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Deconstructing "The Iron Cage"—towards an Aesthetic of Folding

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This essay develops elements of an aesthetic of folding. It uses the metaphor of the fold as a moving concept, which allows overcoming dualistic modes of thinking, which separate inside and outside, organization and environment. The paper starts with the deconstruction of the story of the "Iron Cage" which haunted members of a concrete organization in which the author is positioned. Similarly, organizational theorists in the Weberian and Foucauldian tradition have been haunted by the image of the "Iron Cage" which led to a concentration on the limitations imposed by organization and the competitive pressures of the market. An aesthetic of folding attempts to shift attention to the creative process of organizing, which happens always on the boundary. It positions organizational actors in a field of tensions from which experiences and possibilities of creative re-formation arise. It leads to a view of organization as a process in which various materials are connected and related into productive forms.

Keywords: Iron cage; Aesthetics; Deconstruction; Productive forms

"... the notion of some permanent essence which would be its "identity" is, like that of sharp boundaries, only a simplifying abstraction which may fit in certain limits." (Bohm 1998, p. 100)

A SORT OF INTRODUCTION

A University in Austria: At this university the faculty moved into a new building in 1998. The building is seen by many as an exceptional piece of modern architecture. One of the guiding ideas was to incorporate the idea of an "open university" ("openness to the public", "transparency",...), which emerged from around the beginning of the 1980s as a dominant organizational discourse within the faculty, into the architectural design. As usual in Austria, in public buildings a certain amount of public money is spent on "Kunst am Bau" (art on public buildings). Selected artists are invited to present and incorporate their work into the context of the building. During the sprint of 1999, a work of a well-known artist was positioned in front of the new faculty building. This work is entitled "Garten für das neue Sowi-Gebäude" (Garden for the new faculty building). The work is an impressive iron cuboid: 37 m in length, 4 m breadth, 3.7 m high, made of steel (33 mm) and a weight of 22 tons.[1]

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The "Garden for the new faculty building", described by the artist as a "sign for deliberate renunciation of Gelassenheit and non-intervention"[2] was not to everyone's taste. It was labeled by a group of opponents as the "Iron Cage". In an interview, the artist himself expressed one of his ideas: "Within the boundaries I let things just occur: the planting, the becoming, the perishing, the permeability for the wind, the birds, the water… everyday rubbish does not have to be removed immediately…because out of the beautiful, pure, true, clean nothing emerges anyway…".[3] This statement was meant by the artist as a symbol for modern life and possibly also as an ironic commentary on the new faculty building and on the "Management Center" which belongs to the whole complex and which symbolizes rather the opposite of "a deliberate… non-intervention". It caused others to call the object "The most expensive rubbish bin in Austria". A series of events took place in which different groups protested against this work which was seen as contradicting the idea and image of an "open university" to which the faculty has committed itself. One member of the faculty expressed this view in a public statement: "Why does one put a cage (prison) in front of the university, which causes lack of understanding, annoyance, aggression and rage about the waste of public money?"[4] Events were organized which attempted to transform the "iron cage" into a "house of fantasy and desire", the media commented on the event, others used the work as an occasion to protest against the "waste of public money" and the "death of social policy", etc. As a result of the artist's idea, that "the rubbish does not have to be removed immediately" some activists literally used the object as a rubbish bin and inserted rubbish from the nearby surroundings into it. As a consequence there was even the story of rats being attracted and acting as a possible danger for the hygiene on campus. Organizational actors, like the house-management felt responsible for "order" and "cleaning up", which in turn prompted the organization of new activities, in the faculty meeting discussion on order and disorder, questions of cleanness and hygiene emerged, etc. (Fig. 1).

The event itself of course presents us with a heavily symbolically laden image. You can find the "garden" *outside* the faculty building which is surrounded by walls. However, the walls of the building again are a mixture. There is lot of *glass* and *concrete*, symbolizing both modernity, transparency, but also solidity and clear boundaries. There is the object *outside*,
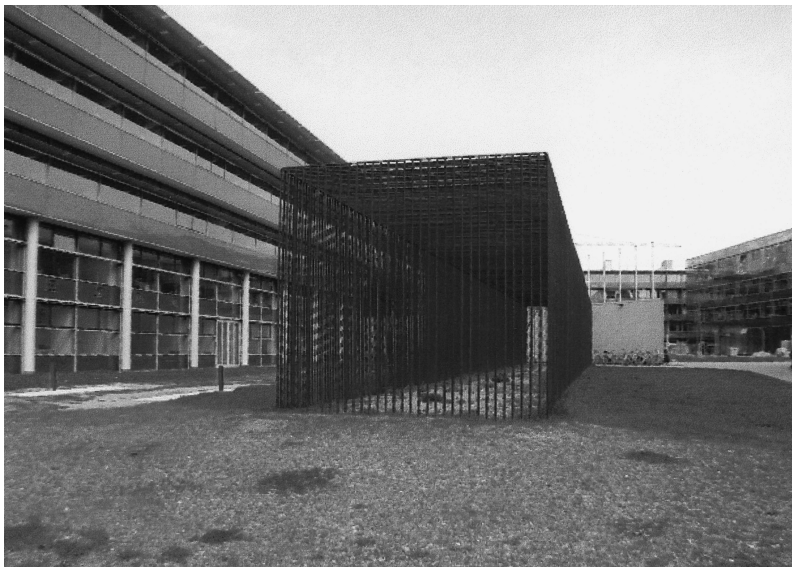

FIGURE 1   The "Garden for the New Faculty Building" also known as the "Iron Cage".

