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The Topographical Imagination: Space and organization theory

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Abstract

We live in a time of space, also in the study of organization. This review essay reflects on the state and the potential of organization theory's spatial turn by embedding it in a wider movement of thought in the humanities and social sciences. Reading exemplary studies of organizational spatialities alongside the broader history and renaissance of spatial thinking allows us to identify and discuss four twists to the spatial turn in organization theory. First, organization is understood as something placed or sited. Second, it is a site of spatial contestation, which is constitutive for (and not merely reflective of) organizational life. Third, such contestation is itself an outcome of a spatial multiplicity that encompasses affects, technologies, voids and absences. Fourth, such an excess of space is beyond (or rather before) representation and thus summons a spatial poetics. In following these twists, increasingly complex and speculative topographies of organization take shape.

Keywords

aesthetics, affect, organizational form, materiality, power, process theories, representation, resistance, space, site technology, topography

Introduction: Wayfinding

> Space is the everywhere of modern thought. It is the flesh that flatters the bones of theory. It is an all-purpose nostrum to be applied whenever things look sticky. It is an invocation which suggests that the writer is right on without her having to give too much away. It is flexibility as explanation: a term ready and waiting in the wings to perform that song-and-dance act one more time. (Crang & Thrift, 2000, p. 1)

A body of work is emerging acknowledging the intimacy between space and organization.

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This association is at its most apparent in studies of the spatial settings of work place architecture (Burrell & Dale, 2003; Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Wasserman & Frenkel, 2011), yet it has also led to inquiries into different sites of organizing such as the city (Michels & Steyaert, 2017; Nash, 2018), festivals (Toraldo & Islam, 2019), hubs (Cnossen & Bencherki, 2018) and stairwells and toilets (Shortt, 2015; Skoglund & Holt, 2020). Heralded as the 'spatial turn' in organization theory (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012), this heterogeneous body of work is marked by a distinct topographical imagination (Weigel, 2009). This has two aspects. First, the studies emphasize the material placement of organization, understood as spatially configured. Second, organization is performed, it literally needs to take place (*tópos*, 'place') and organizational theory becomes space-writing (*gráphō*, 'I write'): It gathers, surveys, maps, experiences and reimagines everyday sites of organizing.

The topographical nature of the 'spatial turn' is, then, more than a request to attend to the organizational influence of built and natural locations. To bring space 'in' is also to think, and write, spatially. It is to think, for example, of how organization is made through interactions and through the edges or borders of such: who or what is 'out' and 'in'? Are they estranged from the space or familiar to it? To think spatially is to be alive to how an organizational form or body is always being placed somewhere, or seeking a place, whereby power becomes intimate to its realization and identity. To think spatially is to consider how boundaries (gates, access codes, language, hierarchies, hinterlands, no-go zones, back-rooms, colonial partitions) are being instituted and transgressed as well as more critically which boundaries define organization; how organizational forms echo or recoil from their wider settings. To think spatially is to consider how, if '[a]ll the world is a bloom space now' (Stewart, 2010, p. 340), organizing works atmospherically, how it is 'constructed out of a spatial swirls of affects' (Thrift, 2006, p. 143), demanding emotional sensitivity; and how questions of responsibility are questions of extension and aura – of reaching out into what is distant and bringing it close, or finding it remains enigmatic and free of 'proper' understanding. It is toward explicating and elaborating on the transformative possibilities of such thinking that this review essay is devoted.

The reason for casting our review in these terms is that we feel organization theory has failed to explore fully the implications of thinking spatially. The failure arises because of two illusions, summarized by Henri Lefebvre as the 'illusion of transparency' and 'the realistic illusion' (1991/1974, p. 27). Illusions of transparency find space 'intelligible'; corresponding to a perception of space as 'innocent' and 'free of traps or secret places', so permitting a broad coincidence between the mental space of thoughts/discourse (ideas of space) and material space (what is made subject to these ideas). Consider

> the creative artist and artful architect, visually or literally re-presenting the world in the image of their subjective imaginaries; the utopian urbanist (. . .); the spatial semiologist reconstituting (. . .) a world of rationally interpretable signification; the design theorist seeking to capture the meanings of spatial form in abstract mental concepts. (Soja, 1996, p. 79)

