or lets the guest sleep in her own bed while she herself has to find a bed in the basement. She speaks of warmth and instant familiarity as specific experience values, values that are socially constructed as experiences worth having. This value construction is made possible by a positioning of Lisa's performativity in explicit contrast to a rational and standardised service context common in managerial hospitality firms. Hereby, the complex nature of the commercial home providing intimacy as an experience value becomes evident in how host/guest interactions not only invoke trust, but insecurity and ambivalence as well. One important means of managing this dynamic is through stories of the norm breakers. In Lisa's narrative, two types of deviants appear, representing opposed expectations of the commercial home: those that expect more efficient and standardised services, and those who treat the place too much like their own home. As a way of avoiding the former, Lisa prefers to have personal contact with potential guests before they book rooms. She can then get a feeling for if they are the "wrong" kind of customers and discourage them to come. She avoids the booking system Citybreak™ administered by the local tourist office. Here, guests can book themselves into registered accommodations on a web page. One important reason for not signing up with this system is the lack of first-hand personal contact and thus the lost opportunity to vet visitors. At the other end of the deviant spectrum are guests treating her place too much as their own home. She tells us about the Austrian young men who undressed in the kitchen, the guests who ate grandmother's cake when they failed to realise that Lisa had set the table for her own private family party, or the boys who without announcing brought girls to their rooms, causing embarrassment at breakfast. These examples become amusing anecdotes and show how situations are transformed from potentially threatening to a crucial aspect of the in-betweenness of host and guest through Lisa's performance of sociability: "I sometimes become a mother to my guests". Stories of deviance become a mediator in the boundary work to negotiate and perform private and public time-space.

Distance is also introduced by the temporal and spatial limitations of the commercial home. The relations that unfold between host and guest are framed in a

specific time-space, similar to what Price & Arnould (1999: 12) in their analysis of commercial friendships between hairstylists and their clients, describe as compartmentalised. Their study showed how friendship relations among service provider and client may emerge, but are often limited to the service context. Even though the client and the service provider may develop an intimate relationship of mutual trust and self-disclosure within the servicescape framework, meetings outside this time-space context may be out of the question. Lisa sometimes gets invitations from guests to come and visit them in their homes. She tells us that she might consider visits to her guests, but while saying this she comments with a smile of self-reflexion "...but then they may not recognise me". The existence of this dynamic between intimacy and distance is thus temporally and spatially asymmetrical – it would not appear in the home of the guests. This points towards the overlap between the social and temporal dimensions necessary to evoke distance, intimacy and in-betweenness in commercial hospitality, but in particular the spatial aspect is highlighted.

Producer Experiences

When we ask Lisa what her guests appreciate most, she immediately mentions the locality, the beautiful surroundings, the local attractions found in tourist brochures and the excellent conditions for walks and bicycle tours. It is the kind of attraction categories found in marketing material, standardised and clearly framed as values for the tourist. However, except from this direct question and quick, seemingly ready-made, answer, Lisa's story is full of descriptions of more intangible values, such as the atmosphere, the spontaneous, the personal and the intimate. These values are simultaneously described as values for herself and values for guests. While talking about these values, Lisa juxtaposes the intimate B & B with the scripted and efficient service of a Hilton hotel where the guest knows what to expect, but which lacks the personal touch. Lisa emphasises the personal and the intimate as a value her commercial friends search for. Thus, she recognises its collective and social importance, although she does not frame intimacy as a typical tourist value.

A similar example is the importance of storytelling, where Lisa enjoys telling her guests the stories of her family heritage, how the family industry was founded 300 years ago, how her grandfather built the cottage, and about the furniture and other characteristics of her home. In this way – and in this time-space – personal values become tourist values. She recognises the potential of the commercial value of storytelling, since she describes it as belonging to her standard repertoire for entertaining her guests:

...then when the weather is bad we use to sit in the atelier, I serve coffee and... I have always a lot of suggestions on what to do in the surroundings... and they enjoy hearing about the house and I always have some funny anecdotes about the house, because that is what I think people appreciate with B&B, because when you stay at a hotel, Best Western or Hilton or whatever, you have a nice cleaned room and every-

thing, but you will not have that contact with the local milieu... many people like it because it is so old fashioned and charming, and I tell them about my family's history.

- So you are a real local...?

-Yes [laughter] and I take advantage of that a little bit, with the tourists...

While this practice of storytelling has a clear value for guests, it is also related to Lisa's own collection of experiences. This negotiation of values between boundaries of the subjective and the commercial illustrates value formation as an explicitly social process. It also points to the importance of specific media, or consolidating catalysts, such as generic marketing material and tourist brochures in the social construction of intimacy as a crucial hospitality value.

Lisa's narrative is structured by a clear dissociation from typical strategic, economic thinking when she explains her motives for running a business. Associated with her B & B is an atelier where she paints, sells art and gives painting courses to guests. She describes how she first realised that she might make a living out of her hobby:

I have always painted because I enjoy it, and then, by coincidence, a relative of mine came for a visit and said "Oh, I want to buy that painting! How much does it cost?" "Cost? How should I know?" "I give you 400." "400!? It is much too expensive, it is not possible. It must be a lot cheaper! 200..." "No, I give you 400..." and so it continued, and finally it ended at 300. And then I went out to buy a notebook and I started to make a note whenever I sold a painting. So that was fun!

Lisa describes all her activities, not only her painting and the painting courses, as the result of coincidences. In her narrative, they evolve organically with one incident leading to another. This attitude is accompanied with her reluctance to even start a business in the first place. With certain pride she says that someone else was actually responsible for taking the initiative. One of her daughters brought her to the tourist office to discuss the potential of her business. Presently, her other daughter helps her with marketing. Lisa does not acknowledge a self-identity as a business woman: "I am just the same old bohemian artist as before, I just try to make this work as well /.../ I have no claims on running a 'good business', I just do it by intuition". When she tells about her recent engagement in local tourism business networks and meetings, she is delighted: "I have never been to meetings in my entire life, it was so fun". She also expresses distance towards the institutionalised social obligations that come with professional economic relations: "I just do it [engage herself in networks] as long as it suits my life and schedule". In this way, she makes the social, emotional and economic coincide in time and space. Lisa rejects the ideals of an instrumental attitude towards the market, but at the same time she embodies a new set of market attitudes through her emotional performativity.

Performing Hospitality

These attitudes and ideals are manifested in everyday activities and encounters with guests. Lisa recounts several anecdotes of how she has to improvise to handle unforeseen situations: "...and then there was this girl, she had been bicycling for three days and she said 'do you really not have any room for me?' ... 'OK, then, I say, *I* will sleep down in the basement'". She repeatedly stresses the importance of being flexible and creative and having the ability to improvise, but the way she talks about this quality does not make it appear as a necessary dimension of a professional role. Rather, flexibility and the ability to improvise are expressed as her own personal characteristics and part of her general take on life. To improvise and to handle things spontaneously emerge in her narrative as the ideal way of doing and being. But her anecdotes about being flexible are primarily about being hospitable, of providing intimacy. One way in which Lisa illustrates the overlap between the social and the economic is thus how she performs the time-space boundary between order and sudden chaos:

There was this wedding party ... a Swedish girl was about to marry a boy from Boston and his whole lovely large American Jewish family would come ... and I had made a buffet and served it in the atelier ... and they were so pleased ... and it rained and it rained, like a tropical rain, and everything went alright until I suddenly saw ... I didn't believe my eyes ... how the water started to pour into the room, like a waterfall, there was a blockage in the drainpipe and all the water just poured in ... In that same moment I saw in the corner of my other eye how someone had opened the door towards the sea ... it was so crowded ... and the rain poured in and "sh-t, I have to do something!" So I grabbed some carpets because it was flowing on the floor and I threw towels on the windows and the guests thought that was really funny ... and I asked the guests afterwards how everything had been and they said that "Oh, it was such a wonderful party" "but didn't you notice all the rain coming in...?" "Oh, no, it was so little, it was just fun" [laughter].

The customers were pleased despite the pouring rain and a wet floor, and Lisa's spontaneous actions would in a scripted management context be interpreted as commercial friendship; as a relationship marketing strategy to have satisfied customers although the product was not what the customers originally expected. But in Lisa's case, the personal relationship becomes the primary product, despite – or because – the lack of dimensions deemed critical in managerial hospitality: for Lisa entertaining guests is to a great extent about her own emotional satisfaction. So Lisa rejects economic instrumentality by dissociating herself and her performance from the images and discourses of a commercial and strategic service business, and by emphasising the intrinsic values of the relationship with the guests. However, she still recognises the economic value of the by-coincidence attitude, by emphasising how pleased the guests are: parts of the narrative that features chaotic or unforeseen situations and the subsequent need to improvise are followed by testimonials of satisfaction among guests. In her narrative, economic value is equalled with guest satisfaction that in turn is told interwoven with her own emotional satisfaction. This rejection of economic instrumentality – at the

same time as value is created in social interaction – makes sense as a strategic practice if viewed as emerging from the dynamics between distance and intimacy – the in-between space – structuring the emotional performativity of commercial hospitality.

Conclusion: The Complexity of Intimacy and Distance in Hospitality Businesses

Through an empirical example of lifestyle entrepreneurship we have used the narrative of B & B and gallery owner Lisa as our ideal-typical case to illustrate ways in which attitudes towards the market are simultaneously rejected and shaped. Earlier studies of lifestyle entrepreneurs have concluded that market instrumentality is rejected in favour of personal values as motivating factors for doing business. By viewing lifestyle entrepreneurship from a perspective focusing on emotional performativity and the micro-spatiality of hospitality practices, we conclude that attitudes towards the market are not so straightforward. Through a “by coincidence” attitude and dissociation from the role of a typical rational business manager, as well as through the emphasis on intrinsic values concerning relationships with guests, an instrumental market ethos can be rejected within a commercial context. However, the case shows the emotionally rich space in-between host and guest as an experience value emerging and being consolidated in the everyday practices of a commercialised home. This in-between space is constantly performed around key notions such as flexibility, deviance, intimacy and non-standardisation. Hereby, the lifestyle entrepreneur acts as the embodiment of an ideal on a complex market where personal, social, experiential and economic values fuse together. The emergence of new meanings, practices and ideals of a market and how market relations should be performed becomes indexical to the formation of a hospitality discourse that includes, even demands, intimacy as a critical value even in hyper-commercial settings. This paradox goes beyond rhetoric, and the surplus value created by emotional labour must be contextualized in order to be critically assessed. Managerial emotional labour is conditional upon the separation between the social and economic. From a mechanical perspective, the surplus value created here must be kept pure in the sense that it must not escape the economic sphere and overflow into other areas. The emotional labour performed in lifestyle entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is embedded in a context with different time-space conditions.

The commercial home brings forth the potential for a kind of commercial friendship that is difficult to categorise as a relationship marketing strategy. When the social and economic become tempo-spatially concomitant, emotional labour can become emotionally rewarding in a deep sense since this labour in turn rests on lifestyle values and self-identity. There is also a wider societal discourse of small-scale entrepreneurship, rural restructuring and stewardship issues that in

effect encourages the tempo-spatial conditions for commercial homes and commercial friendship development. The celebration of the kind of values apparent in lifestyle businesses in large-scale hyper-commercial businesses is one, probably important, feature of the emerging hospitality discourse. But to put this in a larger picture, just as a neoliberal place market discourse celebrates values such as creativity and tolerance while neglecting issues of equality and ethics, so does the hospitality discourse celebrate values of intimacy and homeliness while reproducing and strengthening inequalities associated with for example gender and migration. In a more analytical sense, intimacy in hyper-commercial settings can hardly be conceived as anything but an instrumental relationship marketing strategy since the crucial aspect of distance – resulting from boundary work in situations where the social and the economic overlap in time and space – is hardly possible to perform outside the commercial home. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine how management-driven hospitality businesses could reach strategic goals associated with small-scale lifestyle entrepreneurship without scripting distance, intimacy and in-betweenness. This analysis has taken one step in unpacking this paradox by illustrating that commercial friendship is a more complex issue than what has been acknowledged so far in the hospitality literature. It seems probable that a continued discussion of the social, temporal and spatial complexity of commercial friendship will have bearings on the cultural understanding of emotions, identity and lifestyle values on the one hand, and business strategy, value creation and markets on the other.

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Notes

- 1 See for example the Swedish Rural Network (2010) for an institutional framing of this discourse. The network is a government-led public-private partnership whose aim is to facilitate the implementation of the national Rural Development Programme, where the diversification of rural farming businesses towards offering experiences on tourism and hospitality markets is encouraged (see the Government Offices of Sweden 2010).

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Effective Emotions: The Enactment of a Work Ethic in the Swedish Meeting Industry

By Erika Andersson Cederholm

Abstract

The meeting industry – an encompassing term for services related to various kinds of professional meetings, from mega-conventions to the ordinary work meetings – is increasingly consolidated and legitimated as a specific sector in the service industry. New professions such as meeting designers, meeting facilitators and meeting consultants are emerging, promoting new knowledge in this field. By focussing on processes and social interaction, and highlighting emotional dimensions of meetings, these professions pave the way for new modes of conceptualising and practising professional relationships. The intangible, emotional and playful dimensions of social interactions are promoted as effective means to achieve economic goals, thus highlighting a professional ideal that is here called “effective emotions”. The aim of this article is to show how the work ethic promoted by the meeting industry encourages new intersections, and tensions, between the idealisation of the tangible/measurable/rational on the one hand and the intangible/emotional/magical on the other hand, and between working life and intimate spheres. Through a discourse analysis of a Swedish corporate meeting magazine, it is shown how the distinction between work and leisure is dissolved in this specific work culture, and by this, it is discussed how the meeting profession acts as a normative regulator by reinforcing ideal ways of being and interacting with others. Creativity, personal growth, reflexivity and flexibility are enacted as idealised personal assets as well as moral imperatives in the discourse of the meeting profession and through the practices of various meeting techniques, thus reinforcing not merely a professional ethic but cultural ideals of being as a person as well. It is also suggested that this reinforcement may, under certain circumstances, turn into its opposite and undermine the promoted ideals, thus pointing at the importance to pinpoint the dynamic and situated tension between economic rationality and emotional intensity.