which—on the first sight transports the image of the "iron cage"—an image which is not exactly the one which the symbolic activities of the university were meant to communicate. In a certain sense, the object *outside* presents us with an image of the other. An image or symbol of that which in the discourse of excellence is increasingly seen as improper, rigid, anachronistic, . . . it confronts us with an image of the "ugly face" (Morgan 1986: 273) of organizations. For a while, the object served as a surface on which the negative energies and passions could be projected. This event was the initial point of departure for this paper, in which I will mainly reflect on the role of the boundary, the relation between inside and outside as well as on the possibilities of creative organizing created "moving concepts" (Steyaert and Janssens 1999, p. 188; Deleuze and Guattari 1994) which allow to perceive differently and draw attention to the potentials for creative organizing without neglecting the constraints and boundaries given in organized worlds. From the point of view of an organizational aesthetics (Höpfl and Linstead 2000; Strati 1999) it is not only the object itself or the various interpretations which could be given to it that are of interest, but also the fact that the object can be *framed* in different discourses which allows us to see it in this way or in that. Further, it is interesting since it shows that the frame is by no means fixed, stable or uncontested. As Antonio Strati (1999, p. 75) reminded us ". . .organizational aesthetics do not constitute an imaginary terrain of peace, harmony and love. On the contrary, . . . they are subject to social conflict in organizations, to the violence of corporate cultures and to the power of dominant coalitions in organizational life" Discussion arises, events occur, what is "proper" and what "improper"; what belongs to the inside and what to the outside changes, etc. It depends on the frame which may be relatively stable for a while but may turn out as just what it is: a conventionally stabilized view which may be disrupted on occasion. The frame can itself acquire the solidness of an iron cage when it is confirmed again and again; it than provides some certainty of how and what to see—and how and what not to see. The frame, which belongs to the order to convention *organizes our vision* of the world (see also Bloomfield and Vurdubakis 1997)—it allows us to see e.g. an "iron cage", "a garden", "a cuboid", a statement of Modern Art etc. The same applies to the objects of study which we conventionally call "organizations."

THE "IRON CAGE"

Since Max Weber—or more precisely—since Talcott Parsons' translation of Max Weber's (1930 [1904/05]) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*—at least, the metaphor of the "iron cage" is well known to organizational theorists and has structured thinking. Organizations have been understood as "systems of continuous purposive actions" which are hierarchically structured, marked off by clear boundaries, rules defining the boundaries of the allowed and the forbidden, etc. The "bureaucratic organization with its specialization of trained skilled labor, its demarcation of responsibility, regimentation and hierarchically organized relations of obedience." (Weber 1918, p. 332) ensures efficient production and the predictability of outcomes in the face of competitive market pressures. However, increasingly the dark side of this mode of organizing has been stressed. Bureaucratic organization came to be seen as a machine responsible for "eroding the human spirit and capacity for spontaneous action" (Morgan 1986, p. 25).

Max Weber originally spoke of a "cloak" (Mantel) that subsequently turns into a "steel-hard housing" "Aber aus dem Mantel ließ das Verhängnis ein stahlhartes Gehäuse werden"—In the English translation, however, the "stahlharte Gehäuse" ("steel-hard housing") turns into an "iron cage": ". . .fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage" (Weber 1930

[1904/05]: 181 quoted in Scott 1997, p. 561). This is interesting to note, since the *cloak* is a means of protecting an inside form the dangers of a hostile outside—from the winds, the rain, etc. . . . still, the "housing" is a means of protecting: it protects for example, the machine, which works within the housing and it also protects the operator from the machine; in contrast, the *cage* rather evokes the image of a prison and it also evokes the image of a heroic individual trapped within the narrow boundaries and struggling for freedom. It is further interesting to note, that the *cloak* has some elasticity and continuously *folds* according to the movements performed by the body—it is flexible rather than rigid and stiff. It *enables* a living organism to survive in turbulent times and can also be put off or put aside, when necessary. It is most comfortable when, like the "light cloak" of the saint, to which Max Weber refers "it can be thrown aside at any moment." (ibid.) Instead of a "light cloak" in contemporary discourse (bureaucratic) organization has turned into a heavy burden. It appears as a means for "molding human beings to fit the requirements of mechanical organization rather than building the organization around their strengths and potentialities." (Morgan 1986, p. 38).

There has been a deconstructive move in Organization Theory, in which the "iron cage" has been "revisited" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). However, this revisiting has been limited by a concern to demonstrate how the pressure for normalization and homogenization has shifted. For example, DiMaggio and Powell argue, that "the causes of bureaucratization and rationalization have changed. . . (and that) Organizations are still becoming more homogeneous, and bureaucracy remains the common organizational form" (p. 63). On the other hand, in recent years, within the field of Organization Studies what could be observed was a kind of "Foucauldian turn" (see for example, the collection of papers in Starkey and McKinley 1998). A specific interpretation of Foucault's work however has led to a reproduction of the image of the iron cage, and has overshadowed a central Foucauldian idea, which he articulated explicitly in a late interview, but which can also be seen as underlying his earlier work—namely the idea of "excavating our own culture in order to open a free space for innovation and creativity" (Foucault 1988, p. 163). The "captive" individual—that is the "caged", imprisoned, enslaved, locked up, confined, individual has been the dominant theme in this discourse. As McKinley and Starkey (1998, p. 4) put it: "In both imaginary and intent Foucault recalls Weber—Weber's image of the "iron cage" of rationality which simultaneously materially enriches Western civilization and spiritually impoverishes the captive individual." For Weber, the spiritual impoverishment was an outcome of the *Entzauberung* (disenchantment) of the world, in which the cognitive-instrumental rationality (which is most effectively embodied in the bureaucratic organization) becomes dominant. Weber was deeply concerned with the implications and he asks: "How is it at all possible to salvage any remnants of "individual" freedom of movement in any sense, given this all-powerful trend towards bureaucratization?" (Weber 1994, p. 159) Weber's view is further reflected in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas 1981)—in which it seems that two realms are created: The realm of the "system", which is dominated by "steering media" (such as money and bureaucratic power) and the realm of the "lifeworld" in which actions are coordinated by communication (and through which meaning, social integration and personal identities are reproduced). Habermas continues Weber's view which suggests that there are two different possibilities: On the one side, the instrumental systems which require the "*Fachmensch ohne Geist*" (the specialist without spirit)—on the other hand, we have the "*Genußmensch ohne Herz*" (the hedonist without heart). Whereas formal-instrumental systems require the specialist who is characterized by a purely instrumental attitude—the hedonist on the other hand is characterized by an "aesthetic-hedonist lifestyle" (Habermas 1981, p. 477). In the context of formal organizations it seems that the only alternative left is a "professionally intelligent adjustment to the functionalized milieu of big

organizations" (die fachlich intelligente Anpassung an das versachlichte Milieu großer Organisationen, p. 478).