Consider, even, the academic undertaking a review of 'the field'. All of these figures relate to space primarily as an idea that can be enacted and projected onto the world, and which then stays put. Spatial reality is confined to a cognitive world of imagined representations (*res cogitans*): 'thought things' like designs, distribution networks, arcadias, theoretical patterns and groupings. The idealizations of *res cogitans* appear, for example, in the internal sense of distinctiveness emphasized, in the strategy literature on vision, in identity theory, and with the idea and ideal of connectivity fostered in the literature on boundaries (say, in communities of practice) and networks. It is illusory because ideas of space are being projected onto the world through language (think strategic planning here, or how organizing becomes a struggle

over who authorizes the authoritative representation; (Kuhn, 2014), and the world, it is assumed, will passively comply, as though it were nothing more than passively awaiting conscious design. *Res cogitans* also plays out in practices of theorizing. Think of how theory often assembles organization (and its parts) into categorical boxes, arrows and grids. This spatial language invokes a view of a space that can be abstracted into patterned positions and movements whose predictability becomes a function of the concepts themselves.

The second illusion supposes the opposite to the first. Here space is located physically, in the world of material things (*res extensa*) which can be represented by language.[1] In organization theory *res extensa* is found in the oft-expressed but under-acknowledged assumption that organization refers to a thing *in* an external environment (as in institutional theory, innovation theory or the competitive strategy literature), or a faceted thing (as in the resource-based view, capabilities literature, or theories of partial organization), and as something that can be researched from different levels (in sociological terms, micro, meso, macro; or in spatial terms, through spatial scales; see Spicer, 2006). The illusion comes with decisive priority being given to spatial materialities, as though thinking and conceptualizing were merely a question of accurately representing what is there. They are 'read' like an empirical text, either endogenously through careful descriptions of physical appearances, or exogenously through social, psychological or historical explanations (such as class consciousness, rational choice, economic development or historical variables). This orientation to solidity also plays out in practices of theorizing, where 'container' metaphors are rife: theory is built, added to, there are gaps, theory is grounded (and there is grounded theory), cathedrals of knowledge are to be erected (and to be contested; Reed & Burrell, 2019).

In addressing these illusions, Lefebvre does not deny mental and physical senses of space, but disturbs them, by noticing a third: 'The fields we are concerned with are, first, the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the *social*.' By introducing the social Lefebvre does away with the idea of space as a universal category preceding praxis – be it the Kantian *a priori* of imaginative mental thought of *res cogitans* or the Euclidian container space of *res extensa*. His threefold – or triadic – ontology is meant to supersede the mental-physical binary, dealing instead with the mobile, habituated, practised and sometimes disorienting *experience* of space (Beyes, 2018).

Provoked by Lefebvre's encouragement to consider space socially, and to be wary of the illusory *res cogitans* and *res extensia*, our approach here has been to single out and discuss exemplary and significant spatio-organizational studies that can be read alongside, and in relation to, the broader spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences. We do this to both critically affirm these studies as shaping the topographical imagination of organization theory (its place-writing or 'graphic' configurations of space), and to open up possibilities to push this imagination even further, towards more immersive, intense and alternative – indeed more 'spatial' – elaborations. This first and foremost entails locating organization theory's spatial turn in a wider movement of thought, an 'enormous, subterranean revolution in the art of spatial science' (Doel, 1999, p. 2). The broader spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences does not denote a monolithic and agreed-upon perspective on the spatiality of human life; rather, it opens up a multifaceted landscape of spatial thought extending across disciplines riven with multiple trajectories of inquiry into 'the wildness of space' (Wigley, 1995, p. 217); an attunement, or affective sensitivity, to such multiplicity, or so we will argue, is precisely the point of thinking spatially. This means resisting a 'correct', exhaustive or definitive handling of space (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2018). We rather seek to unfold a consistent theoretical argument that takes the challenge of thinking spatially seriously. Our historical review works as 'the beginnings of a map, or, more accurately perhaps, a map of beginnings' (Pile & Thrift, 1995, p. 2) – a mapping of the

possibilities of spatial thinking for organization theory.