Keywords: Work ethic, emotions, meeting industry, discourse

Introduction

The meeting industry in Sweden - an encompassing term for services related to various kinds of professional meetings, from mega-conventions to the ordinary work meetings - is increasingly institutionalised, consolidated and legitimated as a specific and important sector in the service industry. One example is the emergence and growth of international associations such as Meeting Professionals International (MPI), initiated in the US in 1972 and established in Sweden 1994. Furthermore, there are new media covering the specific interests of this industry, such as the Swedish corporate magazine *Meetings International*, established 2003 and some years later launched on an international market. Simultaneously, as the industry is increasingly consolidated and legitimated as a specific sector of the service industry, and particularly the tourism industry, there is a growing complexity within the sector. One example is the large amount of meeting professions emerging on a new service market, with a growing emphasis on the value of social interactions. Meeting designers, meeting planners, meeting facilitators and meeting consultants are just some examples of new professional roles, promoting new knowledge on how to stage a good and efficient meeting.

In the professionalisation efforts of this “new” meeting industry, professional ideals, norms and practices are highlighted and reinforced. Despite a range of professional roles and types of meetings in the industry, I will use the singular term “the meeting profession” to elucidate the discursive formation of a professional culture embodying a specific work ethic. This professional culture conveys values and recommendations on the instrumental aspects of practices, that is, specific techniques to evoke the ideal meeting, as well as on ways of being and relating in social interaction. There is an emphasis on creativity and reflexivity as personal assets, and authenticity and intimacy feature the idealised social interaction. On the one hand there is a strong concern for economic efficiency through the development of new meeting techniques, on the other hand ideals of playfulness and emotional intensity are highlighted, and the intrinsic value of social interaction is idealised. Hence, a distinction between the rational/cognitive and the emotional is reinforced, simultaneously as these rationales are being intertwined in the culture of the meeting profession.

The aim of this article is to show how the work ethic promoted by the meeting industry encourages new intersections, and tensions, between professional and personal roles, working life and intimate spheres. By introducing the concept “effective emotions” I will highlight how ideals of economic rationality and emotionality are intertwined in a knowledge-intensive service industry and how discursive practices in these types of professions may reinforce certain ways of being in professional as well as personal relationships. Whilst the meeting industry is paving the ground for new service markets, there are not merely new professions arising, but conceptualisations and ways of thinking about and practising services and

professional encounters emerge that reinforce ways of being and relating to others. The meeting profession is thus an agent of change, a catalyst in an increasingly significant service economy. The meeting profession embodies both change and stability and highlights cultural values, social norms and work ethics not merely in a growing meeting industry, but in a cultural economy where the intersection between commercial and professionalised services on the one hand, and the non-commercial and non-professionalised on the other, is vividly negotiated and complex (du Gay & Pryke 2002). In the following section, I will set the frame for my analysis by discussing an emerging work ethic and new capitalist “spirit” (Boltanski & Chiapello 2005) in Western societies that emphasises creativity, flexibility and self-development. I have outlined two dimensions that I suggest play a crucial role in this development: the commodification of social relationships and the articulated increased significance of emotions at work. These two dimensions have a general significance in Western societies today, but are highlighted in certain industries and management ideologies, such as the meeting profession.

The Emergence of a Work Ethic of Self-Development

Commodification of Social Relationships

In the emerging Swedish meeting profession, there is a growing focus on social interactions, not merely as by-products or means to an end in the service encounter, but as a product of its own. In the discursive formation of the meeting profession, the importance of social interaction is emphasised and juxtaposed to the “old” authoritarian one-way communication between meeting participants, as in the following statement by the chief editor in *Meetings International*, an influential Swedish corporate meeting magazine:

Now the time has finally come for dialogue and interaction and we have once and for all put an end to meetings as a medium for one-way communication. Now we have to get used to lots of new specialists and competencies to be able to engage people with our message – most welcome interaction-designers, stylists, anthropologists and scenographers! (*Meetings International* 2008, no. 28: 63, my translation)

The focus on social interactions, framed as an objective with a value of its own, in contrast with a previous, presumed ignorance concerning the interactive dimension of meetings, highlights the intrinsic value of social interaction. In this sense, social interaction as it is articulated in the meeting profession has similarities with the notion of sociability, a concept coined by the sociologist Georg Simmel (1949). Sociability refers to the intrinsic value of social interaction or, more specifically, the play-form of sociality. Although the world of the meeting business, emphasising values such as efficiency and cost-effectiveness, seems quite remote from the intrinsic values of Simmel’s sociability, it highlights a tension between the autotelic dimension of playfulness and the instrumental efficiency of the in-

dustry. The meeting profession enacts ideals of reflection and egalitarian and non-authoritarian communication, which, in line with Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) study of the changes of the capitalist culture at the end of the 20th century, is typical of the anti-hierarchical ethos highlighted in management discourses of the 1990s. In order to reach this ideal, the meeting industry emphasises the importance to stimulate all senses in order to create a sense of here and now. Particularly in the event-oriented type of meetings, the context is explicitly framed as experience-oriented and playful, illustrated in the following quote from *Meetings International*:

This time the sales manager Hans-Åke Antoniussion chose a different type of context for the meeting. During three days, 32 colleagues were all gathering on a camping ground in Vaxholm outside Stockholm. Dressed in jogging-suits. Staying in caravans. On Svensson Svensson's camping ground (Emdén, *Meetings International* 2006, no. 15: 40, my translation).

The sales manager continues: “- It makes a great difference when everybody has the same clothes. We become equals. You mix the group but everybody still look the same. It is like being in a sauna.” (ibid., my translation). Although most corporate meetings are not framed in this obviously playful context, the focus on interactivity and process in the meeting context is assumed to encourage an egalitarian social structure and evoke reflexivity. The choreographed meeting thus embodies a ritualised playful aspect, like a liminoid out-of-the-ordinary situation (Turner 1969, 1978). The play-form of sociality is thus visible in this type of meeting. However, although the meeting itself may have the autotelic aspects significant of the play, the overall objective of the meeting industry is to satisfy the customer's seemingly rational motives, implying more cost-effective and efficient meetings.

This commodified sociability, highlighted by the professional culture of the Swedish meeting industry, is one example of a more widespread phenomenon in Western societies where relationships and interactions are increasingly commodified and ascribed a value in themselves (Wittel 2001; Rojek 2010). In a society where the service industry is becoming increasingly important, social competencies and “people skills” are not only seen as a personal bonus, but also necessary in order to function as a professional. This is in line with what Andreas Wittel (2001) calls a “network sociality”, where the art of socialising, particularly in the in-between spaces of work and leisure such as networking at conferences, dinner parties and at the pub, is perceived as crucial for success in both work and non-work contexts. Since these skills are presumed to be tacit and highly personal, it is the sphere of play and leisure that primarily provide the basis for this type of learning. Consequently, leisure-oriented activities are seen as an investment in personal development where we can develop social and emotional competence in order to enhance work performances (Heelas 2002; McRobbie 2002; Rojek 2010).

Although far from all meetings advocated by the Swedish meeting profession are framed in such a leisure-oriented and playful manner as the teambuilding ac-

tivities referred to above, it is a professional culture that emphasises both emotional and cognitive/rational skills. Through the concept “effective emotions” I will highlight the aforementioned tendencies and discuss how professional ideals in the cultural economy of services are intertwined with the ideals of personal development. More specifically, I will analyse how a professional discourse blurs the boundaries between work and leisure, between the market and the personal life sphere, and thus reinforces professional and cultural ideals.

Emotions at Work

Previous studies on the intersection between the personal sphere and the market have developed into different lines of thought. One is the work on emotional labour, a concept discussed by Airlie Hochschild (1983), indicating the emotional work involved in service work to create satisfied customers (Hochschild 1983; Anderson 1993; Ashforth & Humphrey 1993). Additionally, Hochschild (2003) discusses a general tendency in late modern societies of blurred distinctions between commercial spheres and intimate personal life through the commodification of services surrounding households and intimate life. A similar line of thought is Viviana Zelizer’s studies on the role of money in intimate relationships (1994, 2005), where social negotiations that are creating distinctions between the commercial and non-commercial life sphere are in focus. By focussing on the monetary value that emerges in the non-commercial life sphere, such as the cost of non-paid service work, the norms related to the boundary between intimate life and the market are brought into light (Zelizer 2005). Another similar, albeit slightly different, distinction that has been discussed and critically analysed is the one between work and leisure. The pertinence of such a distinction in the capitalist culture of today, has been called into question since we all seem to engage in a “labour of leisure” (Rojek 2010) where the notion of “being creative” encompasses both work and leisure and is dominated by a logic of economic rationality (Banks 2009). This implies, for instance, that the instrumental focus on self-development and emotional competence in our so-called “free time”, corresponds with a similar preoccupation during our working hours (see also Wittel 2001).

The discussion of the distinction between work and leisure calls forth the notion of work ethic, that is, the values and cultural meanings of work. Organisational studies on emotional labour in creative work have pointed at a dominating work ethic where the notion of flexibility connotes values of freedom and lack of rigidity, and the line between work and leisure is thus transgressed. However, the flip side of the coin is the precariousness of such “free” working conditions, which may reinforce hegemonic social structures (Ross 2003 & 2008; Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2008). For example, the notion of “free choice” when it comes to working long hours in knowledge-intensive work that is often perceived as personally rewarding, is not only an issue of individual choice, but normatively embedded and gendered in the organizational culture (Grugulis et al. 2000; Lewis 2003). The

historical conditions and social consequences of a work ethic promoting flexibility has been thoroughly analysed by Richard Sennett (1999), who argues that a neo-liberal political and economic culture that expresses contempt for routinized work and praises creativity, individual self-determination and short-term job-commitments, will undermine long-term commitments regarding personal relationships. The result, according to Sennett, is a “corrosion of character” since our possibilities for building long-term personal trust is undermined.

Although the development foreseen by Sennett may not be equally pertinent to the entire work-force in a society, the ideals of flexibility, creativity and self-determination are, however, relatively wide-spread and accepted in Western culture. That is, if we see these ideals as dimensions of a “labour of leisure” in Rojek’s sense (2010), implying that we engage in self-management and self-development in order to lead a creative, self-determinant life, beyond routinisation and boredom (see also Goldschmidt Salomon 2005). One example of this is how the tradition of preparing oneself to get a job has been displaced by the notion of a “building a career”, and how it has become increasingly important for people to incorporate private and leisure oriented experiences into their notion of a career (McRobbie 2002; Salomonsson 2005). In this sense, the formation of a professional life is also the formation of a subject (Salomonsson 2005: 125). It is thus not merely important what we may accomplish as professionals, but how we *are* as persons (Heelas 2002). By showing that we take responsibility for our personal development by being creative and flexible, we are presumed to be more attractive on a labour market.

Although I have depicted some more generic tendencies in the cultural economy of Western societies, a work ethic that idealises creativity, flexibility and self-determination may be more significant in some professional cultures than others. The corporate cultures and management discourses and practices of the so called new economy has been analysed as particularly prone to embrace novelty and innovation, often with the unconventional pairing of the hard facts of economic calculation and psychological and emotional values, sometimes wrapped in an attractive package of playfulness (Löfgren & Willim 2005; Thrift 2001, 2002). Nigel Thrift (2002), for example, has shown that many companies today are under constant pressure of measuring performance and innovation, which evokes specific forms of management ideologies and practices. Thrift argues that although innovation has always been an important dimension of business growth, what we see in many businesses today is a greater emphasis on the prerequisites for fostering creativity. Consequently, creativity emerges to a larger extent than previously as a value in itself. Creativity in this sense implies that companies do not only seek employees who accomplish tasks that may lead to innovation, but they want creative individuals. Furthermore, the working subject wants to be creative as well, not primarily in order to fulfil work tasks, but to fulfil him/herself. Informed by Foucault’s notion of governmentality (Foucault 1991), that is, how modes of

governing becomes self-governing by the subject's themselves (see also Miller & Rose 1990), Thrift points at specific techniques or "performative spaces" (2002) that hasten the fusion between management ideology and the ideology of self-improvement. One is visual communication and visual rhetoric through new communication technology, the other is through managing the body through emotionally triggering events and performances that heighten social interaction, and a third are the techniques and prerequisites for mobility and travel that may enhance circulation. These techniques are particularly pertinent and visible in certain industries, especially those that, according to Thrift, characterise themselves as "fast", that is, those who wish to present themselves as being in a permanent stage of change. It is also particularly significant in companies with a highly educated management, especially human resource management preoccupied with "fashioning the self" (2002:207).