Even if Habermas is critical of Weber's view on the process of rationalization on the whole and also admits, that the "externalization of the contexts of the lifeworld can never be achieved perfectly" (p. 460) he suggests that "in the *interior* of organizations" (im *Binnenraum* von Organisationen, emphasis added) (p. 460) communicative action, the only medium through which according to Habermas collective orientations, social integration and individual identity can be "reproduced" is neutralized. In Habermas' view, there is a way out of the iron cage: This way out of the iron cage however is not to be sought in a liberation from rationality, but rather in a higher form of rationality, which he calls "communicative rationality".

Habermas' theory, however, is based on a mechanical dualism, which separates "system" and "lifeworld" and action theory and systems theory, respectively, which prevents him from seeing that what seems to be excluded and externalized is actually a constitutive part of the inside. For both Weber and Habermas the factual existence of a *division* between essentially different realms is given.[5] Instrumental knowledge and "intelligent adjustment" is necessary in the realm of "the system" whereas aesthetic self-expression belongs to the life-world. Further, this division, which is also seen as an expression of a "functional differentiation" of society should be evaluated positively "as long as each and every one of the functionally differentiated social practices does not overstep the boundaries of its range." (Schulte-Sasse 1989, p. x).

It is actually Max Weber himself, who provides an interesting clue, which suggests that right in the center—or better at the very heart—of what is conceptualized as purely instrumental-rational order there can be found something which resists cognitive-instrumental rationality. Max Weber has described bureaucracy, the "steel-hard housing" also as a "Gehäuse der Hörigkeit"—a "housing of enslavement". Enslavement can also be translated as serfdom or bondage, which is exactly what Weber means to imply (Scott 1997). In German the word "Hörigkeit" has often connotations of sexual dependency, as for example, is expressed in Bert Brecht's and Kurt Weill's "Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit". Such relations of dependency cannot be reduced to instrumentality or instrumental action but are rather com-*pli*-cated relations in which human passion, power, questions of identity are intertwined.

This suggests, that *within* the house(ing) or "home" provided and stabilized by the "bürokratische Herrschaft" we can expect "das Unheimliche" (the uncanny—literally translated, the "un-homely") to play an important part. The "home" contains the unhomely, the rational contains the "irrational", organization contains dis-organization; the machine, which is supposed to work orderly in order to produce predictable outcomes contains within itself that which disrupts its smooth functioning.

An alternative way of thinking about the complexities of organizing, is by focusing not on dualistic distinctions (such as system/lifeworld, instrumental/expressive, material/symbolic, organization/environment, . . .) but rather by focusing on alternative modes of thinking, which question such dualistic views and thus open a space for seeing differently.

THE BOUNDARY

Cooper (1990) has drawn attention to the fundamental role of the boundary. In contemporary thinking two basically different concepts of the boundary can be distinguished. The first mode of thought starts from the assumption of given objects which speak for themselves and whose meaning is given. In this mode of thought, organization is thought of as "simple

located" (Chia 1998). Organizations, individuals or other entities are surrounded by boundaries. The role of the boundary, in this case is to hold together, what is supposed to belong together. In this mode of thought, the boundary serves a secondary and supplementary role, it "simply serves to frame (i.e. maintain), the 'system'" (Cooper 1990, p. 171). The function of the boundary is to mark off, to hold together, etc. unities that *are given* and derive their meaning and self-identity from intrinsic characteristics (see also Malavé 1998). This concept of the boundary is maintained even when organizations are constructed as "open systems" (see e.g. Scott 1987) in which the boundary is seen and conceptualized as permeable. This concept is perfectly in line with the image of the iron cage, which, as in the case of our example cited above, distinguishes itself from for example, a closed container: As the artist expressed the view: "*There is an inside and an outside/the interface is made permeable by the selection of bars.*"[6]

As we have already noted in the case of Habermas (1981), the "externalization of the contexts of the lifeworld can never be achieved perfectly" (p. 460). Probably, if we stick to this image, a Habermasian—democratic—solution would be, to have a democratic discourse in which ideally all members of the "lifeworld" would make rational decisions about, for example, the distance between the bars, the conditions of entry and exit. (Fig. 2).

In a second mode of thought, attention drawn to the constitutive role of the boundary. The boundary constitutes "this" and "that", "inside" and "outside", "good" and "bad", "beautiful" and "ugly". For Cooper, the understanding of the constitutive role of the boundary is of utmost significance for the understanding of organizational life. The boundary serves a dual function: (i) it divides or separates "this" and "that"—that is, it constitutes a *difference* and at the same time and (ii) it joins—that is, it constitutes a *relation*. For Cooper, it is also important to think of the boundary not as a given line, but rather as a "source of paradox and contradiction", as a "complex, ambiguous structure around which are focused both the formal and informal organizing processes of social life." (Cooper 1990, pp. 168–9). It is this understanding which is also implied in Foucault's work on "transgression" and also in Deleuze's and Foucault's metaphor of the "fold".

FIGURE 2   A look through the bars of the "Iron Cage".

ANOTHER WAY OF TALKING ABOUT THE RELATION OF INSIDE/OUTSIDE: THE FOLD

"the inside will always be the doubling *of* the outside" (Deleuze 1988, p. 99)

With the notion of transgression Foucault has deconstructed dualistic thinking. Rather than thinking in terms of black and white, in terms of the opposition of inside and outside he creates the image of an ongoing play. "Transgression, then is not related to the limit as black to white, the prohibited to the lawful, the outside to the inside, or as the open area of a building to its enclosed spaces. Rather, their relationship takes the form of a spiral that no simple infraction can exhaust." (Foucault 1998, p. 73–4). With transgression he developed an idea which is fundamental since it connects a specific experience which can be described as an aesthetic experience[7] with the creative re-formation of relations to self and others. Transgression is the experience of loosing ourselves, of loosing our *fixed identities.* With the notion of transgression, Foucault tried to understand human beings as both limited *and* open to possible transformation.