Mapping alludes to 'wayfinding' (Pile & Thrift, 1995, p. 1); to exploring positions 'on foot' rather than having a map to hand, more groping one's way forward in the absence of a clearly demarcated terrain (Chia & Holt, 2009, pp. 164–7) or what Thrift refers to as a 'speculative topography' (Thrift, 2008, p. 2). Wayfinding means dwelling on how organization theory's spatial turn might produce an awareness of space being continually produced, and relationally so as well as materially. Interweaving contributions by geographers, sociologists, philosophers, architectural theorists *and* organization theorists, this awareness enables us to apprehend a topographical imagination of organizing in the form of four twists (to pursue the metaphor of a turn requiring successive twisting movements). These twists are space as 'site', 'contestation', 'multiplicity' and 'poetics'. In making these twists the illusions of space as *res cogitans* and *res extensa* give way, making room for a more generative sense of space. The first two twists we identify are, to some extent, already present in organization theory. The first, site, is an awareness of the intimacy between space and placing: organization is invariably sited. This siting is architectural and material, but extends to the symbolic and semiotic sedimenting of institutional facts: to think and write spatially is to be alive to how space embodies and enacts habits and norms. The second twist finds space being organizationally contested. Since space is instituted it is interspersed with the workings of power and resistance, both in the striated settlements by which certain things, events and relations are valued more than others, and in future possibly transformative projections concerning these settlements. Writing space in this sense performs topographies of contestation and struggle. The third twist – and here we begin to find the topographical imagination of organization theory becoming far less attentive to the possibilities of spatial thinking – concerns the mobility and 'throwntogetherness' of space (Massey, 2005, p. 149), a concern with spatialities understood as multiple and inherently open fields of differential movement shaped through technical, social and natural mediation. Emerging from fields and approaches such as human geography and urban ethnography, this twist finds theorists emphasizing the multiple, restless, indeterminate and as such inherently political nature of space, something that cannot be represented even. Finally, the fourth twist radicalizes the generative potential of space understood as an inherently open gathering of multiple and simultaneously apparent movements, but then as forces we can feel, but never explicate. Here space-writing becomes more affective, experimental and open in nature, challenging the analytical and explanatory dominance of entailment, cause and effect and the positioning of one theoretical position against another. Instead we encounter a poetics of space, one that arguably emerges (in Europe at least) from Romanticism and its thinking of space as a form of generative wandering.

The last two twists of multiplicity and poetics are very much nascent ones in organization theory's topographical imagination, whereas the first two of sitedness and contestation are more established. In identifying these twists, this review opens up organization theory to a maturing of space-writing; from institutional sites through contestation and multiplicity and to the poetic. Yet we should not confound such maturing with a one-dimensional and thus aspatial narrative of progress in spatial theory, as if space could be turned into time. If the point of a topographical imagination is an attunement to spatial multiplicity, then a historically minded review such as this one needs to proceed heterochronically (Rancière, 2012): the space of spatial theory, too, is a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey, 2005, p. 9), and the social production of space follows neither teleology nor a linear logic (Schlögel, 2003).

The Spatial Turn

The 'spatial turn' was coined, almost in passing, in Soja's (1989, pp. 16, 39) *Postmodern Geographies*, describing the turning toward

questions of space and geography (instead of time and history) in so-called critical theory of the late 1960s. The move to the spatial is perhaps best encapsulated in Foucault's amazement that space could ever be treated as 'the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile' while, in contrast, time was seen as 'richness, fecundity, life, dialectic' (1980/1976, p. 70). The spatial turn now figures prominently in human scientist circles, denoting a renaissance of 'space' as a conceptual and analytical category, and marking a renewed interest in the spatial nature of human experience (Döring & Thielmann, 2008; Thrift, 2006). As befits a renaissance, exponents of the turn began to sense a paradigmatic shift was under way. Soja himself, for example, having initially invented the term as an explorative intervention into Marxist and post-Marxist debates, felt compelled to announce spatial thinking as a new transdisciplinary paradigm, (Soja, 2008, pp. 242 et seq.): a reconfiguration and transformation of the research landscape, showing more profound effects than the panoply of fashionable, smaller 'turns' (such as performative, iconic, practice, material turns) ever could.