The meeting professionals presented in this study, through various portraits in the Swedish magazine *Meetings International*, are usually self-employed consultants, and many of them may be called entrepreneurs, emphasising innovation and growth (Johannesson 2005). Several of them actively annihilate the distinction between personal lifestyle and work, and are in many ways part of the creative workforce where flexibility and individual freedom are highly valued (Ross 2003 & 2008; Hesmondhalgh & Baker 2008). The meeting profession may thus be studied as a kind of creative work typical of the new service economy. However, since this type of profession focuses on social interaction per se, it highlights a phenomenon in late modern societies where the notion of social interactions becomes a product on its own terms, and shows how the modes in which we relate to others are deeply intertwined in market relations. As I will try to show in my analysis, the enhancement of psychological and emotional dimensions of meetings, and the promotion of humanistic and artistic knowledge in the new meeting profession, do not replace rational/cognitive modes of calculating business, but these rationales are intertwined in both management ideologies and ideals of being as a person and a professional. To illustrate the tension between these rationales, the outline of the analytical section of the article, "the enactment of a meeting profession", is divided in three main parts: "Techniques and materialities" highlights the measurable and "rational" aspects of the industry, "Interaction and being" discusses the emotional and elusive dimensions, and the third part, "the practices of being" is a synthesis of the two that focuses on how ideals and practices in "how to do" manuals enact a form of "how to be".

Methodology: The Meeting Magazine as a Discursive Medium

The magazine *Meetings International* (the name of the owner organisation is Meetings International Publishing Ltd.) was launched in 2003 as the first Swedish magazine focusing primarily on the meeting industry and its growing professions.

It publishes approximately six issues per year and is the main forum for the Swedish association Meeting Professionals International (MPI) (www.meetingsinternational.se). As a corporate magazine, its readers are presumed to consist of professionals in the industry that, except from the “new” professions described above, includes all service producers in the meeting industry and their customers and potential customers. According to my analysis, the advertisers seem to be primarily conference organisers such as hotels. The magazine aspires to cover the latest trends in the industry, with many portraits of leading personalities in the profession. As the sole magazine of its kind in Sweden, it is an influential mediating factor in an institutionalisation and professionalisation process. Meetings International Publishing Ltd. has a newsletter and a web site as well, including a bookstore. The bookstore’s offerings are relevant for the analysis since it exhibits those books that, by the magazine, is considered to be interesting to the market in focus. The magazine has, from the start until issue 23/2007 been titled *Meetings International – your first lifestyle meetings magazine* (however, since issue 24/2008 changed to *Meetings International – your first meetings management magazine*). The first title associates it with other life style oriented magazines such as travel-, leisure-, health-, design- and garden-magazines. This life-encompassing aspiration corresponds well with the content, and the shift in titles does not seem to have changed the style and discursive content of the magazine. When it comes to issues of work ethic and cultural ideals expressed in the magazine, I do not see any significant changes during the period of five years that encompasses my document analysis, which includes 20 issues of the magazine between January 2005 and April 2009.

I have focused predominantly on this specific magazine in my study of the meeting profession, albeit aware of the lack of nuances that for instance interviews with meeting professionals may provide. However, the aspiration of being in the front highlights certain values in a distinct and discursive manner, which makes the magazine appropriate for a discourse analysis of an emerging professional culture. In line with Foucault’s (1993) discussion of the exclusive power of discourses, I will focus on the discursive formation of ideals and values, highlighted in a normative and thus exclusive manner, making the nuances of a complex and multifaceted professional culture less visible. The professional culture of the meeting industry displays similarities with a “doctrine” or educational culture (Foucault 1993:31) which ties subjects to certain manners of speaking and writing and exclude other discursive forms. The doctrine, according to Foucault, executes a double submission: the speaking subjects are submitted to the discourse and the discourse is submitted to the group of speaking subjects (ibid.).

One example of an ideal highlighted and promoted in the discourse of the meeting profession is novelty. Novelty, trendiness and being in the front are three notions that capture the spirit of the *Meetings International* magazine. The spirit of novelty is in line with the nervousness and “newness” that Löfgren and Willim

(2005) have distinguished as typical of the corporate culture of the new economy. Novelty in the meeting industry is not merely about covering the latest news and trends in the business, but also about conveying the profession as a whole as new, which is important in order to distinguish it from previous and other professional cultures. This does not imply, however, that the business of meetings is new. Hotels, travel agencies and transportation companies have for a long time provided services related to meetings, such as conferences and congresses. What is new is rather the discursive use of the notion of novelty and the narrative juxtaposition between the old and the new. One expression recurrently used in the magazine is “from logistics to content”, implying that the “old”, or rather “obsolete”, meeting industry was solely preoccupied with practicalities such as transport, accommodation, food, meeting rooms and technical facilities, juxtaposed to the “new” meeting industry that provides services more related to the meeting itself, everything from staging the setting or room in specific ways in order to trigger the senses needed to be triggered to achieve the goals, towards entering the meeting process itself, such as preparations for the agenda and coaching the customers to reflect upon and sharpen the focus of the meeting. Furthermore, the “old” type of communication in meetings is portrayed as authoritarian, hierarchic and non-creative, whilst the new type of communication emphasises mutuality and transgression of fixed traditional roles. Overall, there is an emphasis on processes and social interaction, and also an emphasis on the emergence of a new market, hitherto regarded as a black box in the meeting industry, but now discovered and promoted.

A discourse of a market does not only represent ideals, but enacts the market as well. However, when it comes to the notion of being in the front, it also implies the possibility, or risk, that the meeting profession is far ahead of the market. The focus on experiences and new dramaturgical devices in staging meetings may provide more than the market is ready to buy (see Acar et al. 2007), and the variety of new professions may still be unknown to the customers. Even though the gap between supply and demand is not specifically articulated or debated in the magazine, the ambition to narrow the gap is expressed through the persuasive tone in the magazine, where the new professions are promoted in an educating manner. The discursive power of the meeting profession thus includes not only what is being said, but also how it is said. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the discourse of novelty may reinforce certain work ethics and ideals and practices of a market, but simultaneously, if the emphasis on novelty makes the industry seem too avant-garde or even obsolete (if newness becomes a cliché), it may undermine or change the market. In the subsequent analysis, I will point at the discursive practices of the meeting profession by highlighting ideals and norms discernible through statements by the editors, personal portraits of professionals in the field and their work and publications, advertisements, and reportage of new techniques. The images and the text are included in the discursive practices of the meeting profession, but I will also discuss the specific meeting practices and techniques

that are referred to in the magazine. Although I have not analysed how these practices are performed in practice, they are referred to in a discursive manner in the magazine and may point at the ritual techniques or formalised practices that are important in order to sustain a discourse (Foucault 1993: 28).

The Enactment of a Meeting Profession

Techniques and Materialities

Although the meeting profession dissociates from the “old” practicalities surrounding meetings and emphasises the “black box”, that is, the elusive social interactions and processes within the meeting itself, these elusive matters are being concretised and materialised. One way of materialising is an emphasis on communication technology. This is not merely about making the computers work smoothly at the meeting, but through technical means trigger the meeting participants’ presumed capability of simultaneous sensory stimuli that may facilitate interaction. Thus, the ideal seems to be that the technique should be used not merely as a simple tool but as a catalyst for creativity and reflexivity. In promoting new technique, there is an obvious dissociation from a “previous” preoccupation with the technique as such, while “now” focussing on its potential in social interaction, illustrated in the following quote:

For many years there has been some kind of imagined threat that we will stop having personal meetings. Instead, we will look at each other through our computers and, if we are lucky, have so called video-meetings in a studio. Simultaneously as the technique has improved, the technical development has shown that we have even more reasons to meet in real life. Because one simple rule still prevails: you cannot share a beer on the Internet. The new system Tandberg Telepresence T3 is designed to give the meeting participants the experience of sharing the same table. To create the best possible meeting-experience, the company has contracted a social anthropologist which has co-operated with the company’s development team and customer representatives. Together, they have investigated the importance of design, colours and the furniture for the meeting. (*Meetings International* 2008, no. 28: 84, my translation)

Quite typical is the emphasis on holistic knowledge, where unconventional knowledge in this industry, here represented by the anthropologist, signifies novelty as well as legitimates the focus on technology by recognising the importance of the “human touch” in professional meeting situations. Another mode of materialising the meeting profession is by emphasising the physics and biology of the meeting experience. Personal portraits of professionals with specific knowledge in this field – such as specialists in lighting design – represent this. One example is the interview with a professional in architectural lighting design, working as a researcher and teacher at one of the technical universities in Sweden. In the interview he talks about the two processes related to light that affects a meeting: the psychological and the physiological. He elaborates on the physiological aspects, informing about hormones which affect both sleep and stress and are related to the

type of light we are surrounded by. The reader is thus informed by his knowledge of expertise in predominantly the biological and technical aspects of lighting, but we are also informed about the multidisciplinary character of his knowledge and career and, as he tells us in the interview, the novelty of the disciplinary field he is working in. (*Meetings International* 2008, no. 25: 71-77).

The portrait of the lighting architect is merely one example of several professional portraits of technical and biological expertise. Another example is a series of articles called “Brain-check”, on how our brains work in everyday working life (see for example *Meetings International* 2008 no. 25, 27, 28). One of the articles is a portrait of a woman who has developed an expertise on the role of food in wellness and how the brain is affected by what we eat. Typical of the professionals interviewed, her career seems rather diverse but successful with a clear tone of entrepreneurial spirit:

Ten years ago Helene (...) finished working as the director of one of the largest multimedia companies in Sweden. Since then she has established two (names in original) publishing companies, written books, purchased a printing company, been educated in acupuncture in China and is just about to finish medical school at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden (*Meetings International* 2008, no. 28: 77, my translation).

The journalist continues:

It is easy to see a clear line in Helene’s (...) life and work. She has left a more stressful life to a life with more harmony. Today she focuses health and well-being in working life, which she is currently writing a book about (*ibid.*, my translation).

The article continues with Helene’s specific knowledge on food and how it affects the brain and our working capacity, and Helene has several concrete advises on what to do and not to do. Although Helene’s field of expertise seems very multifaceted and holistic considering her background, the article focuses on specific material and biological matters:

Scientific research shows that everyone who is hungry makes more mistakes in memory- and attention-tests. – Hungry people are also more irritated and some become aggressive – this concerns especially men since their amount of testosterone rises, the nerves affecting smell are activated and we are affected by colours; red stimulates hunger and blue reduces it. (*ibid.*, my translation).

The article continues with similar information and corresponding advice, related to working capacity in general, but also on how to make a good meeting environment using food as a specific meeting device.

Another example of an article in the same “brain-series” is an interview with a man who is both psychologist and architect (*Meetings International* 2008, no. 27). Typical of the professional intersection of these professionals, the emergence of a niche-product that seems tailor-made for the meeting industry is discernible. This professional has specialised in how colours affect us: “Those who choose a room with right colours may enhance creativity, fighting spirit, speed, security and many other things – but also the contrary with the wrong colours.” (*ibid.*: 85, my translation). The economic potential of this kind of knowledge is persuasive:

Colours are a natural part of our lives and they affect us whether we like or not. A modern company cannot afford to ignore it. It is not enough to reach mediocrity in the meeting industry; the company has to find the niches and reach for excellence. (ibid.: 92, my translation).

The personal portraits above express the emergence of professional niches related to specific knowledge of expertise. The kind of knowledge illustrated in these examples is oriented towards the natural sciences, and when human behaviour and interactions are mentioned, it is framed in a behaviouristic and biological oriented tradition of knowledge. This is not merely related to the fact that two of the portraits mentioned belong to a particular series about the human brain, but the positivistic aspects of human behaviour is highlighted in the magazine, that is, the observable and presumed measurable aspects of human life. One possible explanation is that the measurable is less elusive and may also have a legitimate effect on the emerging professional fields in this industry. Furthermore, there is an overarching and pressing demand within the industry, which now and then is articulated as one of the greatest challenges in the sector, which is to find the adequate means to measure the economic effects of meetings. Return on investment, shortened ROI in the magazine, is the overarching rationale for the industry. Thus, the measurable, in all aspects, is portrayed as a positive loaded value, which is closely connected to the observable materialities of meetings.

Interaction and Being

I have argued that the “black box” of interactions and processes – the meeting itself – is increasingly being illuminated through the emerging meeting profession. The meeting itself has turned into a professional field and a new knowledge area, wherein the materialities and measurable practices of the meeting professionals are highlighted. However, there is a seemingly opposite direction in the enactment of the meeting as valuable in itself, which is rather concerned with norms and morals of being, in private life as well as professionally.

The cultural norms and ideals conveyed in the magazine, seems to encourage a transgression between the personal and professional self, between the private sphere and working life. Indeed, as mentioned previously, the logo of the magazine was until no. 23 in 2007 titled *Meetings International – your first lifestyle meetings magazine*. Several of the personal portraits of professionals in this field convey an image of people whose professional careers are directed by their personal interests and lifestyles. The portraits often show how these people have reached a junction in life, and how existential quests of choosing direction has paved the way for a new professional career. They often seem self-determined and creative as well, with a clear entrepreneurial spirit, crossing traditional professional fields.

The notion of creativity is thus a highly regarded value in the emerging meeting culture. The professionals are portrayed as innovative, introducing a new spirit to the meeting industry, and their multifaceted careers and their flexible approach to

life are regarded as an important means to creativity. One professional who runs a consultant company called The Idea Laboratory describes himself:

I am a person who thinks you become creative by mixing. I started (my career) as a student in literature, then I entered the Drama Institute to become a film director, now I study for a Master at the School of economics, and I also work as a sport journalist on the side while running my own company. I think it keeps my head clear. This may not be a recipe for everybody, but it works for me, so I won't be bored... (Meetings International 2007, no. 23: 28, my translation).