The *fold* is a metaphor which has been developed and used by Foucault in his various writings. It has been further developed and given its due weight by Deleuze (e.g. 1988, 2000). To think in terms of the fold creates a different way of seeing the *relationship* between inside and outside. In conventional thinking—as Cooper has already noted, there is a tendency to think in terms of systems which are surrounded by the boundary. Usually, the boundary is seen to belong to the system. It is the system, which has a boundary, rather than the environment. Connected with this idea is a way of thinking which privileges the inside against the outside. This establishes a "command economy" (Lee and Brown, 1994, p. 782) which subordinates the environment to the system's own operational requirements. Further connected with this view is the idea, that the inside must be protected against what is outside. In order to maintain the purity and order of the inside, the outside, which is seen as different, must be kept out. The outside is, as Derrida put it a *supplément.* Obviously, the relation created by this concept of the boundary is not neutral or symmetrical. It is a hierarchical relation. What is outside is less ordered, less understood, the outside is a threat to the inside, it endangers the purity of the inside. Consequently, the protecting function of the boundary is stressed.

The metaphor of the fold provides an entirely different view. As Deleuze puts it: The inside is the outside *folded* in. "If the inside is constituted by the folding of the outside, between them there is a topological relation: the relation to oneself is homologous to the relation with
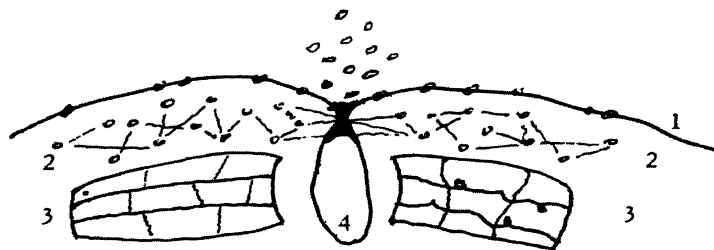
1. Line of the outside
2. Strategic zone
3. Strata
4. Fold (zone of subjectivation)

FIGURE 3   "The fold" (Deleuze 1998, p. 120). (1) Line of the outside, (2) strategic zone, (3) strata, (4) fold—zone of subjectivation.

the outside and the two are in contact, through the intermediary of the strata which are relatively external environments (and therefore relatively internal)" (Deleuze 1988, p. 119). What was formerly seen as a *line*—separating inside and outside, this and that—is now a *space*. It is a "strategic zone" to use a Deleuzian expression—it is a zone of paradox and contradiction, it is a zone of micropolitics, it is a zone of contestation. The strategic zone neither belongs to the inside, nor does it belong to the outside. It is a zone in which struggle takes place and in which it is decided what belongs to the inside and what to the outside, what is proper and what is improper. The boundary then is not a static line, but a dynamic space (Fig. 3).

With this metaphor in mind, we are able to think of organization as a "manifold". There is no one (clear cut) boundary, which surrounds the system/organization and separates inside from outside, but rather there is a multiplicity of folds, which are dynamic, rather than static. The *relative*stability is provided by the "strata", which are historical formations which have formed over long periods of time. The manifold is of a *labyrinthine* character in which many ways lead to somewhere and sometimes nowhere. Form this point of view, organization and environment (e.g. markets) are not understood as preexisting entities which relate to each other in one way or another. Both production and consumption are *poetic* in the sense of producing unexpected outcomes and novel forms. This means that both "external" (markets) and "internal" (employees) environments are products of a complex process. Neither are the "productive subjects" constituted in a way that transforms them quasi-automatically into reliable workers that comply to the demands of production nor are consumers passive in the sense of using products in a completely predictable way. As we have seen for example, with the so called "Iron Cage" at the university campus—this object took on a variety of meanings which emerged in a complex process in which political interests (e.g. the object as sign for the "death of social policy"), passions (the object as an assault to the self-identity of certain factors), calculative considerations (the object as "waste of public money") and has been used in ways that the producer of this work could neither foresee nor control (e.g. the object as a rubbish bin). How things and goods are used, to what ends and with what effects cannot be completely determined. As du Gay (1996: 86) noticed "despite the enormous efforts made through advertising, design and the media to create markets for given products, profits are always dependent on the ability of marketing staff to interpret the changes in the way products are used in current social relations." Production and consumption are not two separate domains in which one conditions the other but rather two circuits which come together at the strategic zone.

In his celebrated book *Foucault* Deleuze (1988) uses this metaphor in order to bring out the whole force of Foucault's idea of an *aesthetics of existence.* Foucault's later work (Foucault 1984; 1985; 1990), in which he develops the idea of an aesthetics of existence has sometimes been interpreted as a late discovering of the autonomous subject by Foucault. This has usually been interpreted as a kind of radical shift or break, in which Foucault seems to "discover" the autonomous subject, which in his earlier work he has criticized so harshly. In the reading of Deleuze, however, which I find quite convincing and productive this is not at all the case. Neither is there any determinism, nor is it correct to say that there is an autonomous self (opposed to the outside word)—in the humanist sense. This provides a clue for finding an answer to Max Weber's question "How is it possible to salvage any remnants of "individual" freedom of movement in any sense . . .?" (Weber 1994, p. 159) As Deleuze (1988, p. 101) put it: "Foucault's fundamental idea is that of a dimension of subjectivity derived from power and knowledge without being dependent on them." Rather, there are "forces" in which the "subject" is *implicated.* The point of the subject of the aesthetics of existence is that it makes creative use of the forces. It "folds" the forces of the outside and makes them productive. In Foucault, this idea of an aesthetics of existence is mainly related

to subjects or individuals. However, Deleuze makes an additional interesting remark—he says "there are collective subjectifications" (pp. 103–4). This idea means that we can think of an *aesthetics of existence* not only in terms of an individual subject who "creates (itself) as a work of art" (Foucault 1984, p. 350)—it is also possible to think of groups or a multiplicity of individuals in terms of creating themselves and their modes of relating to each other as works of art. That is, modes of organizing or modes of connecting in which one follows desire rather than institutional priorities and demands (and tries to give them a shape/form).