'Space' thus becomes 'the everywhere of modern thought', as our epigraph from Crang and Thrift notes – somewhat warily. As if to support and yet test Soja's claim, Döring and Thielmann (2008) review and assemble an array of (sometimes mutually contradictory) spatial *turns*, ranging from the historical sciences to sociology, from the literary sciences to art theory, from the media sciences to postcolonial studies, from gender studies to urban theory, and from the cultural sciences to theology. They struggle to find conceptual common ground, save a near universal hostility to a simplifying view of space as a backdrop to be crossed or thing to be occupied, and a near universal concern for space as an active substance or force (Döring & Thielmann, 2008, p. 14; Dünne & Günzel, 2006).

There is, then, a complex 'knot' of conflicting interpretations of space, resulting in particular dangers for a review essay such as ours, dangers that range from policing the field and claiming a distinct understanding as superior, to getting lost in the rhizomatic entanglements that any attempted mapping of thinking spatially would bring forward, being always a process of fluidity and fixing, openness and opacity, a going along on foot (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 36–44). Hence, we share the sense of caution evoked in the epigraph: if these understandings of active space are not interrogated carefully, then space becomes (yet another) 'all-purpose nostrum' to half-heartedly connect organization theory to broader currents in the human sciences, without engaging with its critical and unsettling potential. And of course, we are not ourselves outside 'space'. Our outlook on spatial theory is infused with particular streams of thought and ways of 'doing space'.

However, if comprehensiveness and totalizing approaches are ruled out, suggestiveness and lending consistency are still possible (Doel, 1999, p. 6). Thence the need to position ourselves. Our aim is not to provide an encompassing overview of spatial concepts and approaches but to propose and detail a nuanced, contextualized and perhaps provocative understanding of the 'spatial turn', and its rich implications for writing organizational space and expanding organization theory's topographical imagination.[2] It is to this end that we have defined the four twists, twists that we find emerging in spatial thinking in the humanities and social sciences, and to some extent in organization theory (so we read the 'turn' as already including the field of organization studies, and not something that needs to be brought to organization theory from beyond). While a scholarly table usually is a feeble and unpoetic form of space-writing (tables value stillness, simplicity and juxtaposition instead of aliveness, interlacement and complexity), the following tableau should serve as an opening onto the four twists. As a practice of boundary-drawing, Table 1 is no more than a practical means of 'going on', allowing us to distil and illustrate aspects of spatial thinking. Being ourselves wary of Lefebvre's earlier mentioned illusions, the stillness of the table should not deceive: such tables are, by default, approximations and the distinctions leak and

Table 1. Four twists of the spatial turn in organization theory.

Spatial twist	Main concerns	Research approaches	Examples	Temporality	Theoretical tone
Site **Theorizing organization as placing, as always being spatially situated and formed**	Architecture Materialities Objects Boundaries and thresholds Identity	Case study Ethnography Narrative/descriptive analysis (mapping) Archival research Observation Actor Network Theory	Studies of spatially expressed organizational facts and relations; Studies of assemblies and assembling im/material things. Descriptive topologies	Dialectic, Imbricated	Analytical (Analogy, Metonym) Realist
Contestation **Theorizing organization as spatial production of power and struggle**	Power Language & discourse Struggle Everyday life Practices Ethics	Case study Ethnography Narrative/ discursive analysis Archival research	Studies of divisions between: subjects & objects of knowledge; life worlds; spatial hierarchies and scales forms of activity	Dialectic (binary) Trialectics (everyday) Experience	Critical Emancipatory Genealogical
Multiplicity **Theorizing organization as performed through different, indeterminate spatialities**	Generative novelty Rhetoric and metaphor Bodies Becoming Affect Situations & atmosphere Mediation	Rhythmanalysis Walking Wayfinding Affective (multi-sensory) ethnography Ecological thinking Phenomenology	Studies of organizational atmosphere. Studies of perlocutionary performativity. Studies of haunting. Studies of machine aesthetics and new forms of organizing.	Heterochronic Open historicity Simultaneity Multiple, interwoven trajectories Process/ flow	Attentive Embodied Engaged Immersive
Poetics **Theory as poetic sensibility, as invention and intervention**	Art Political expression Performance Experiment	Intervening Wayfinding Composing Fabulating Staging Disturbing	Studies of (and re-writing) the denotations and connotations of models/ diagrams/maps. Studies re-imagining and re-casting events. Psychogeographies of organization	Spacing Span (mortality) Natality (begin anew)	Metaphorical Ironic Speculative Digressive Fragmented

overlap. What follows the table is an elaboration of each of our twists and how these are, or might be, stitched into organization theory.