Not merely the meeting professionals, but the products, the meetings themselves, have to be staged and choreographed in order to enhance creativity. The word "creativity" is used repeatedly, both as a naturalised, taken for granted personal asset among the professionals or as a self evident buzz-word in commercials, or as a scientific quest, represented by portraits of professionals who are researching the topic, for example the connection between place and creativity. Successful leadership is presumed to enhance the meeting participants' creativity. The following statement is from a guest article written by Jan Rollof, an academic who is the author of several books on the topic of creativity. Facilitating creativity is not only desirable, but even framed as a moral imperative, according to Jan Rollof:

Is it possible to plan creative meetings? Yes – you *can* and you *should* do it. You can be even more explicit and say that you have a *responsibility* and *obligation* to do it (emphasis in original). Meetings take time and effort and cost money. In the long run you cannot afford not to use the energy that good meetings may evoke. (Meetings International, 2007, no. 21: 45, my translation)

Being creative is often mentioned in line with notions of personal development and individual responsibility, implying that the ideal of being creative may act as a moral imperative as well. The three notions of creativity, personal development and individual responsibility are a complex whole that is presumed to benefit the organisation as well as personal relationships. In the personal portraits as well as in other type of articles, this complex whole is emerging not merely as instrumental assets for making meetings more efficient and thus more profitable, but as ideal ways of being and relating to others as a human being. The ideal of personal development is intimately connected to individual responsibility through the ideal of reflexivity. An ideal meeting should encourage reflexivity as well as your whole way of being. The blurred distinction between professional and personal relationships is discernible throughout the magazine by the use of a discourse recognisable in the therapeutic professions but generalised in a common and popular discourse on self-development, in line with what Chris Rojek calls "the labour of leisure" (2010). For instance, one columnist, the professional psychologist Hans Gordon, compares meetings in professional life with personal encounters in almost every issue of the magazine. Another example is the following statement under the heading "The personal meeting – *what a possibility*" by the editor in chief:

In the personal meeting you communicate with all your senses. It is the meeting that provides you with an image of a person, it is the meeting that provide you with new contacts and make relationships grow. We share common experiences. It is when people meet that new ideas are arise, and isn't that right that when ideas come true we grow as human beings? (Meetings International 2005, no. 6: 9, my translation).

The quote above implies that the previous type of meeting, in the "old" meeting industry, was *not* personal, and therefore, less efficient. Thus, *being there* as a person, involved with all your senses and not merely a distant professional in the conventional sense, may lead to professional as well as personal growth. *Being there with all your senses* is a formulation known from the experience discourse in leisure travel as well, common in marketing of tourist destinations and attractions, illustrated in the following advertisement by a conference organiser:

Important meeting! With yourself.

In the forest, you are closer to everything. To yourself and to life. Here you and your colleagues will have the time to reflect and absorb the majestic sighing in a hundred years old tree-top. Discover that you are able to manage several days without mobile phone, red light or café latte. Instead you will absorb the smells of lingonberry and chanterelle... (Meetings International 2005, no. 6: 35, my translation).

The notion of "being there with all your senses" is closely related to the notion of authenticity, which in tourism is often represented by more or less essentialistic aspects of the physical surroundings, such as originality, history, localness, sometimes transferred to primitivistic aspects of the local population (see Andersson Cederholm 1999). However, being there with all your senses rather indicate an existential dimension of authenticity, a sense of wholeness and presence (Andersson Cederholm 1999; Wang 1999; Taylor 2000; Hom Cary 2004; Steiner & Reisinger 2005).

Furthermore, the dimension of authenticity that is articulated and promoted by the meeting profession corresponds quite well with Ning Wang's (1999) notion of inter-relational existential authenticity. Inter-relational authenticity implies an intellectual and/or emotional intimacy with others, whom in leisure tourism may be either your travel companion such as your partner, family member or friend, or people you meet on your journey, for example locals or other travellers. Although the corporate meeting context is professional, intimacy is an implicit dimension in the notion of a "personal" meeting, where we meet with open senses, with no pre-determined hierarchical order or hidden agenda: "it is only a self-conscious and present person that is capable of leading a meeting without hidden agendas. The authenticity of the leader evokes the authenticity of the participants" (Hörberg, Meetings International 2008, no. 25: 82, my translation). This author, Per Hörberg, has presented a series of articles in the magazine on the topic of authenticity in meetings, and he has also written a book on the same topic called "To Really Meet" (Hörberg 2007, my translation). Being present in the meeting, with your intellectual as well as emotional self, is crucial for a successful meeting, according to Hörberg: "The meeting that we find interesting, in our personal life or

at work, is about the same thing. That those who meet really meet. It is not until we are totally present and able to show our emotions simultaneously as we talk about something, that we can achieve this.” (Hörberg, *Meetings International* 2008, no. 25: 82, my translation) and “The secret of a meeting is that you and I always departure from ourselves when we meet others... To dissolve you own obstacles are like coming home to yourself. It is not until I am close to myself, that I can be present in a meeting. To be present means to be close”. (Kellerman, quoting Hörberg’s book, *Meetings International* 2007, no. 22: 40, my translation). Again, the blurred distinction between life and work is highlighted. Roger Kellerman, who is the publisher of *Meetings International*, continues his review of the book:

Per Hörberg is the leader of meetings that develop people as well as companies. He is coaching organizations, management and individuals to focus on essentials. To the company and the management group this may lead to more involvement with the common goals. To the individual, it may lead to a more meaningful life with a better balance between efficient work and a relaxing leisure time. (*ibid.*, my translation)

The ideals of existential authenticity, and the ideals of being and interacting as a professional in general and in the meeting industry in particular, thus highlights specific ideals of being as a person - a creative and reflecting individual striving for personal growth, preferably with an entrepreneurial spirit of transgressing conventional boundaries while pursuing your personal interests. This is in line with Foucault’s (1991) notion of governmentality, which Nigel Thrift discusses in relations to management ideologies and practices in the corporate cultures of the new economy (2001, 2002) and Karen Lisa Goldschmidt Salamon’s discussion of the “logic of the inside-out management” (2005: 53). According to Salamon, this logic implies the development of a new positive self that operates by forms of subjectification, where the individual is encouraged to “take ownership” of his/her own “path to success” (2005: 54). This type of management ideology attacks routine processes of work that are assumed to be outdated and mechanical, instead emphasising on notions of authenticity and emotional intensity.

Through Hörberg’s book and the articles by him or about his book, the existential dimension of authenticity is articulated and shaped in an intellectual discussion. Nevertheless, this type of authenticity has an elusive character and in contrast with more essentialistic images of authenticity, often related to nature, this type of authenticity is more often articulated, and particularly in commercials, in words and phrases such as “magic” and “something just happens when people meet”. This elusive and magical aspect of meetings seems quite far from the technical and measurable dimensions I presented earlier. However, although the elusive character of existential authenticity may be articulated in intellectual reflections or as emotional triggers in commercials, when it comes to more practical matters, that is, how to design a good meeting, the elusiveness is quickly transformed into specific techniques, or “performative spaces” (Thrift 2002). In the following section, I have called these “the practices of being”. They are seemingly

very simple, practical methods of meeting in the “right” way - or implicitly - being in the “right” way.

The Practices of Being

One type of technique used in order to interact in an idealised way is to change the conventional staging of the meeting room. In a portrait of the former therapist and now meeting coach Tom MacDonald who is currently working on a book entitled “Big heart, big profits – unlocking the power of love at work”, he says in the interview that he is surprised that so many meeting organisers still use the setting of a classroom, where the participants sit by desks which they put their papers on:

If you are going to talk to each other, you can't sit in a row, next to one or another. If you want to be creative you must have a round-table discussion. Personally, I think it gives the participants opportunity to hide behind the desks, so I usually suggest they take them away.” (Meetings International 2008, no. 27: 70, my translation).

These simple means are not only used in staging the meeting, but also in the meeting process itself. The methods used in the process are often structured according to different stages of the interactive and analytical process. Two consultants, introduced in the magazine, who have developed two methods now widely used among companies all over Europe, say that they think that their methods are actually very basic. It is about “to release common energy in an organisation or a meeting” (Meetings International 2005, no. 10: 43, my translation). They describe one of their methods as divided into five stages; in the first stage the participants are encouraged to individually think about a specific question, a stage called “spontaneous thinking”. The next step is to discuss the issue in pairs. In the third step the thoughts from all participants are openly exposed, in the fourth step these are ranked according to what is closest to the aim of the meeting, and in the last stage all the discussions are categorised according to various themes (ibid.: 44). This method is an example of many techniques that in similar ways are compartmentalised in stages, and the entire meeting process is framed in a specific temporal and spatial frame, often according to a very strict time schedule and led by a consultant/instructor.

Other types of techniques, less formalised, are oriented towards the individual's presumed tacit skills and competence in social interaction. Such is the art of networking. In the personal portrait of Patrick Delaney, the owner and manager of a large Irish event company, he states three concrete advises on how to network: be different, give more than you try to receive, and think ROI in your networking. He continues with many concrete details on the art of networking, thus articulating a presumed tacit knowledge:

... move around the room, talk to many people, repeat the names on those you meet, try hard to remember them. Leave your business cards, write notes on the ones you receive so that you don't mix them up when you are back in the office ... make sure that you have open questions which make the answers longer ... Then it is all about

giving instead of taking. Listen to his needs. Follow up and do what you have promised. Otherwise you have created an enemy, not a friend. (Meetings International 2007, no. 19: 77-79, my translation).

What is significant with all these techniques of interaction is their astonishing simplicity. The detailed compartmentalisation and specification in time and space is an effort to transfer the elusiveness of social interaction into a comprehensible and technical “know-how”. Simultaneously and more implicitly, there is an effort in framing the *ideals* of being with others in professional meetings – such as authenticity and reciprocity – into formalised codes of conduct. Thus, the practices of being enacted by the meeting profession illustrate the tension between different and seemingly contradictory ideals in the meeting profession: the measurable positivistic aspects of social interaction on the one hand, and the egalitarian playfulness of sociability evoking a sense of existential authenticity and emotional intensity on the other. This tension is even more accentuated by the fact that the overall and explicit aims of all the techniques presented above are quite simply economic: to create efficient meetings that may give a return on investment. Through these techniques, energy and creativity are expected to be released, as they are important aspects of efficiency. Furthermore, the egalitarian non-hierarchical and reciprocal meeting situation is supposed to evoke reflexivity, encouraging growth in the company as well as for the individual employee. Hence, the practices of being manifest the notion of effective emotions. Economic rationality and emotional intensity are two ideals and rationales that are being distinguished, as well as intertwined, in the performative practice of “know-how”. Effective emotions illuminate, enact and legitimise values related to specific ways of being as a person as well: you should be creative and innovative, constantly reflect upon yourself, your life and work – and thus be prepared to be flexible – and exhibit personal growth, preferably accomplished through social and emotional skills.

Concluding Remarks

I have presented the meeting profession as an agent of change, a catalyst, paving the way for new professional arenas in the service economy. New niches are created, traditional professional roles transgressed and intersections between social, psychological, technical, artistic and economic fields of knowledge emerge. New methods of social interaction are established and promoted. Furthermore, the meeting profession is a catalyst in a deeper, structural manner as well. It is one example of a new type of service profession that encourages the involvement of emotions and intimacy in professional relationships, and idealises ways of being that blur the distinction between the professional and personal self, life and work, and between the private and the public sphere. Interpersonal existential authenticity, that is, a sense of presence, mutuality and intimacy with others, is thus ascribed a social as well as an economic value, and it is promoted as an important medium in market relations. The meeting profession highlights the tension between the

measurable, tangible and instrumental on the one hand, and the elusive, intangible and playful on the other. The notion of “effective emotions” seems like an anomaly, but represents a mode of conceptualising and practising social relationships that may be increasingly common in the fuzzy intersection between the life world and the market in the service economy.

However, the meeting profession is not merely evoking change but functions as a normative regulator as well, normalising and legitimising specific ideals of being. Through the increasing tendency of focusing on the interactive process itself, and thus how you relate to others, ideals of being is performed, enacted and reinforced in the discourse of the meeting profession and through the practices of various meeting techniques. Thus, creativity, personal growth, reflexivity and flexibility are enacted as idealised personal assets as well as moral imperatives. The critical implication of this is that what we may see as “merely” ideals of a professional role, should rather be seen as ideals concerning our way of being and relating to others in all aspects of life. The discursive practices of the meeting profession, and the specific interactive form of meetings, may thus be interpreted as a means of governmentality (Foucault 1991; Miller & Rose 1990; Thrift 2002) or as a seductive “magic” typical of the corporate cultures of the so called new economy (Löfgren & Willim 2005). The combination of a ritualised, temporal and spatial framed situation, the simplicity of its techniques and emotional and interactive intensiveness, may produce the magical “effectiveness” typical of ritual enactment (Turner 1969, 1978). Hence, the notion of “effective emotions” does not merely refer to the discursive ideals of combining instrumental rationality with emotional intensity, but it also refers to the performative power of discursive practices, manifested in everyday practices such as the “practices of being” referred to above. However, a ritual enactment that is framed in a commercial setting, with an overall instrumental goal, may have both a legitimising and undermining effect. The persuasive discourses and practices of the meeting profession carry the potential of both reinforcing and undermining ideals and norms of a specific culture. On the one hand, it is legitimising in the sense that the moral imperative of specific ways of being and acting reinforces a market and work ethic that encourages creativity, personal growth, reflexivity and flexibility. In line with Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005) study on the new spirit of capitalism, this kind of work ethic might be an expression of an ambition to overcome the perceived disenchantment of the social world and former hierarchical, overly formalised and emotionally distant working cultures. On the other hand, if the overarching instrumental goal becomes too explicit in the interactive situation itself, and if the implicit normativity in “how to do” becomes explicit enough, the intrinsic value of social interaction is undermined and the magic will disappear. The efforts of re-enchantment will turn to its opposite. Effective emotions are thus only “effective” as long as a tension between instrumental rationality and emotionality is preserved. By focusing on the manifested practices of effective emotions, their discursive contents as well as

interactive forms, the tension and dynamics of a work ethic may be brought into light.