McKinley and Starkey (1998) have criticized the image that has been created by a specific reading of Foucault within the field of Management and Organization Studies. "We need to contest the reading of Foucault's work as little more than an elaboration of Weber's "iron cage" argument in which modern society and modernism are deconstructed as various expressions of a common theme—the generalization of panoptical or conformist forces in a unitary process of rationalization and normalization, as a result of which we all inhabit carceral archipelagos of one form or another." (p. 233). Instead, McKinley and Starkey suggest conceptualizing organizations as "communities of practices" in which individual and collective forms of an aesthetics of existence are thinkable. "While acknowledging the reality of limits, organization theory needs to be more concerned with how individuals/groups *transcend limitations and create forms of practice* that reflect the pursuit of their own, not others' desires." (p. 239, emphasis added). In a similar way Willmott (1994) has pointed to the limits of a certain reading of Foucault's concept of subjection and to the need to think of possibilities and processes of "de-subjection" (p. 119). Willmott suggests some metaphors, which point to an understanding of aesthetics of existence. In contrast to the traditional understanding of Critical Theory which strongly emphasizes the need for reflection—which is understood as a rational(cognitive) process—Willmott points to improvisation, a metaphor which has increasingly been picked up by organizational theorists (e.g. Hatch 1998, 1999; Weick 1998, …) in order to think of "the (disciplined) art of organizing together" (Willmott 1994, p. 120) in a different way. In improvisation, Willmott argues, a dualistic sense of self, which is the basis for subjection is dissolved. He quotes an extract form a conversation with the jazz musician Even Parker who describes the experience of free improvisation, which he sees as illustrative of the "experience of de-subjugation" (p. 119).

> "The best bits of my solo playing, for me, I can't explain to myself. . .at a certain speed all kinds of things happen which I'm not consciously controlling. They just come out. It's as though the instrument comes alive and starts to have a voice of its own." (ibid).

Improvisation can also be expressed in terms of the fold or (un)folding (see Barrett 2000). The question we would need to explore is the ways in which individuals and groups of individuals fold the forces of the outside productively or aesthetically. That is, how they make creative use of the possibilities and materials at hand. Creating form in this view is to be seen as "*unfinished business*" (Cooper 1976, p. 1014). It is a process of creating and recreating, rather than a result. Examples for this productive folding of force can be drawn from diverse fields. Think for example of the Judo-fighter. There is a constant struggle or a fight. In a judo-fight it is important to work *with* the forces rather than against them. The distinctive feature of the art of judo is to use the force—to fold the force. The point is, that it will only be a beautiful fight when there is an ongoing process, in which complex movements are performed. A precondition for this is not only an embodied knowledge of the technique, a certain bodily condition but also of awareness of or attention to the differences in force.

Another example is the example of the sailing boat. The point here is again, that a successful organizing means that it is not worked against the forces (the wind, the tides, etc.) but rather, that these forces are folded. (see Watts 1983, p. 45)

What is characteristic for these forms is not that they are chaotic or without form—but rather that form is an ongoing accomplishment which comes out of responding to and of

working *with* the forces rather than against them. One is not opposed to forces—but rather one is *within* a field of forces. One is conditioned by these forces but not determined.

The emphasis shifts from norm and normalization to form and style. The concept of style has often been associated with superficiality. What matters, it is argued is content rather than form, it is substance rather than style. From the point of view of an aesthetic of folding however, style is of utmost importance. Not as opposed to content—rather as being inevitably linked. To give style means actually to give form, which is actually another word for organizing. Giving form should be interpreted not as imposing a predefined form but rather as emerging out of a intensive field. It is an unfolding of potentialities which cannot be imposed—but which can be provided (or denied) to the conditions of possibility to emerge. For Nietzsche, style originates in the expression of a condition, an "inner tension of a pathos" (innere Spannung von Pathos). "To express a condition, an inner tension of a pathos through signs, including the tempo of these signs, that is the meaning of every style. And considering that the multiplicity of my inner conditions is unusually large I therefore have many stylistic possibilities—the most multifarious art of style which a person has ever had is at his disposal" (Nietzsche, quoted in Winchester 1994, p. 142). What Nietzsche says here about the personal style can also be translated to a multiplicity of individuals relating to each other and the way the multiplicity is organized. As Lee and Brown (1994, p. 787) noticed, there is an "irreducible otherness at work at the very heart of every multiplicity". It is exactly the way how we approach this otherness which constitutes different forms of knowing organization and its possibilities.

ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS AS OPENING OF FIELDS OF POSSIBILITIES

"Unfolding the Manifold Onto a flat Plane": An Obscure Art of Light

Representation, as description or explanation involves "unfolding of a manifold onto a flat plane" (Cooper 1993, p. 289) This form of analysis can be found for example in strategic management. The famous SWOT—the analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the organization suggests to explore the strengths and weaknesses that are given in an organization. These strengths and weaknesses are to be put on "a flat plane". The multidimensionality of the organization is to be subjected under the objectifying gaze of the strategist. There is a representationalist strategy which follows a "veni-vidi-vici theory of knowledge" (Fleck 1994 [1930]) The strengths and weaknesses are there—to be discovered and collected. They have the character of facts, which may be hidden but can be made visible by the correct gaze (see Knights 1992; Calori 1998). This form of "unfolding the manifold" can be understood as a form of *subjection*. It imposes a truth on a field; (e.g. in describing the strengths and weaknesses at the same time it prescribes a certain course of action, a certain path for development, . . .). This form of knowledge is made up by "minor techniques of multiple and intersecting observations, of eyes that must see without being seen; using techniques of subjection and methods of exploitation; an obscure art of light" (Foucault 1977, p. 171)

It is constitutive for the logic of the *gaze*, in which knowledge is, as Foucault (1984, p. 88) notes "not made for understanding (but) . . .for cutting". The attempt to know, the desire to know all and everything, any detail is an ultimate illusion, which has been pursued by the diverse specialisms of management. For example, in the field of HRM but also in the field of accounting a whole arsenal of techniques has been developed in order to *objectify* anything and transform it into a resource to be used and exploited (see Townley 1994; 1998). Knowledge of a specific form it is assumed provides the very basis for rational management.