Site

> Because nothing and no one can avoid *trial by space* (. . .).
>
> (Lefebvre, 1991/1974, p. 416)

When space is accounted for, it seeps and colours the understanding of organization. At the beginning of the 20th century, Georg Simmel in his pioneering sociology of space (Simmel, 1908a/1997) suggested all social formations are manifested in space, and that spatial forms are thus a matter of great concern for social thought. He also reflected on the fact that the organization of space thus becomes a key component of social conduct. Following Simmel, the first twist of the spatial turn is as basic as it is consequential: any form, practice or process of organization is sited and organizing is thus an invariably spatial exercise. As Cnossen and Bencherki (2018) show with regard to emerging organizations in the form of creative hubs, space is what makes organization endure; it is constitutive for instituting organization. It takes the form of a stabilized material site or assemblage that shapes organizational conduct, while the everyday practices of organizing recursively stabilize or alter the material constitution of organization.

An obvious way of tracing how organization is sited, then, is to focus on the material architecture and the effects of built space. This is the starting point of Kornberger and Clegg's study on 'bringing space back in' (2004, p. 1100), alive as it is to how 'architecture orders and manages human activities; it distributes bodies in a certain space and organizes the flow of communication'. The materialities of this placing have effects; they are a prime mover of organizational conduct. In short, spatial configurations organize social facts. By way of presupposing a causal link between formal (architectural) change and social change, space, here, becomes a hitherto underestimated dimension of organizational control. Similarly, Zhang and Spicer's (2014) study of a Chinese office building, built in the shape of a pyramid, reveals a hierarchical, rationalized space. They notice some disturbances to organizational order, but conclude these are little more than small, impotent blooms of unsanctioned group and individual expression whose emancipatory force is of no more lasting effect than the glow of seasonal baubles at an office party. The space they look for, and find, is one of tightly governed opinion-corridors along whose length conformity is enforced with censure.

Yet to just understand space as a material site influencing human practices risks overlooking that such material placing is not (only) the spatial expression of a social fact (such as space embodying the always arbitrary and local distinctions between the object and subject of knowledge), but, following Simmel (1908a/1997, pp. 141–6), is itself a social fact (per)formed spatially through the creation of boundaries. Cornelia Vismann's (2008) archival study of law and bureaucracy made this clear in her association of legal and social structures with the mediating force of files. The force and nature of law was in effect a function of the location and movement of material files through which identities are being continually mediated: something exists to the extent it is 'on file', and to be recognized legally is to be 'processed' as such (recorded, stored, transferred). As Vismann (2008, p. 15) remarks: 'questions of law are reduced to questions of access'. Even if one is outside and barred from entering, one remains subject to the very law to which one is refused access: understood spatially, the reach of the law is not limited to those within territorial boundaries; being outside, as Simmel (1908b/1971, p. 170) also remarked in relation to the figure of the stranger, is a particular form of being inside. The law extends beyond itself into a milieu from which it secures itself. It does so through the mediating device of what Walter Benjamin (1999, p. 856) called a threshold (*Schwelle*) or 'zone of transition'. Crossing such a zone, undertaken through devices such as signatures (Agamben, 2009),

becomes an organizational process of transforming and confirming identities and roles. The threshold confers and names what otherwise goes unorganized. Studies like Vismann's issue a compelling riposte to what Crang and Thrift (2000, p. 1) call the 'tyrannies of historicism and developmentalism', that ignore how history is 'affected by the space in which it is placed' (Wigley, 1995, p. 197). The dialectical exchanges being revealed in organization theory are not simply time-based, they are also intimate with spatial location. Organizational phenomena such as identity are found to be riven with placings – just where one is put, and alongside or removed from whom, and more figuratively still, the spatial mediations of systems such as files, govern what it is to have organizational presence. Typically organization theory has privileged the historical and time-based aspects of organizational development and structure (growth patterns), while space, as Chanlat, (2006) notices, has often been concealed. Whether in Taylorism, theories of bureaucracy, institutional theory, or critical management studies, all of which invoke spatial arrangements to further their cogency, but without pursuing space as anything more than the struggle between ideas to be imposed, or containers to be filled.