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Digital Exhibitionism: The Age of Exposure

By Ana María Munar

Abstract

Web 2.0 has expanded the possibilities of digital creative production by individuals and enabled the digitalisation of private life experiences. This study analyses how social media contributes to the making of personal biographies and discusses the shift towards a culture of digital exposure. This study uses netnography and a constructive approach to examine online communities and social networks. The findings illustrate that these new technological platforms are mediating in the construction of late modern biographies, which are expanding the complexity of today's socio-technical systems. The paper discusses the power of these technologies as agents of socio-cultural change and suggests that, besides providing individual realisation and mediated pleasure, these technologies encourage exhibitionistic and voyeuristic behaviour, elude reflexivity, and display authoritative tendencies and new possibilities for social control.

Keywords: Social media, cultural change, online communities, social control

Introduction

From the outset of modernity individuals have traditionally kept records of their lives. From diaries, to paintings, to photographs or music, men and women of all ages have created cultural texts portraying their experiences, emotions and opinions. In most cases, this private creative content was circulated among a limited social sphere consisting of family, friends or colleagues. The cost of producing these texts meant that people needed to be selective about the kinds of special occasions, such as weddings or travels, they wanted to record. This feature of modernity has been radically transformed thanks to the expansion of information technologies (IT) and the World Wide Web. Social media now provide digital platforms that support and enhance self-expression. The new phenomenon popularly known as Web 2.0, for example, has further expanded the possibilities for individuals to produce creative texts digitally. Web 2.0 allows for the digital creation, storage, publication and sharing of people's private lives. This technology does not only enable individuals to portray their lives in new ways, it also provides the necessary tools for them to create instantaneous and real-time self-biographies on the Web. This in turn has transformed the Web into an exhibition of do-it-yourself biographies (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002). The conversion from an analogue to a digital culture of private experiences has profound consequences for the ways in which we portray ourselves and shape our identities. It also offers new insights on how technology supplements and re-mediate our social activities.

The main transformation from analogue to digital texts has been possible due to developments in IT, such as enhanced capacities for collaboration and sharing of information (Cooke & Buckley 2008), and by factors such as more powerful and affordable hardware and software, a faster network edge, the enhancement of easy-to-use tools, a higher e-literacy among the population of the world, and the increase in portable and wireless platforms (Parameswaran & Whinston 2007). All of these elements have led to a change in the locus of control in the creation process of the online content: from a Web content controlled by organizations and corporations to a Web which, to a large extent, is the expression of the interaction and participation of end-users.

The main attributes of popular social network sites are the content generated by the users and the tools that allow the user interactivity. Although the phenomenon is quite new, there is already a myriad of personalised social information available to cyber-users around the world. Social media allow for the digitalisation of creative texts (visual, narrative or audio) that were previously produced and consumed using other technological tools with a lower diffusion capacity. This provides a new scene for the self-making of personal biographies. The new interactive Web is a vehicle for the digital exposure of personal lives, which float in cyberspace on different types of social network sites.

A popular viewpoint among analysts of the Web 2.0 is that the increased possibility of interaction between the users and the Internet opens a new era of participation and democratisation (Qualman 2009). This development is explained as the beginning of a new digital revolution that is shifting from a technology based on “command and control” to a technology based on engaging and empowering individuals through their online identities (Shih 2009). However, other more critical perspectives question the value of the user-created content or pose ethical questions to the use of social media. There are emerging studies problematizing the optimistic view that Web 2.0 empowers users through their collaboration and shared information. Authors have pointed to the poor security of content and identity theft by the media (Poster 2006), the possible misuse of increased transparency to achieve greater centralised control (Hand 2008; Miller 2010), or issues relating to the ownership of displayed content (Aspan 2008; Tierney 2010). Keen (2007) in his provocative essay challenges those who praise the wisdom of the crowds and the quality and value of the millions of amateur contributions. According to Keen, instead of creating masterpieces, social media users produce an “endless digital forest of mediocrity” (2007: 3). Positive as well as critical accounts of this phenomenon agree that the digitalisation of user generated content offer new understandings of social and cultural participation. This study examines how social media contribute to the construction of personal biographies, discusses the turn towards a culture of digital exposure, and critically examines the challenges of the digitalisation of personal life.

Method of Study

This paper explores the Web as a social construct and a context that facilitates the examination of the creation and evolution of social structures, such as relationships and communities. Markham (2004) defines this methodological perspective as the constructive approach. The specific methodology used in this study is netnography. Social scientists typically use netnography to conduct Web research (O’Reilly et al. 2007). Kozinets (2002, 2008) describes this methodology as an online evolution of ethnography and defines it as an application of methods of cultural anthropology to on-line cyber culture. Netnography consists of the participative observation and examination of one or several online communities, as compared to ethnography, which is the study of cultural and social forms through observation of events as they unfold. Ethnography is a method that requires co-presence with the people observed during the study (Haldrup & Larsen 2010). Netnography applies this presence to the virtual world. The researcher acts as an active member of the community and studies the processes of interactivity, the specific settings, the architecture of the sites and the main characteristics of the content available. However, the digitalisation of the object of the study means that this method can only trace a very specific type of cultural and social communica-

tion, which is recorded and uploaded digital content. This type of communication differs greatly from other types of social behaviour. In this case, there are no “natural settings” in which the social acts takes place; the setting is a virtual platform of communication, which is another type of social construct based on specific technological cultures.

Another important difference between netnography and ethnographic methods is that the researcher conducting a netnographic study can return to the original form of communication studied, because it is recorded, stored and displayed on the virtual platforms. Nevertheless, the nature of the Web poses several challenges to the netnographic method. Websites and other forms of digitised documentation, which lay the foundation for netnographic analyses, develop and change at a high speed. Additionally, the rapid change in the patterns of use, and the fragmentation and massive amount of data associated to the object of analysis, represents an additional challenge to the study of the Web, but it does not make Web studies any less relevant. Netnography is a multi-method approach whereby the researcher can apply historical analysis, semiotic analysis, and other observation methods, to their netnographic study. This study uses content analysis and observation methods.

In order to analyse the role that virtual communities play in the development of virtual identities, two main data sets were established. Firstly, a purposive sample of online communities was developed and a sample of personal profiles of a web community examined. A total of three different social network sites and one wiki site (an interactive website that focuses on the content and not the users) were selected: Facebook, TripAdvisor, Twitter and Wikipedia. These websites represent different types of online communities, which have different aims and purposes, and at the same time a large scalability and a very large number of users (see table 1). Secondly, the development of ten different personal profiles in Facebook was studied. The social network of Facebook is characterised by a password-protected and membership only use. Its content has a limited circulation and it is not accessible to the broader public. This raises specific ethical issues for the researcher who wants to study the content of this site. It was therefore essential to obtain informed consent from Facebook members and to present de-identified text and multimedia representations of these people in this article. Half of the profiles correspond to men and half to women, whose ages range from 15 to 45 years old. The group consists of four different European nationalities. The examination of sites and profiles took place during the months of November 2009 to February 2010, with frequent visits to the different communities.

Online community	Characteristics
Facebook	Social network with a focus on personal interaction among members; non themed; membership required.
Twitter	Community based on microblogging; non themed; membership required.
TripAdvisor	Community with a focus on reviews; themed community dedicated to tourism and travel; open to all users; registration required for uploading content.
Wikipedia	Community with a focus on the creation of an online encyclopedia; based on wiki technology; open to all users; personal account required for uploading or modifying content.

Table 1: Features of Different Online Communities

User Generated Content and Online Communities

There are many different perspectives on the Internet and the Web as factors of social change. These perspectives relate to globalisation processes and cultural change (Hand 2008); focus on the digital divide, diversity and power relations (Kirkpatrick 2008; Kleinman 2005); assess the construction of personal identities (Poster 2006); examine changes in space-time constraints and cultural perceptions of body (Basu et al. 2007; Schwanen & Kwan 2008; Shaw 2008) and view the Internet from a historical and sociological standpoint (Castells 1996, 1997, 2001). Recent books have examined the impact of social media and web communities, such as Facebook, Youtube or Twitter, on both society and on the market place (Li & Bernoff 2008; Qualman 2009; Weinberg 2009; Brogan & Smith 2009; Weber 2009).

The more interactive Web has been popularised with the term Web 2.0. Web 2.0 describes a Web which is “increasingly influenced by intelligent Web services that enable users to contribute to developing, rating, collaborating and distributing Internet content and customizing Internet applications” (Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent 2007: 9). It reflects a mix of different types of ICT tools, including wikis, podcasts, messaging applications or blogs (Stillman & McGrath 2008). The main characteristic of the new Web is that it enhances the collaboration and sharing of information online, and is built around social software which makes it possible for

individuals to communicate and form communities using their computers (Cooke & Buckley 2008).

Discourses on information technologies and the Web have long focused upon the technological contribution to economic and social development. However, the Web 2.0 turn has expanded the “techspressive” (Kozinets 2008: 870) perspective of our socio-technical environment. This ideological perspective considers technology a provider of individual realisation, mediated pleasure and escape. This perspective is historically the most recent element of technology’s ideological field (Kozinets 2008). The techspressive discourse has developed following an increase in the importance of video games and it is now being expanded thanks to the popularity of social media and Web 2.0. Much of the literature on online communities is embedded in the techspressive discourse of technology use combined with a linear progressive understanding of the technological influence on economic development (Brogan and Smith 2009; Qualman 2009). The techspressive focus on pleasure and individuality is further enhanced thanks to the possibilities of user generated content (UGC).

UGC is the aggregation and publication of users’ contributions on the web. User created digital content is very diverse and includes narrative text, such as reviews or diaries; contact details; photos; video and audio files; and goods and services for sale. Some of these contributions have a strong creative element, for example, photo reportages of personal experiences, while others are more passive contributions, for example, the sharing of the processing capacity of computers to achieve free Internet telephony (e.g. Skype). Several definitions and classifications of this content exist (Deshpande & Jadad 2006; Lenhart & Fox 2006; Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent 2007; Wellman 2007; Cook 2008; Cooke & Buckley 2008; Stillmn & McGrath 2008). Cook (2008) defines UGC as part of the broader user contribution systems. User contribution systems “aggregate and leverage various types of user input in ways that are valuable to others” (Cook 2008: 62). Additionally, Vickery and Wunsch-Vincent’s (2007) analysis of the participative Web highlights a difference between UGC and user created content and focuses on the creative element of the content generation. Their analysis demands a more extensive use of creative skills by the user, for example when reviewing a restaurant or making a photographic reportage of a destination.

Online communities, or virtual communities, are one of the main elements of Web 2.0 and its broader contribution systems. Communities can be defined as networks of interpersonal ties. Online communities are websites where user relationships develop, and their main assets are a combination of user generated content and easy-to-use tools and applications. They are technological platforms with relationship tools that allow users to communicate with their network in new ways, changing the cost of interaction and maintenance of a relationship, and increasing people’s network capacity (Shih 2009). The Web displays a very large

diversity of online communities which represents different social characteristics of the users.

The large number of different communities that exist on the Web vary according to their size, their conditions of use, the variety of their activities, and whether they are open or require membership. Virtual communities can be strongly influenced by the amount of users they have; too many people may create too much confusion, while too few will not provide any dynamism and the value of participation may be too low (Preece 2000). Online communities can provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging and social identity (Wellman et al. 2002). Some of the main types of communities are media-sharing sites, such as Youtube; virtual worlds, such as Second Life; blogging sites, such as Travelblog; social bookmarking and voting sites, such as Digg; review sites, such as TripAdvisor; or social network sites, such as Facebook or LinkedIn. These communities are extensive environments with many different types of tools and components allowing for different forms of interactions and activities. They differ from other interactive platforms in the Web, such as wikis, blogs and message boards, in that they enhance relationship building among their users (Buss & Strauss 2009).

The distinctive norms used in these communities have also resulted in differing degrees of public access, participant norms and expectations (McKee & Porter 2009). However, according to Castells (2001), these communities share two important characteristics. The first is their support of free and non-hierarchical communication. Although there are varying degrees of protection of content uploaded on-line, the assumption that these platforms should be based on the free exchange of ideas remains paramount (Lash 2002). The second is the self-directed connectivity, which allows any person to connect to the web and publish his or her own information. Self-directed connectivity is a tool for social organization, collective action and meaning (Castells 2001). Furthermore, it allows individuals to express their identities and to create and maintain social relations online.

The social networking sites selected for this study have distinctive rules and forms of interaction among their users. These sites invite self-biographical expression in diverse ways. Facebook was established in 2004 by undergraduate students from Harvard University and was first aimed at university students. This linked to a long tradition in universities of establishing networks among students while they are studying and later on through associations. However, as opposed to more traditional associations, Facebook initially functioned as an informal dating site where students could obtain photos and contact details from their classmates. The members of the site would thereby attain links to other users' details, with their permission, as "friends", a term used as a marker of trusted identities for this site. The network's building blocks are the users' profile pages and its design relies on a clear protocol, which allows users to accept or reject friends' requests (Zarrella 2010). In 2006, Facebook was opened to anyone with an email address and it became extremely popular. The site announced that it had reached 400 million

members in February 2010 (Helft & Stone 2010). It has also proven to be a very profitable business; the company reported \$210 million in U.S. ad spending in 2008 (Buss & Strauss 2009). Nevertheless, the network has also received hard criticism for claiming ownership over the content uploaded by the users, a debate that resulted in a revision of the terms of use by the management of the site (Stone & Stelter 2009).