The more detailed knowledge is produced, it seems, the more would there be the possibility of rational management based on the certainty of information. Barbara Townley (1998, p. 194) has well described what is implied in the creation and production of knowledge for the purpose of governance:

"There are three principle areas of knowledge which the management of personnel requires: knowledge of the "body of labor" or the workforce generally; knowledge of the activity or labor to be undertaken; and knowledge of the individual. Ways of ordering populations, mechanism of the supervision and administration of individuals and groups require the operation of disciplines. Technologies, or mechanisms of disciplinary power, establish an order through classifications (*taxinomia*) or through measurement (*mathesis*). These technologies constitute systems of recording, classifying and measuring. They act as grids, configurations of knowledge, which may be placed over a domain. Through a number of different mechanisms, a personnel provides measurement of both physical and subjective dimensions of labor. It offers a technology which attempts to make individuals and their behavior predictable and calculable, allowing the 'elimination of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation. . .to establish presences and absences' (Foucault 1977: 143). It fixes individuals in a conceptual space, orders or articulates the labor process, captures individuals within a form of visibility, a gaze, which serves to render actions, behavior, and even thoughts, knowable." (Townley 1998, p. 194).

The attempt of knowledge as unfolding is to fix and freeze—in order to make objects manageable. In this view, the iron cage takes on a new form, which has already been noticed by Jeremy Bentham:

"Bentham was surprised that Panoptic institutions could be so light. There were no more bars, no more chains, no more heavy locks; all that was needed was that the separations should be clear and the openings well arranged. The heaviness of the old 'house of security', with their fortress-like architecture, could be replaced by the simple economic geometry of a 'house of certainty' (Foucault 1977, pp. 202–3).

However, to see the functionalist transparency as an achievement, rather than a tendency or even a desire fuelled by the fear of the "dark forces" which may interrupt predictability, calculability, etc. is to re-produce the image of the iron cage once more. The iron cage reappears as the panoptic space of light. The idea of an all seeing eye, of a light without shadow is itself an impossibility, since every light produces at the same time its own shadow. As Cooper puts it: "When everything is named, identified and located in this space of saying, then everything is known and there is no remainder, no shadow." (Cooper 1993, p. 291). An alternative view would start not by the attempt to represent and to know. Rather it would start

from here and now and focus on the possibilities given in a situation. Knowing then is not for the convenience of the strategists or administrators, to enable them to "see more clearly and more quickly" (Cooper 1993, p. 296) but rather to work creatively in structured fields.

Knowing As Folding

"what is it to know, if it is not possible to draw everything together on a flat surface?" (Law 1998, p. 98).

To work creatively *in* a field of possibilities demands a form of knowledge, which is distinct from purely cognitive knowledge. Schmid (1998, pp. 221–230) used the ancient Greek term of *phronensis* to characterize a form of knowledge or "wisdom" (Klugheit) which folds cognitive and aesthetic capacities. Phronetic wisdom is located "...between cognition and perception, between knowledge and experience to bring to the fore sensible thought and a bodily intelligence." (p. 221, my translation). Such phronetic wisdom is the form of knowledge which characterizes the subject of the "aesthetics of existence", in which "thought thinks its own history (the past), but in order to free itself from what it thinks (the present) and be able finally to, think differently (the future)." (Deleuze 1988, p. 119). Such wisdom is not concerned with a-historical and de-contextualized knowledge of facts; rather it is concerned with re-search in the proper sense of the word. The Latin particle recorresponds to the English "again" or "against". Thus re-search means to search *again* or to search for the second time, or to put it an other way to search for that which has been lost or forgotten on the way (method = the way).[8] What has been lost on the way that are the possibilities *not* realized, the connections *not* made and probably the future possibilities *not* taken into consideration. There are thus three aspects which prevent such a kind of knowledge or better knowing from "narrow-mindedness and short-sightedness" (Schmid 1998, p. 223): retrospective, circumspective and prospective.

These three aspects concern the *three folds of time*. The whole of these three folds shows itself in every moment. The past is *im-plicated* in the present, as much as the future is *im-plicated* in the present. The present, the moment thus is a manifold, which unfolds itself continuously. (Böhler, 2000, p. 170) This constitutes the process of a continuous folding, unfolding, refolding. It is important to see, that the potentialities given in a situation can often not be realized. For example, traumatic experiences in the past may foreclose the potentialities given in the present or in the future. The lack of imagination or vision may bind us to reproduce a present condition, just as restrictive forces or objectified "demands" may prevent potentialities to be actualized. The potentialities then remain enfolded. Knowing as folding therefore means to start from the *middle of things*, from the present stratum, in which one is embedded: "what can I see, and what can I say today?" (Deleuze 1988, p. 119) and than to relate it to the folds of time.

The *retrospective* aspect focuses on the genealogy of things and situations. It allows to realize, that the conditions of a field are actually outcomes of a historical process, in which some possibilities have been realized at the detriment of others. What is realized in an actuality carries within it the traces of its own past and is but one set of multiple possibilities that could have been realized. The retrospective aspect thus "permits the discovery, ... of the myriad of events through which—thanks to which, against which—they were formed." (Foucault 1984, p. 81). It involves the analysis of "... accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us" (ibid.). Such genealogical insight increases the awareness for the historical conditions *implicated* in a present situation. However, it is not concerned with the past per se. It is not a reconstruction or representation of the past in terms of the present. Genealogical

investigation is also not a search for origins. It multiplies rather than unifies. It does not seek for (causal) explanations. Rather, it attempts to make a present situation or a present set of realized possibilities intelligible and to *open* up a space for future actions. The *circumspective* aspect realizes that anything connects to anything and that there are no *given* boundaries; it strives to discover the connections in a heterogeneous field, which make up an actuality. The circumspective aspect realizes that there are no isolated unities, but rather, that anything which is given is only so by virtue of a network which sustains it. Anything is part of a larger context which makes it possible or prevents it from further realization (see for example, Law 1994).

The *prospective* aspect concerns possibilities not yet realized. It is not so much concerned with foretelling and predicting (organizational) futures (March 1995) rather "the imagination of possible futures (and futures possibilities) is a source of new experiments and different possible ways of thinking and acting." (March 1995, p. 435). Such imagination allows to take care in the present in order to be open to future possibilities, which, even if they incorporate a moment of chance must be appreciated in order not to kill them in advance. These future possibilities must not be "known in advance" rather, they are to be "connected to the idea of the subjunctive, that which is subject to doubt and uncertainty, that which might be." (Cooper 1993, p. 288).