By emphasizing the situatedness of space we begin to realize how organizational phenomena do not precede their spatial condition (either as *res cogitans* or *res extensia*): what appears is always and already spatially set and spatially shaped. This recursive, socio-technical relation calls for space-writing as a form of descriptive analytics, a *topographical tone* of organizational analysis that gathers, traces, maps and connects. Consider, for example, Knox, O'Doherty, Vurdubakis and Westrup's (2008) ethnographic study of daily life in an airport, that reveals the multiple ways in which an object – in this case an aeroplane – is organized spatially. We begin to understand how witnessing the spatial nature of a thing like a plane necessitates an apprehension of the spatial nature of the thing called baggage, the thing called passenger, the thing called holiday and leisure, the thing called queuing and waiting, the thing called tax-free shopping, the thing called national boundary. By analysing how planes, bags and human bodies are sited, we sense the bewildering array of ways in which social facts are spatially settled upon and enacted (see also Sheller & Urry, 2006; Cantillon, 2019, p. 41).

A similar and mundane complexity is found in Tyler and Cohen's (2010) theorization of the spatial nature of gender performativity (the institutional scripting and structuring of gender) and gender performance (the everyday, habituated instances where roles are experienced, expressed and contested) (see also Wasserman & Frenkel, 2015). Tyler and Cohen analyse how the largely female occupants performatively inhabit and embody social norms, and how the senses and affects are worked into such performance. In decorating office spaces with family photographs, for example, the images are interpreted as, at one and the same time affirming and sustaining the imaginary of a dominating photographic media, playing out the caring role of mother, and countering the business narrative of efficiency and order. Gender binaries are created through the performance of everyday placing in office space, and these placings continue to polarize human relations through the repetitious recitation of spatially enabled and expressed norms. (Skoglund and Holt, 2020)

At its most telling and intense the spatial enactment of material and social facts governs the very nature of subjectification and subjectivity, as opposed to being one expression of such. One study making this apparent is Martin's (2003) analysis of Mies van de Rohe's Seagram building in New York. This 'modernist flower' has been interpreted as a handmade readymade, a gloriously individual expression of modernist ambition that spawned myriad (inferior) copies, and which stands in erect riposte to the vulgar commercialism that subsequently descended along its Park Avenue home. For Martin (2003), though, Seagram is itself thoroughly implicated in its own reproducibility (the spawning copies) and in its own attractor role (pulling the space

together). Together these constitute the Seagram building, not as an original, but as an embodiment of a system of endlessly modulating and repeating organized patterns of variety and conformity. Seagram is, in this sense, not a singular space, it is thoroughly mediated, it is a particular expression of modular patterns that, architecturally, are found in curtain wall structures, office space hierarchies and everyday details such as invisible lighting, all of which have become integral to the patterns taken by corporate organizational forms, that themselves are embodiments of a mass circuity of capital flow to which there is no unity or centre. The occupants too are equally implicated, each being subjectified through the twin imperatives of variety and conformity being woven into the fabric of human practice during the occupation of this architecture. It is, argues Martin, less a case of the individual subject being overrun by the organizational impress of corporate capital than this capital spatially creating a new individual form from within itself; Seagram becomes a womb for a new organizational species.

Contestation

That organization is invariably sited, and that this sitedness is both an outcome of and generative of social facts, is perhaps the main and most well-established figure of thought in organization theory's topographical imagination (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014). In analysing the spatial nature of facts associated with norms and symbolic values, and re-describing organization as something predicated on sites and how these seep into conditions of subjectivity, this well-established figure is also closely associated with questions of power and resistance. Vismann's study, for one, shows legal territories being organized in the potentially hegemonic interests of the powerful (those historically winning the struggle) but also open towards the complex meshworks of spatial trajectories that harbour new solidarities and new collectivities (between those falling outside the ken of the files, so to speak, and who remain unfixed, bare). A similar intimacy between the first twist of site and the second twist of contestation is found in Tyler and Cohen (2010) and Martin (2003).