TripAdvisor is the largest networking site focusing on tourism and travel. It has over 11 million members and it had amassed more than 30 million reviews of tourism products by February 2010 (TripAdvisor 2010). Contrary to Facebook or Twitter, TripAdvisor is an open network and it is not necessary to register or become a member in order to access the published content. However, it is necessary to create a virtual identity to upload content onto the site.

Twitter uses microblogging, a form for blogging which limits the amount of text posted (a maximum of 140 characters). This technical limitation has created a very specific form of communication that has had a burst in popularity since the first half of 2009. Twitter is used by individuals and companies alike, and it is a kind of “news” site where users can upload and share all types of updates. It can be seen as a major news channel with a diverse mixture of traditional news and information about individual members’ real-time daily life activities.

Wikipedia is an iconic representation of user generated content. It is selected in this study as the counterpart of the other social media platforms of the sample. Wikipedia encourages the creation of content but, unlike the other platforms mentioned above, its focus is not on sociability but on the co-creation of knowledge. In some of the literature wikis are not considered to be online communities, because their focus is on the content rather than the contributors and because the content’s authorship is anonymous (Buss & Strauss 2009). However, participation in wikis can provide a feeling of belonging and social recognition, as seen in the open source movement (Castells 2001). Wikipedia appeared in 2001 thanks to the wiki technology. This technology allowed any user to upload content to a communal web site without any approval by a central administrator. This collective experiment made it possible to handle a massive amount of amateur contributions using a very clear regulatory system of online behaviour. In this type of community anyone can become a contributor (or editor) but the result is a collective effort where the individual creative effort is diluted into the community. It is a system of libertarian roots in which individuals are given equal voice so “neither our reputations nor our qualifications have any intrinsic value” (Keen 2007: 43). It is an example of an interactive Web in which the individual identity is excluded on purpose to give room to the wisdom of the crowds.

Digital Exhibitionism

Social media platforms are technological tools mediating in the construction of late modern “lego” biographies:

The second modernity’s totally normal chaos is regulated by non-linear systems. It is also regulated by an extraordinarily powerful interlacing of social and technical systems: by, precisely, socio-technical systems. It is at the interface of the social and the technical that we find the second-modernity’s individual. It is at this interface that we take on the precarious freedom of a “life of our own”; that we “invent the political”, that we take on ecological responsibility. The individual in the second modernity is profoundly a socio-technical subject (Lash 2002: xiii)

Social media sites are new tools that contribute to a larger complexity of these socio-technical systems. These platforms can be placed on a continuum. There are those that promote self-biographical expressions (such as Facebook or LinkedIn) and on the opposite pole those enhancing a communitarian effort and a dilution of individuality in the “commons” focusing on a product or the content of the site (such as Wikipedia).

A common feature for Twitter and for Facebook is that they encourage users to share brief textual narrations in the form of microblogging. The most prominent tool in Facebook’s profile is a microblogging tool, which invites individuals to write something personal in answer to the question: “What’s on your mind?”. Twitter has a similar question: “What’s happening?”, oriented towards the outside world. Individuals are invited to join the network activities by publishing updates about their lives and thoughts. In the first case other members of the network can become “friends”; in the second, “followers”.

The microblogging tool is a technological application that enhances the exhibitionist tendencies of social media. Common to the culture of these sites is the acceptance of the recording and publishing of daily life activities or banalities. Both platforms invite the broadcasting of the “immediate thought” or the “immediate observation”. In much of the discussion around the evolution of modernity (Bauman 1998; Held et al. 1998; Giddens 1999, 2002) there is focus on the increased reflexivity of individuals. However, these platforms invite instant communication and lightness of being, like an online playground characterised by the immediateness of feelings and emotions, and members are encouraged to engage in a less reflexive practice of interactivity and self-portrayal.

This technology supports the change from reflexive behaviour to “reflex” behaviour. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) describe this change as a movement towards an increased non-linearity of individual life. The non-linear modern person may wish to be reflexive but does not have the space or the time to devote to reflectivity. In social networks the recording of the memorable has been changed by speed and by immediateness. Facebook and Twitter represent the dilution of the frontier between what is considered as being essential for one’s biographical

record, and therefore needs to be stored and shared, and those daily routines and thoughts that can be seen as a futile part of anybody's life.

Artistic expression has proven to be able to reflect upon socio-cultural change while it occurs (Giddens 1999). In the film *Julie and Julia* (2009), directed by Nora Ephron, Julia Child's story as a cook and writer is intertwined with blogger Julie Powell's challenge to cook all the recipes in Child's famous cooking book. The film portrays the power of exhibitionism and exposure of intimate emotions that lies in blogging. Julie shares with her online followers her more intimate feelings, her self-esteem problems and lack of career prospects. This exposure challenges her personal relationships; her husband makes her promise not to write about their quarrels and her boss prohibits her to mention him in her blog. One of Julie's friends blogs about her extravagant sexual experiences, and therefore achieves huge online audiences and is portrayed as successful.

The inherent exposure of blogging is highly present in the microblogging of online communities. This is not to say that everyone who uses platforms such as Facebook or Twitter will share all intimate details of their private life with the community, but the culture of social media is that it is all right to do so, and those that do are seen as active and well-functioning members of the community. In the ethics of these communities it is accepted to expose one's "self".

In the profiles studied in Facebook, different levels of emotional exhibitionism are present. It is possible to distinguish between those who use Facebook with a larger level of intimacy, expressing emotions and personal opinions about different issues, and those who use it as a news board to announce interesting events for the community or to list their different daily life activities. Nevertheless, the latter type of user also includes expressions of intimacy and emotion in recounting their thoughts on the events they are informing about.

Besides microblogging, other typical activities members of the social networks in this study engaged in are: interactive diaries or blogs; publishing original photos or videos which other members can tag and comment upon; and participation in interactive games, quizzes or discussion groups about specific topics. Facebook and Twitter's updating systems allow members to receive regular information about other members' activities. Some of these activities have exhibitionistic tendencies similar to those seen in microblogging. For example, it is possible to see the results of other users' tests. One of them is called "The truth" and aims at disclosing private opinions of emotional character. After a member (X) has taken that test, the rest of the community can get updates such as "See if X fancies Y" or "Are you in love with X?". Other similar applications inform that "X just took [a]: Who is your love story? Test" and invite other users to check the results. There are also updates on game behaviour, such as "X played The Family Farm today" or "X just got a new high score in Kamikace Race". In general, social sites trace members' activities on the network and feed information back to the network. Accordingly, the design of these networks not only encourages interactivity, it

also discloses information which may be felt as an invasion of other members' privacy. Some users may take an IQ test on Facebook just to discover that all of their "friends" are being updated about their results with the offensive note: "One of your friends got the score idiot, click here and see which friend".

While users may be in control of which private photos or videos they want to upload to the network, little can be done about the visual content published by others. The culture of exposure of these media creates a collage of visual virtual identities co-created among community members and defies personal control of the content. Social networking promotes group interactivity as opposed to individual control, and although these platforms have increased their privacy settings, the question remains of how these platforms try to educate their users in this matter (Tapscott 2009). Personal control upon visual content can only be achieved by a constant monitoring of the network activities, a task that may prove to be extremely time consuming.

Communities allow for more extreme forms of Web exhibitionism, for example, the uploading of webcam videos broadcasting a member's activities in real-time. These technological platforms have the potential to turn into life the "big brother" tendencies portrayed in the movie *The Truman Show*, a film directed by Peter Weir portraying a man who is living in a TV-produced reality soap opera, which is televised without interruptions to global audiences. Anybody is free to broadcast a personal version of the reality-TV success *Big Brother*.

The review genre, which is the main content of TripAdvisor, encourages another type of exhibitionism. This form of social media promotes itself as the place to find "the truth" about tourism products and places. The discourse of the administrator of this digital platform is rooted in the idea of authenticity, which is a contested and problematic concept in tourism studies (Ooi & Stöber 2010). The review genre provides insights into the feelings and emotions of tourists from a micro-perspective. This genre is activity related and self-centred. The online review genre is very different from the traditional reviews we read in newspapers. As in the case of Wikipedia, there is no demand of expertise to legitimise the "truth" of the content. Users frequently write in the first person and include names of family members and friends: "Mom and I went for their Sunday Roast special, £15 for two courses. They were very tasty." or "I absolutely loved afternoon tea at the Dorchester Hotel. First, we started with tea, I chose Earl Grey, scones, clotted cream, and jam".

The legitimacy of the review lies in the expression of the personal emotional experience. A community review includes the exposure of a person's feelings and opinions, akin to a personal biography. It is the lack of commercial or authoritative language and the exposure of feelings attached to the consumption experience that gives users' reviews extra value. Furthermore, TripAdvisor also invites self-biographical mapping with a tool entitled "Cities I've Visited". This tool allows users to place pins on a digital map (using Google maps) so that they can create a

map showing their travel record. Individuals can use this tool to expose their travel conquests, as hunters used to display the heads of their hunted animals at home. Users can now expose their travel patterns by alerting everybody in their network every time they travel to a new city.

Digital Voyeurism and Social Control

Digital exhibitionism fosters its counterpart: digital voyeurism. Voyeurism has been considered a type of deviant behaviour because it relates to the pleasure provided by observing other peoples' private activities without participating in them or making one's presence known. Voyeuristic activity becomes extremely easy in social networks. Facebook provides an application that allows members to seek information about users who visit their profiles. However, it is seldom that members monitor who looks, and for how long, at the personal information they have uploaded, or follow all the conversations that take place among different members. Social networks therefore provide a double pleasure, that of social interactivity and that of social observation. As a researcher, there is nothing easier than to monitor and observe other members private behaviour without making oneself present and it is important to face this ethical problem, as mentioned previously in the methodological section of this paper.

The voyeuristic tendency of social media is in IT literature referred to as "lurking". A lurker is someone who does not participate, only observes the community and remains silent. A "voyeur" (from the French) is "one that looks". The exhibitionist tendencies of these media make voyeurism a normal form of online behaviour. It is easy to feel like a voyeur when looking at intimate photographs portraying a couple in love or a private party, reading the results of a test about sexual preferences, or being updated about a member's gaming behaviour. However, observing private content is part of the meaning and value of these social communities. Depending of the cultural background of the user, what may be understood as voyeurism may differ a lot. In some cultures observing (or uploading) photos of physical intimacy among lovers or family members may seem deviant, in others publishing political or religious views may be perceived as incorrect behaviour. Therefore, these social networks are redefining what is to be considered as deviant in voyeuristic terms.

The division between public and private becomes diluted by the empowerment of these technological platforms. How much privacy one wants to expose or get exposed to therefore becomes an individual matter. The individualistic tendency seems to support the thesis of self-directed connectivity (Castells 2001), by which individuals design their virtual conduct. However, much of the online behaviour seen in this study is pushed, transformed and moulded, not by free-individuals interacting in neutral spaces, but by the socio-technical platforms embedded in specific technical cultures.

Social network sites and communities provide another form of social behaviour closely related to voyeurism, that of social control and monitoring. Several researchers have focused on the danger that lies in the possible abuse of personal digitalized information by political authorities or corporations (Hand 2008; Tapscott 2009; Miller 2010). However, the Web as a social control tool can also be seen in other more intimate spheres, such as that of the family. For example, a virtual group was created in Facebook with the goal of excluding parents from the network. This group was created by teenagers who used Facebook as the main communication platform within their community, and who were of the opinion that accepting parents as “friends” in the community was expanding parental control. They believed the parents used the network to monitor their activities. This is not a strange assumption. In the United States it is possible for parents to buy applications that inform about their children’s updates and activities on social networks. For many western cultures, to avoid interference by adults or authorities has traditionally been a part of being young. Parents are confronted with the dilemma of choosing between interacting with their children’s virtual communities and becoming voyeurs, or keeping out of their children’s online activities, which today are an important part of their social life.

A similar dilemma relating to the fear of social control is found in the process of accepting or rejecting “friends” or “followers” in both Facebook and Twitter. Depending on the individual’s use of the network it is not always easy to accept the virtual “friendship” of a superior or a colleague at the workplace. How would it then be possible to post negative feelings or frustrations related to work? However, the decision of rejection is not an easy one either. For example, in Facebook it is difficult to know if the rejected member is updated about their rejection. Similar considerations can be given to the online interactivity of students and university professors or patients and doctors/other health specialists. To what extent, for example, do professors want to share their private life with their students? Traditionally, individuals have been able to keep their identities depending on their role in a specific community. A professor would keep a specific role with the student, a different one with a colleague, an old friend or a relative. However, the fluidity of social media also has consequences for the building of individual networks on these platforms. Social rules and procedures of how to keep these different identities separate online are still in the making. The popular social networks studied here allow for the creation of several online identities by one person. Nevertheless, this entails a large degree of reflexivity and purposiveness in the making of virtual identities, which is still rare to encounter.