Further, imagination is not to be thought of as *creatio ex nihilo*. Rather, imagination is related to previous experiences, it is related to history and it is related to the present conditions. This however, does not mean that imagination is simply a repetition of the past. Rather, it can be understood as folding past and present—imagination in this sense is really a form of re-membering—but not in order to simply repeat the past—rather in order to create a difference. Imagination in this sense can be understood as memory, which in German means *Er-innerung*; this can also be translated as re-membering, that is of making the forgotten, repressed, excluded a member again—a member of those possibilities worthy of consideration. As Deleuze (1998, p. 108) puts it: "memory is the necessity of renewal". Or as Weick (1998, p. 547) put it in the context of improvisation: "to improve memory is to gain retrospective access to a greater range of resources."

THE BOUNDARYLESS

For Carter and Jackson, who refer to the aesthetic category of the sublime it is necessary to draw attention not only to what is but also to what is not. The whole field of the negative, the field of the possibilities not realized and excluded by the dominant discourse deserves special attention. The "negative" in Carter's and Jackson's view comprises the other, it comprises what has been excluded and what has been denied the possibility to emerge. They favor a view which in order to be productive and creative of something new and different, the dominant discourse has to be denied. "It draws *nothing* from, and relates to *nothing* in, the dominant mode of organizational thinking" (p. 211, emphasis in original). In order to regain the productive potentials and to overcome the "profound impotence in our normal(ized) ways of understanding and organizing" (p. 209) negative thinking is "necessary and has to place itself outside the dominant discourse" (p. 203). However, this is also a problematic assumption. It is not clear where the boundaries created by the dominant order are. It seems that Carter and Jackson create a new form of either/or thinking, which they actually want to criticize and overcome. An aesthetic of folding shares with Carter and Jackson the idea of overcoming an imposed "impotence" but it does so by a form of contestation which is not negative—but neither is it positive or affirmative in a simple sense. As Foucault put it, *transgression* is not negative, it is rather a "non-positive affirmation" (Foucault 1998, p. 74).

Transgression affirms both the limited being in the world as well as the limitless to which it breaks out. The affirmative "yes" of transgression, however has nothing to do with the mindless acceptance given order. Rather, it is an affirmation of the possibility of creative trans-formation (see also Dumm 1996, p. 45; Schmid, 2000, p. 143). Similarly, Deleuze (1968, p. 208) stressed the problematic of the negative: "Practical struggle never proceeds by way of the negative but by way of difference and its power of affirmation, . . ."

The point I would like to make is that the "sublime" is not necessarily something to be talked *about*, nor is it necessarily something to be represented. As Strati (2000, p. 21) put it, it arises in those moments "when the personality seemingly disintegrates." This is the point of transgression, at which for a moment "our normal(ized) ways of understanding and organizing" (Carter and Jackson 1998, p. 209) break down and open the possibility of refolding.

THE SPIRITUAL

There is yet an other dimension to be considered which can be seen as an energizing principle, as A force "from which the subject, in different ways, hopes for immortality, eternity, salvation, freedom or death or detachment." (Deleuze 1998, p. 104) It is the spiritual. As Guillet de Monthoux (1993, p. 237) put it: "Between subject and object the spiritual in organizations takes on an important aesthetic value.". After discussing a series of investigations in which aesthetics was the relevant topic, de Monthoux comes to the conclusion that "What really seems to have attracted them is however the Kandinskian quest for the 'spiritual' in organizations; of course not in the sense of finding 'the spirit', which is a perspective and not a thing or an attitude. Aesthetics seem to be a way to interpret social organization—a way to see and thereby shape social reality. It is highly idealistic and perhaps even belongs to the religious realm." (p. 251). My own interest in aesthetics is, among other motivated by a similar concern. However, the question still is, which kind of spirituality? Whiteheadian spirituality, which has also been described as "postmodern spirituality" (Griffin 1992) is attractive here. It focuses on making creative use of possibilities and it reframes the view of our relation to the world, in which we are implicated rather than opposed to. It encourages an openness and the development of a rich sense of self, which is—as we could say—a manifold, created by a multiplicity of experiences. It cannot easily be described as "highly idealistic". Rather it can be characterized as an attempt to overcome the dualism between idealism/realism; mind/body; spirituality/materiality. "According to Whitehead, our soul is not an enduring substance that is what it is, and has the powers it has, prior to its relation with other things. That notion of the soul as independent substance is what leads to the competitive model: we must become less of ourselves if God is to become more of us. Whitehead has suggested that we think of the soul instead as a series of moments of experiences. Each experience includes, in some sense, those other things into itself, making itself out of them. Given this understanding, I am not in competition with my environment; I need not shield it out to be authentically myself. Rather, the more of my environment I can take into myself, making it my own, the richer my experience is." (Griffin 1992, p. 379). Managerial writers, such as Peters and Waterman, Peters and Austin etc. have talked about the spiritual dimension in a certain sense. In their discourse readers are incited to develop a "public and passionate hatred of bureaucracy" (Peters 1987: 459) and develop an "enterprise culture" in which employees are driven by "a burning desire to be the best" (Peters and Austin 1985: 414) In the place of God is the customer and the market, in the place of true spirituality is the spirit of enterprise from which it is assumed that a "passion for excellence" in the sense defined by the company arises. The entrepreneurial spirit is

understood as an ethics which demands to comply to the expectations of the customer and passionately fulfill the needs and desires of the customers. "Thus an enterprise culture is a culture of the customer, where markets subordinate producers to the preferences of individual consumers. Success and failure in this market based universe are supposedly determined by the relative ability of competing producers to satisfy the preferences of the enterprising consumer" (du Gay 1996: 77). However, the Spiritual is more than a mere ideology, and in my view should not be left to those authors who simply capitalize on the lack of spirituality (created by governmentality) by enforcing a discourse of "passion for excellence" (Peters and Austin 1985), using religious and pseudo-religious symbols to mobilize commitment and energies for pre-defined ends. There is more to it, and a more serious point to make—and I think the Whiteheadian concept can be of help here. Whiteheadian spirituality circles around the creative use of possibilities and the engagement in situations. It stresses that even if "we find that possibilities as well as actualities are given (in our environment) . . .they can always be synthesized in various possible ways. . .this synthesis can be a creative synthesis, rather than one that was determined by forces external to it. And we sometimes experience as given rather novel possibilities that allow us to transcend the actual past quite dramatically." (Griffin 1992, p. 381). From this point of view production and consumption—the activities associated with organization and the market—are both *creative* activities which come together at fold of organizing: a *poesis* in which heterogeneous materials are folded.