Lefebvre's pioneering work on social space, and its being inevitably contested as well as situated, has often proved influential for such studies, and more generally for a renaissance of spatial thinking in the social sciences – including organization theory (Dale, Kingma, & Wasserman, 2018). In Dale and Burrell's book, *The Spaces of Organisation and the Organisation of Space*, space is understood as 'socially produced and simultaneously socially producing; as concurrently material and imaginary; as intimately connected to embodiment; and as irreducibly political' (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 6). The book's resonance comes in its reframing of Lefebvre's well-used spatial triad of conceived (ideas and visions relating to values and norms to be inscribed into an idealized space), perceived (the embodiment of these ideas and visions in human habits) and lived space (undertaking practice, and experiencing there the accidental, ad hoc and creatively resistant expression of otherness). This triad is re-conceptualized as the organizational interplay of enchantment, emplacement and enactment, to then better understand the materialization of power in organizational space. Yet here too, as in many studies on the first twist, there is still a falling back into space as an interplay of mental idea and physical manifestation, for example in granting architects 'the pivotal role [. . .] in constructing meanings, social spaces and organisations, in both material and interpretive forms' (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 32). In arguing this, Lefebvre's insistence on the simultaneous and complex diversity of the interrelation of the conceived, the perceived and the lived aspects of spatial production seems to give way; his spatial and tension-laden 'trialectics' is otherwise folded back into a more simple dialectic narrative of power and occasional resistance (Latham, 1999, p. 166).[3]

This folding back into binaries is, in spatially sensitive theorizing, quite common. We find spatiality often being treated as an additional manifestation of already existing power

imbalances that shape topographies of control and opposition. For example, in how certain functions and professions are granted access to restricted areas; in efforts to architecturally encode certain values such as openness or security; and in layouts that elicit certain movements (corridors for silent hurrying) and behaviours (café areas to encourage productive conversation, liminal spaces for escape) (Courpasson, 2017; Dale & Burrell, 2008, Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Shortt, 2015). Here a more traditional sense of dialectic shadows the analysis. Similarly, Wasserman and Frenkel's (2011) analysis of an Israeli Foreign Ministry building found binary oppositions pervading organizational space. The higher the organizational role, the more gracious and well-appointed the workspace. Those of lowly station were observed coping with small uniform cubicle workstations, windows that would not open, and doors preventing access to ministerial elites. Their analysis reveals how occupants of the lower or lesser spaces actively disturbed the planned intention to impose certain respectful and diligent behaviours through the architecture. It is a tale of union-sanctioned opposition to spaces of attempted managerial control (illicit smoking, personalization of workspace, breaking door locks, and so on). The placing of such refusals and appropriations was managerially hard to pin down and eradicate, revealing perhaps the inevitable failure to ever fully marry the idealization of spatial representations with the perceptions of everyday activity.

This disruptive influence of everyday activity is picked up in Courpasson's (2017) study of factory space that identifies a persisting tension between alienating workplace forces (associated with the fatigue and frustration of repetition) and creative ones manifested in the simple, direct and unmanaged irruptions of everyday life that subvert, almost naturally, the constraints by which activity is typically striated. The workers know themselves as objects of predictable labour power – 'a modern object knows what it is, its role and its place' (Lefebvre, 1987, p. 8) – but they find niches in which to experience the surprising, the erotic, the wayward and quietly magical. Shortt's (2015) study of hairdressing salons identifies these moments with specific spaces, the overlooked corridors, toilets and stairwells in which workers congregate, set away from formally organized social spaces like a canteen or staffroom where feelings of management surveillance still linger. She finds these edge-like spaces being used for sharing ideas, for emotional releases, for gossip, all of which stall the productive demand to be client-focused, if only for a while.

Where in these studies contestation and the possibilities for (momentary, and perhaps inconsequential) emancipation tend to be configured through binary opposition, other studies try and push the topographical imagination into a more fluid spatial sensitivity. Daskalaki and Kokkinidis' (2017) study of resistance groups emerging in Greece during an extended economic crisis, for example, follows subjects of an economic crisis who have partially lost the sense of subjection. Though they experience tensions with the police, they do not experience themselves as objects of knowledge for a distant elite. Instead of a dyadic 'us-them' opposition, the study find groups experimenting with new forms of co-created organization (medical clinics, mobility funds) that re-organize work relations, and new subjectivities, without official aid, and without the prospect for organizational settlement. In this theorizing there is a more fluid conceptualization of emancipation and institutional 'escape'. The researchers are following the production of spatialities as they open and open anew, rather than distilling these into already existing conceptual binaries of manager and worker, colonist and colony, police and activist.