Virtual Identities

Social networking sites allow people to create new forms of relationships, which are different from traditional face-to-face relationships (for example, the “friends”

in Facebook) and provide new tools to maintain and enhance personal social networks, but they also pose new demands and challenges to the users. These platforms demand a new type of reflexivity about the creation of virtual identities and the management of personal information. Several authors have discussed the implications of digitalising personal data and information (Greenfield 2006; Hand 2008). Others have celebrated it as an era of transparency (Shih 2009; Brogan & Smith 2009) or as a new social transformation (Bus & Strauss 2009: 31):

Today's teenagers and twenty-something, far from valuing privacy and boundaries, like earlier generations, embody a new kind of self-obsessed, Youtube broadcast culture. The typical high school student today posts her photos on Facebook or Flickr, and tells the world where she is, what she is doing, and how she is feeling on her Facebook status message or Twitter.

The increased transparency is not only viewed as a positive phenomenon, it has also been criticised as a medium to a larger centralised control on personal life. Nevertheless, this study challenges the very assumption that these platforms are transparent. Although users upload a considerable amount of content on these platforms, nothing points to this content being more transparent or more “true” than other traditional forms of non-digital social communication. Individuals can use the relationship-building tools provided by this technology to build and shape their virtual identities and, although it is impossible to monitor all the content that may be uploaded about oneself, users choose specific ways to portray and present themselves in those digital platforms. Users of social networks are becoming increasingly conscious about the image they want to project and the use they want to make of that image. The profile pages of Facebook and the updates on Twitter are virtual blocks of a personal brand. There are plenty of recommendations of how to optimise these tools for personal promotion in the social media literature:

It's a good idea to do whatever you can to make your profile reflect your personality and personal brand, but don't go crazy – everyone hates the seizure-inducing profile with alarmingly loud pop music (Zarella 2010: 57).

Some of this literature invites an increased reflexivity in the use of these platforms (Tapscott 2009; Bay 2009). Users adapt to different types of roles in virtual communities. The participation in these communities helps to provide a multidimensional virtual identity, which can take many different shapes depending on the platform of communication. The multidimensionality of social identities is also reflected in the virtual world. The four different social network sites selected for this study are different mediascapes that encourage different types of social interactivity.

Authoritarian Virtual Coaching

Users are helped to create and maintain online identities that match the aims of the virtual platform. In the case of virtual communities the employee is not present in a traditional way; there is no “human face” representing the organisation. The

firm is represented by those in charge of the administration and the system architecture of the site. The role of the “employee” resembles the voice of a virtual agent that takes the mask of a facilitator or coach and not that of a traditional manager. The informal style of language and the collegial approach to users is found again and again in the presentation of the different tools available on the sites. This language differs greatly from other, more formal bureaucratic instances, which have normally addressed large populations of users.

The communication style of the facilitator of the sites is very specific. There is no she or he, instead the facilitator becomes a de-personalised voice. The voice addresses the user with a colloquial style, which tries to imitate that of friends or colleagues and is far from other types of more formal communication. However, it combines this “friendly” style with authoritative tendencies (such as the language of the coach of a sport team). Within the sites it is common to find plenty of commands: “Send a message to ...”, “Write on her wall ...”, “Suggest friends for ...” “Write a review ...”, “See what people are saying about ...”. The authoritarian language that appears in the main pages of the sites is always encouraging participation and speed of action; it does not encourage protection of privacy or reflexivity. There are no commands such as “protect your privacy ...”, “be aware of the type of content you upload ...”, “reduce the number of people that can see this...” or “think before sending ...”. The style of communication is informal and resembles that of teenagers. Use of honorifics such as Mr. or Mrs. or other such as Dr. is avoided. Typically the member is addressed in the second person: “You can do this and that here”. There is a cult of “youth” and of personalization in the language style used on these platforms. The “coach” seems to say: “Well, let’s pretend that we already know each other and let’s get started”.

Technological systems are not produced in vacuums but in specific cultural settings, and the communication style of the network expresses the importance of the cultures of the internet in the shaping of social media. The specific language of the platforms can be connected to the informality of some of the most prominent web cultures such as the hacker culture or the virtual community culture. Those cultures have their roots in “contra cultural movements” and other alternative lifestyles which appeared during the 1970s (Castells 2001) and are characterised by a lack of formality. Although these “rebellion” tendencies have dissipated in a Web that is a reflection of mainstream cultures, there are still some traces in the communication style of the sites.

The platforms’ different goals are stated in the sites’ presentations and are further explicit in the different tools used. Facebook presents its aim already in the homepage: “Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life”. There is no difference between working life or private life; it is a holistic statement, which invites to self-biographical representation. This appears as a contrast to other popular social network sites such as LinkedIn, which presents itself as the place to “Stay informed about your contacts and industry, find the people &

knowledge you need to achieve your goals and control your professional identity online”. Interestingly, this site mentions the aim of identity creation and control and also acknowledges the existence of multiple identities. The edition of the personal profile in Facebook includes questions about political and religious views as well as a section called “Interested in:”, with possibilities of selecting men and/or women, apparently referring to sexual preferences although it is not explicit. This may be seen as a fear of sexual references by the administrator (they are not afraid to call politics or religion by their names). The user can also specify if he is looking for friendship, a relationship, dating or networking. Furthermore, the user can indicate all types of preferences from favorite movies to activities, personal data like addresses and educational background. It is a virtual tool to create a mobile, ever-changing self-biographical profile. Twitter has a similar unpretentious and colloquial style, it announces that the aim of the site is to allow users to “Share and discover what’s happening right now, anywhere in the world”.

TripAdvisor does not display the aim of the site on the homepage. The “coach” in this case indicates the main asset of the site stating that it has “Over 30 million trusted traveler reviews & opinions”. It is first in the section dedicated to reviews that the user is addressed in a similar informal and authoritative way: “Write a review. Get Started... Review a hotel, restaurant, attraction, or even the place you visited”. Wikipedia is also open to all Web users and addresses the reader in the following way: “Welcome to Wikipedia. The free encyclopedia that anyone can edit”. However, from the different sites studied the “coach” of Wikipedia, although informal, is less authoritative, the language used is more explanatory and there are fewer commands. In general this type of network invites more reflexivity and provides reasonable arguments to the virtual audience. For example, it says, “Semi-protection is sometimes necessary to prevent vandalism to popular pages. You can discuss this page with others. You may request unprotection of the page”. There is a generalized use of “can” or “may”, which seems to favour reflexivity as opposed to the abundant use of imperative language in the social networks dedicated to online communities.

A fundamental value of the hacker culture is freedom, which is fostered by the lack of formality in relation to ownership of production, whereby many contributors use anonymous signatures. In social media there is a vast use of nicknames and anonymity. This is clearly the case on TripAdvisor or Wikipedia. Wikipedia is the most extreme case of those studied. The final product or article appears as one collective work without any indication of the individual contributions and without references to the authorship, whereas in TripAdvisor there is a specified authorship of content. However, signatures are unreliable as they include anonymous names, nicknames, signs and what may look like the real name of the author. In Facebook and Twitter contributors’ names are important and they seem to correspond to real names that can be traceable, although identity theft can occur in both platforms. From the examination of these platforms it is possible to con-

clude that those platforms which focus on self-biographical exposure are also those that have a larger tendency to reveal the real authorship of the content. While those that focus on knowledge, such as product reviews or encyclopaedic articles, have a tendency towards anonymity and nickname use. Personal exposure on the web reflects the tension between the real and unreal (use of nicknames, chat language and the brief commitment of web groupings; vs. the expansion of open-sources, wiki and other forms of more “objective” forms of contributions). It allows the production of hypertext about personal realities; not only including the personal details but also linking them to other personal contacts, other contributions, and other sites with information.

The ten profiles studied in Facebook show the real identity of the contributors. However, tendencies towards anonymity and informality of authorship often appear in the photos that these contributors use on their profile. Three of them use pictures of objects or of other famous persons (Hollywood actors or sport stars) as their profile photo and they tend to change their photo often. The majority, however, use traditional portrait photos on their profile. The examination of the identification of personal identities points towards a very different use of social media for shaping virtual identities. While platforms like Facebook and Twitter may be used to enhance and promote a personal career or individual social networks, TripAdvisor and Wikipedia provide other types of rewards which relate to peers’ recognition as it is known from the open source movement.

Disembedding Biographical Experiences

Web 2.0 disembeds the recording of biographical experiences. This takes place in two different ways: in relation to space and in relation to ownership. Firstly, there was once a clear spatial limitation between the production and sharing of traditional biographical records in the forms of familiar photo albums or analogue-written diaries. There was also a specific natural setting for the sharing of those creations. Digitalisation processes have profoundly altered these spatial boundaries. There is no physical space limitation for digital content. Everything can be documented and stored and therefore every banality or daily activity can become important in the self-portrayal of one’s life. Mobile devices have increased this tendency, providing access to these virtual platforms from anywhere, not only from a computer desk. The democratisation tendencies of Wikipedia, in which amateurs and experts are considered as equals, displays a parallel development in these social network through the “flattening” of our own life experiences, where everything is to be considered good enough to command attention from our network. The constant interaction and updating of the platform is a silent expectation of these communities; several of the “friends” studied in this article apologised for not being active enough, concluding that because of their lack of activity their profile would not be of interest. For Facebook members, quality of performance is related to constant interactivity; it is like the virtual “Reuters” of one’s social life.

In the future we may see a whole virtual world of graveyards of biographical banalities to be carried along as we get older.

Secondly, social media entail a profound change in the control and ownership of the created content. Traditionally published narrative, visual or audio texts had a clear authorship and functioned as closed works after their publication, e.g. a published review of a restaurant in a newspaper or a diary notebook. Texts published on the web are open. The work is not completed, and it invites the contribution of other users. Social network sites encourage people to write about people, so that individuals in a network can upload narrative texts, photos or videos of others, creating a biographical hypertext. The influence of the “open-source movement” in social media is evident in the openness of the virtual texts. An example of this is that the personal home pages of Facebook do not only show the photos or videos of the user, which have been uploaded by herself, but also those that have been provided by other “friends” of the network. Furthermore, it also includes a tool to comment on personal updates. This encourages virtual social interaction and also provides new layers of meaning to the personal contribution. This interactivity is an embedded characteristic of these systems, and individuals are invited to alter the original work by rating it, providing extra comments on the content, including tags in photos and videos, linking it to other contents, or sending the content to be published at other network sites. The character of most of the user-generated content is dynamic and fluid, always open to alteration. There is little self-direction in this socio-technical behaviour. The lack of full control over one’s own production is part of the essence of this virtual sharing of information, and the assumption of this lack of control of the final product is part of the system architecture of the social network sites.

The examination of the data also entails that there is no single virtual identity or specific way in which social media contributes to identity building, but many diverse shapes and a multiplicity of platforms that help users to create a collage of multiple, fluid and complex virtual identities. These essential elements of social networks will soon demand necessary tools to manage this increasing complexity and solutions to monitor a portfolio of different identities created in different forums, which aim at different goals.

Individuals begin at an early age to develop virtual self-biographic texts in different social media platforms. This poses new and different types of challenges to the management of the exposure of private life on-line. Today’s children and teenagers will accumulate a large record of biographical content. Real ageing will be mirrored by the virtual ageing of identities and profiles created through time, providing different self-portraits and do-it-yourself biographies. This traceable web behaviour may in turn become a heavy burden to carry, as information about one’s life becomes more and more fragmented and difficult to comprehend and control. There has long been a debate about the impact that the massive amount of information provided by the Web will have/has had on younger generations (Bay

2009). However, the information found in social media is not just any kind of information, it is information about one's private life and intimate world.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine how social media has contributed to the making of personal biographies, while discussing the shift towards a culture of digital exposure and digitalisation of personal life. The findings illustrated that online communities and social network platforms are new technological tools mediating in the construction of late modern biographies and that they expand the complexity of today's socio-technical systems.

The analysis of the different platforms indicates that the use of social media promotes non-linearity in the making of personal biographies due to the encouragement of instant communication and the broadcasting of immediate thoughts and observations. It also shows that the architecture of the sites and the culture of online communities promote digital emotional exhibitionism, although it is possible to distinguish between the different levels of emotional involvement of the users. These socio-technical systems support the change from reflexive behaviour to reflex behaviour and help to erase the frontier between the documenting of a person's biographical record and daily life banalities. The exploration of the sites illustrates that social networking promotes interactivity instead of individual control and personal privacy. This, together with the encouragement of speed and lack of reflexivity, poses important ethical questions in relation to the management and ownership of virtual identities.

Digital exhibitionism provides the necessary grounds for the development of digital voyeurism. Besides eroding the division between the memorable and the ordinary, these technologies also challenge the division between the public and the private. The traditional frontier becomes diluted by the empowerment of the socio-technical cultures that enhance disclosure and exposure of information as well as voyeuristic tendencies. The exposure of personal content also enhances the possibilities of using these technological tools for social control. This has posed new challenges to the users of these networks while ethical rules and procedures for the management of online identities are still on the making.

The analysis of the cultural, technological background has provided insights on the processes that allow the user to create virtual identities. These processes reveal the significance of the system architecture of social network sites, tendencies towards anonymity and informality of authorship, and show that the communication style of the administrators is informal but with authoritarian tendencies, aiming not at the encouragement of reflexivity but at group interactivity and speed of action.

The study points towards the multidimensionality of online social identities, an addition to the complexity of today's late modern biographies. The lack of control

over one's production is an essential part of these technical platforms. The large interactivity of social media in the form of comments, tags, signs, etc., provides new layers of meaning and content to the uploaded personal contributions. This feature, combined with the participation in many different online communities and networks, contributes to the digitalisation of a personal life as a collage of multiple, fluid and complex virtual identities and challenges the idea of a self-directed Web.