We are not determined by the outside forces—but rather the point is to fold the forces of the outside. *Governmentality is antispiritual*—it represents what Griffin calls in "anti-spiritual spirit" (p. 381). It replaces passion, enthusiasm, . . . Foucault is of course is a thinker of the death of God. But I think it can be said, that he tried to think of the Devine without God.[10] His notion of transgression has a very spiritual dimension.[11] Transgression is an aesthetic and a spiritual experience. Transgression is an *experience* which has to do with limits and the boundary, dissolving boundaries and getting in contact with the infinite. It is a form of spirituality, which encourages to make creative use of possibilities. It does not focus on the negative—nor does it simply affirm what is given. Rather, it attempts to create, to use the forces, to transform the forces into a productive energy. "The most distant point becomes interior, by being converted into the nearest: *life within the folds*. This is the central chamber, which one need no longer fear is empty since one fills it with oneself. Here one becomes a master of one's speed and, relatively speaking, a master of one's molecules and particular features, in this zone of subjectivation: the boat as interior of the exterior." (Deleuze 1988, p. 123).

CONCLUSIONS

After all, it is good to remember, that we do not live or work in an "iron cage". The "iron cage" seems to belong to "the old categories of the negative" (Foucault, in Hand 1988, p. xlii) through which the limitations and restrictions are stressed. An aesthetic of folding encourages to overcome a dualistic view, in which the individual is seen as imprisoned and in which it is hardly thinkable, to "salvage any remnants of individual freedom of movement in any sense" (Weber 1994, p. 159). Instead it suggests that present conditions, in which one is embedded can be folded in different ways.

To paraphrase Deleuze, we can say: to organize is to fold, to "double the outside with a coextensive inside" (Deleuze 1988, p. 118) In this sense *organization* is not understood as arresting, fixing, dividing—but rather as an energizing principle, which connects and relates various materials into productive forms. We are now also able to see that this understanding of organization is a reversal of the traditional notion. Organization is usually understood as a

mechanism or technology for the reduction of complexity. However, organizing as folding means to increase complexity, it is complexification. *It is a becoming rather than a being*.

NOTES

1. These are the measures according to the artist (Weinberger 1999a,b).
2. "den Garten als Zeichen des freiwilligen Verzichts/der Gelassenheit/des Nichteingreifens zu sehen. Es gibt ein Außen und ein Innen/dessen Schnittstelle jedochdurch die Wahl von Gitterstäben durchlässig ist—ein grenzenloses Haus für Lebewesen" (Weinberger 1999b, p. 24).
3. "Im Konzept war auch enthalten, dass Alltagsabfälle nicht sofort werden müssen, so als Symbol für Reinheit und Schönheit, sondern dass sie ruhig auch liegen bleiben können. Das wurde dann überspitzt, indem Leute Mullkübel aus der Altstadt oben hineingekippt haben . . .ein einziges Missverständnis, weil die paar Coladosen und Tschiggstummeln hätten nicht gestört. Weil aus dem Schönen, Reinen, Wahren, Sauberen ohnehin nichts entsheht " (Weinberger 1999a, p. 21).
4. "Warum setzt man dann einen Käfig (Gefängnis) davor, der nur Unverständnis, Ärger und Wut über verschwendete Steuergelder auslöst" (Sattler 1999, p. 24).
5. Habermas' *(1986, pp. 327 ff.)* Theory of Communicative Action has been extensively criticized for the tendency to reify the categories of "system" and "lifeword". In the Entgegnungen defended his conceptualization. He argued that, even if he introduced "system" and "lifeworld" as analytical categories, these categories have a "quasi-ontological character" (p. 386). This is why Habermas is able to talk of a "Entkoppelung" (decoupling) of "system" and "lifeworld" which finally leads to a "colonialization of the life world". According to Habermas, this "colonialization of the lifeworld" manifests itself in destruction of collective meaning, social anomie and individual psychopathology.
6. "Es gibt ein Außen und ein Innen/dessen Schnittstelle jedoch durch die Wahl von Gitterstäben durchlässigist - ein grenzenloses Haus für Lebewesen" (Weinberger 1999b, p. 24).
7. "It is "aesthetic" in the sense that Steven Linstead describes the aesthetic moment as "a moment of dislocation form the social dimensions of experience, where the observer attends to the objective qualities and form of the object as object and forgets its significance." (Linstead, 2000, p. 82); see also Linstead (1994).
8. In ancient Greek method or meta-hodos denotes the way or the path through a problem.
10. On several occasions Foucault noticed the trans-formative power of spirituality. For example, in his (journalistic) writings on the Iranian revolution he noticed, that Marx' famous dictum of religion as an "opium for the people" has often been quoted, whereas Marx' sentence, that religion is "spirit in a spiritless time" has been neglected. There is also some evidence that Foucault appreciated Eastern spirituality. Reportedly, in 1978 he went to Japan and spent some time meditating in a Zen-temple and studied the works of the 9th century Zen master Rinsai; on a philosophical level, Foucault suggested to reformulate the question of truth as a "practice to transform oneself". This suggest that the transformative power of spirituality is an important element in an aesthetic of folding, since it also depends on the "intensity of courage" (Foucault) which is creative of new experiences (see Schmid 2000, pp. 366–72).
11. As Foucault (1998: p. 75) notices in his discussion of the work of Georges Bataille, transgression "was originally linked to the devine, or rather, from this limit marked by the sacred it opens the space where the devine functions."

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