Hundreds of millions of users are digitalising personal and biographical information. Online communities and social network sites are seen by many as providers of individual realisation and mediated pleasure. However, these platforms are not culturally neutral playgrounds. They are technological platforms embedded in the cultures of the Internet, which enhance the making of reflex-biographies. This analysis points towards some complementary characteristics of this popular phenomenon: the exhibitionistic and voyeuristic features of the communities, the lack of reflexivity, the authoritative tendencies and possibilities of social control, and the power of these technologies to act as agents of socio-cultural change.

Further study may reflect upon the management of virtual identities over time, how the dilution between the memorable and the banal and the private and the public impacts on the ageing of biographies, online and off-line, and how the different socio-cultural backgrounds of the users reflect upon the use of these media. As our world's use of IT and social media increases and expands, an enhanced understanding of the impact of these technologies in the making of personal identities and relationships becomes more valuable.

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Epilogue – Towards an Experience Ecology of Relational Emotions

By Richard Ek

In the introduction we addressed service work in general and the emotional labour concept in particular, with the assumption that emotion management and emotion display is not limited to the front-desk or service employee. Rather, as indicated, “it is a process that permeates and characterises the service encounter and its physical environment, its servicescape, in its entirety”.

From this suggestion I would like to address three implications that are in need of more scholarly attention. The first is that *also the consumer*, as a customer, tourist, client, guest or whatever, conducts emotion management and emotion display. The second implication is that these two processes of emotional management and emotional display (the service personnel’s and the customers’) are preferably apprehended and discussed *as relational* in character. This means that they mutually shape and enhance each other in an interaction with a particular set of politics and poetics that craves more analytic concern. The third implication is that the poetics and politics of relational emotion management and emotion display need to be situated in their *spatial context*.

The third implication in turn addresses a call for a more sensitive attendance towards this relational spatiality through its ontological register. This is of course a very ambitious task, and here I can only offer a distilled picture of the work pertaining to the cultural circuit of capitalism conducted by Nigel Thrift as analytical spine. While the different implications addressed above are attended to in different ways in the individual papers, I would like to use this postscript to paint a distilled picture of what could perhaps be referred to as experience ecology for relational emotion management and emotion display.

Experience Ecology for Relational Emotion Management and Display

Taking a political approach, Nigel Thrift (2005a: 6–8) argues that the cultural economy of contemporary capitalism can be divided into three areas of approach: the *cultural circuit of capitalism*, *new spatial forms of corporate related practices* and *new forms of commodity and commodity relations*. For me, all these three areas of approach enlighten the experience ecology that relational emotion management and emotional display should be situated in.

The first approach, the cultural circuit of capitalism, was introduced in the 1960s. This cultural circuit is a self-organising assemblage of knowledge production and diffusion, primarily among the business elite (Thrift 2001). The chief

components in this assemblage include business schools, management consultants and management gurus (Thrift 1998a). Particularly characteristic of this institution, and the management discourses that are articulated and spread in this amalgam, is the ambition to deal and cope with complexity through reflexivity (Thrift 1998b & 1999). Through this ambition, “soft” aspects like knowledge, creativity and innovation become key concepts (as was stated at the end of the introduction). In this situation people become the primary resource, which means that this human resource consequently needs to meet new requirements and managerial expectations. This leads us to the second area of approach, namely new spatial forms of corporate-related practices.

A soft capitalism that rests on creativity, knowledge, tacit skills etc., needs willing subjects. More explicitly, the business organisation is in need of willing and willed subjects (Thrift 1998a). The managed body has to do more (work harder) but at the same time be passionate about it and not only invest cognitive skills in the work. In addition, the managed body has to become more adaptable (through constant learning) and participative in order to be sensitive to the social dynamics of the organisation (Thrift 2001). The managed body, and particularly the bodies of the personnel, becomes performing bodies as attempts to engineer “fast” subjects are unfolded in tandem with attempts to produce new spaces of intensity and plasticity. These fast subject positions become engineered through spaces of visualisation, circulation and embodiment (Thrift 2000a).

These spaces of pastoral subjectification and performative recitation of norms (Butler 1993) do not create agent-less drones. Nevertheless, they are products of intentional circumstances, reflected in practices such as therapeutic models, a management ethos that predicts openness and fluidity and organisational work forms like teams and projects. In order to underpin this openness and capacity for renewability, inspirational practices like events, performances and playfulness are used as management technologies (Thrift 2000b), together with more representational technologies such as corporate storytelling and iconographic uses of signs and spaces (Thrift 2001; Boje 2008).¹

These new spatial forms of corporate-related practices do not only limit themselves to the spatialities of the organisation bodies, but apply to the organisational spatiality as a whole. Among all the dimensions that can be considered here, Thrift stresses in different writings that the background is usually more or less taken for granted. Clearly, computing is now much more common in the organisational environment, with the consequence that surfaces and all kinds of software-driven devices (Thrift & French 2002; Thrift 2003) give a new texture to everyday life. New information ecology increasingly forms a background of cause and effect, thus creating all kind of densities and intensities and blurring ontological as well as ontic orderings and distinctions (Thrift 2004a & 2004b). Societal interaction becomes embedded in a more active object environment and an informed materiality that is continuously mediated and articulated, sensed and represented

(Thrift 2005b). As kinetic, ubiquitous surfaces, these environments influence our understanding of movement and time (Thrift 2004c).

It is now time to attend to the third area of approach – the new forms of commodity and commodity relations. To Thrift (2005a: 7–8), this is a development that pivots on the consumption of the new commodity forms that are unfolded, such as the ubiquity of brands and the animation and vitalisation of commodities (material, non-material, material-and-immaterial, more-than-material and so on) intended to produce affect (see also Molotch 2003; Lury 2004; Miller 2009). The tendency here is intensification, or extensification, in order to produce commodification in registers so far downgraded in capitalistic mechanisms (Thrift 2006). These tendencies are perhaps best captured in management discourse through the work of Pine and Gilmore (1999) on the experience economy and the need for business to arrange, design and create experiences for and with an increasingly active consumer.²

When consumer practices become imagined as experience creation and as something more than an instrumental exchange or interaction, a new, but still commercial, poetics of the service encounter is unfolded. This tendency has paved the way for immanent management recipes on value and an all-encompassing service dominant logic within service marketing literature (Vargo & Lusch 2004; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004; Prahalad & Krishnan 2008). Value is increasingly expected to arise not from what is but from a realm of potentiality (Thrift 2006) and consumers' investment in the act of consumption.

Here, the full consumer register must be played upon. In particular, the spectrum of non-cognitive processes, of forethought, has to be mobilised through new business models and management engineering. Forethought is no longer understood as a substrate but as a vivacious performative situational element. As a consequence, what counts as production and consumption, as well as products and services, is restructured.³ Attention is paid to affect, since consumption is increasingly understood as not only an emotional but also an affective field that is possible to reach through an activation of space (Thrift 2006).

This is not the place to make a long re-capitulation of affect or the increased interest in these questions that makes some voices claim a contemporary affective turn (Clough 2008). Basic definitions and a suggestion as to how affect can be related to feelings and emotion will have to suffice. Affect can be described as a culturally unfiltered self-referential state of being (Thrift 2008: 221). It can be seen as “the stuff of our being and not the semiotic material that enables us to understand our being” (Dewsbury 2009: 21). It can also be imagined as an “experiential force and a material thing that exists as a relational experience and a phenomenological realm in a noninterpretative and impersonal manner” (Dewsbury 2009: 20).

These definitions refer to the perhaps more dominant approach towards affect outlined by Thrift (2004d: 63–64), and are based on the works of Spinoza and the

interpretation of Spinoza's work by Deleuze (1988, 1990) and Massumi (2002).⁴ Affect is a form of usually indirect and non-reflective thinking, its own kind of intelligence and consequently a capacity of interaction, a force of emergence. Affect is therefore a transpersonal capacity, a force in and between bodies. The body (not necessarily a human body) can both affect and be affected. Affect is inherently relational (Anderson 2006). In Steve Pile's review, affect is non-cognitive, pre-reflexive, pre-conscious and pre-human, and, following this, representations of affect can never represent affect itself (Pile 2010).⁵

What becomes problematic for Pile (and I agree with this objection) is Thrift's insistent remarks that affect can be manipulated. To Thrift (2006), capitalism to a greater extent uses the whole bio-political field, a microbiopolitics of the subliminal, including affect (non-cognitive dimensions of embodiment and instinct, the 0.8–1.5 seconds of little space of time, the blink between action and performance) (Thrift 2000c, 2004d). Business corporations become increasingly affective, with more and more advanced affective techniques that appeal to the heart, passion, imagination and emotions (Thrift 2008: 244–246), while cities are concentrations of manipulations of affect for political gain through new political registers (Thrift 2004d, see also Connolly 2002 and Protevi 2009).⁶ To return to Pile (2010: 17), he is critical of the assumption that affect, as a non-representational object, can be grasped, made intelligible, represented, i.e. known, and the same time consciously and deliberately engineered. It is clear that we need to be concerned about and examine the ontology of affect and how it relates to feelings and emotions.

To Clive Barnett (2008: 188), affect is doubly located in the relational in-between of interaction fields, metaphorically *below* the level of consciousness and *before* the realm of intentional action. Affect comes before “doing” and “knowing”. These layers of ontology are perhaps most evident in the separation between affect, feelings and emotions. Emotions are everyday understandings of affect (Thrift 2008: 221), affect is unqualified intensity, while emotion is qualified intensity (Massumi 2002: 28). Pile (2010: 9) summarises this ontological map of prior, below, and beyond (affect is prior to emotions, below cognition and beyond reflectivity and humanness [situated in the realm of bare life]) as a three tiered cake of mind-body, in which the first tier is the non-cognitive – affect – below, behind and beyond cognition, the second tier is the pre-cognitive – feelings – not yet expressed or conceptualised but made into conscious and personal responses to transpersonal affect and the third tier is the cognitive – emotions – expressed feelings that are socially constructed through language and other kinds of sign systems. The problem is, of course, that since affect is unknowable the basic ontological tier cannot be represented (that is, ontologically fixated in any sense). Even if it could be situated as the foundation or requirement of feelings and emotions, it is not possible to articulate the nature of this foundation, requirement or influence. Pile definitely has a point here, so we need to articulate a new view of affect, feelings and emotions in order to address their presence in experience

ecology and the relational emotion management and display phenomena situated within.

Instead, I suggest that the cartography of affect, feelings and emotions can be regarded as a palimpsest, following Crang's geographical vision of the urban landscape (Crang 1996). It is still tiered cake ontology, but the tiers no longer have a causal function through a one-sided direction of forces (from affect and then "forward" in time and topography). Affect is here no longer isolated and impossible to make knowable or represent, because affect is here topologically related to feelings and emotions, and in that sense, graspable and tangible, possible to represent and understand.

This is perhaps an unorthodox view of affect, but it fits with our purpose of directing analytical focus to emotional labour in an experience-filled economy that is increasingly unfolded through ever more inventive and creative (mainly commercial) approaches and actions along the entire emotional register of societal interaction (see for example George 2008). Thrift's and other scholars' takes on affect help us to pay attention to a spatial context that includes the ephemeral, artefacts, technology and the mundane in the context of emotional labour, at the same time as the content of what is social and social interaction is not taken for granted. This is what I have called the experience ecology of relational emotion management and display.

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Notes

- 1 I am well aware of the literature based on Foucault's work on governmentality and bio-power and the fact that it fits well into this analysis, but I choose not to include this strand of work in the reasoning in a systematic way.
- 2 See also Boswijk et al 2007; Gilmore & Pine 2007; Hjort & Kostera 2007; Klingmann 2007; Sundbo & Darmer 2008.
- 3 This has also developed into an "identity crisis" in service marketing, as the former distinction between goods and services no longer holds, not even in a superficial way (Grönroos 2001; Lovelock & Gummesson 2004; Gummesson 2007).
- 4 The second approach conceives affect as a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct as an outer lining from phenomenological, hermeneutic and social interactionism approaches. The third approach is based on the notion of libidinal and sexual drive in Freudian

and psychoanalytic meaning. The fourth and last approach to affect is what Thrift called Darwinian affect, which discusses the universality and specificity of expressions of emotions involving the face, the voice and body postures and movement (Thrift 2004d: 63-64). Later, Thrift (2006: 223-225) identified five schools of thought relating to affect: the Darwinian approach, the James-Lange theory, Tomkin's distinction between drives and affect, Deleuze's work and the psychosocial school of thought.

- 5 Affect is consequently of special concern in Non-representational theory, an investigative approach that questions the scholarly emphasis on the representational realm in the social sciences and humanities. Besides stressing affect and sensation, Non-representational theory or geographies further stress the vitality of the everyday flow and the philosophies of becoming, the anti-biographical and pre-individual, practices, things, experimentation (also in the research process and research outcome, see McCormack 2002) and a view of space as the concreteness and materiality of the situation rather than a transcendental or metaphoric take on space (Thrift 2008: 5-16, see also Cadman 2009). The most important articles on affect from the Non-representational geographies literature not taken into consideration here include Dewsbury (2003), McCormack (2002, 2003, 2007), Anderson (2004, 2005) and Harrison (2007).
- 6 Thrift uses Agamben's (1998) notion of 'bare life' to conceptualise this bio-political domain of half a second and manages to elucidate the connection between the bio-politics of modern totalitarianism and the society of consumerism and hedonism, to some degree apparent in Agamben's work through his reading of Debord and Heidegger.

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