While the second twist in spatial studies explores the intimacy of space and power, then, its specific potential resides in a persisting sensitivity to the spatial contestations characterizing everyday life. No matter how tightly configured the impress of space, there is always room for expression, upset and deviance, because space is never there as such, but always being produced, and no matter how repetitive the production, there is always the possibility for difference. The point of

Lefebvre's idiosyncratic triad is precisely that all spatial constellations already contain and constitute emancipatory traces and moments; hence his belief in, and support for, practices of self-organization (Beyes, 2018). Such an emancipatory spatial praxis, however, is not easily figured in theory. As Fredric Jameson (1991, pp. 410–12) suggests, the spatial turn has come in the wake of an inexhaustible expansion of capital into increasingly restless, elusive spaces such cruise tourism, platform-mediated politics or global branding. These spatial expansions warrant critical examination. Following Lefebvre, we have suggested that if these examinations rely on already existing conceptual binaries highlighting exploitation and hierarchy, then they are not always up to the job. Yet the risk is, without the structure and distinction offered by such binaries, spatial thinking becomes little more than the descriptive apprehension of the quickening and multiplying sensory and emotional affects to be found in organizational life.

Thus, on the one side we have a form of critique in which space, as one phenomenon among others, is analysed so as to question unequal and unjust distributions of power. The underlying assumption here is that there is a proper ordering of space against which present orderings can be compared and found wanting, and which is available to the theorist but not the theorized. As Rancière (2004) notes, this places the critic in the settled role of guardian: they properly express a spatial conception (figurations of emancipation or justice, say), against which the world is being measured. On the other side, we have the figurations of theoretical inquiry loosening to the point where they are little more than wisps. Without robust spatial concepts we become 'exposed', as Jameson suggests (1991, pp. 412–13), 'to a perceptual barrage of immediacy from which all sheltering layers and intervening mediations have been removed', leaving us with 'the disorientation of a saturated space' that resists any 'adequate figuration' and which makes itself felt in 'the fragmented and schizophrenic de-centering and dispersion' of all things, including ourselves.

The third and fourth twists respond to this problematic of finding 'adequate figuration', but without prioritizing the conceived, mental space (*res cogitans*) to assess deviances from an ideal. Indeed Lefebvre himself might be said to embody this problematic. At times his conceptual spatial triad feels more like a 'dialectical mopping-up operation' (Doel, 1999, p. 118) that heuristically orders organizational spatialities into a convenient typology of conceived, perceived and lived space to organize otherwise messy empirics (Lefebvre's, 1991/1974, p. 33). Yet he remains committed to the 'social' aspect of space as a disorienting force of 'otherness' found in everyday lived space from whose cracks and crevices emerge the struggle and wonder of endless, small transformations. Instead of the linear, time-based dialectic of thesis/anti-thesis/synthesis we have a propulsive but undirected triadic awareness. It is an awareness that calls for an even stronger sensibility for space's constitutive multiplicity and unruliness – and it is to this that we now turn.

Multiplicity

An ingenious attempt to find a conceptual figuration adequate enough to acknowledge the multiplicity of space is laid out in Giovannoni and Quattrone's (2018) historical study of Siena Cathedral. Here organizing is shown to be not only predicated on what is architecturally visible and representable, but also on what is absent – and here what is absent is not just absent to be eventually filled with presence, but meant as impossible to fully represent. Considering Lefebvre's spatial triad, the authors show that the conceived, the perceived and the lived are not only entangled in the making of organizational space, but that their encounter produces a 'materiality of absence' as an active organizational force. This, they argue, should compel us to (also) conceive 'the material (its dynamism and organizing effects) from the absence that it entails rather than from the fullness of the physical' (Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018, p. 852).

Giovannoni and Quattrone's interest in gaps, incompleteness and absences as themselves

productive spatial forces points to a third twist in organization theory's topographical imagination, one that steers clear of the tendency towards integration and homogenization while remaining alive to Jameson's valuable reminder that we still need the adequate figuration offered by theoretical spatial concepts. Doreen Massey's *For Space* (2005) encapsulates this push towards a form of address that is adequate to space's multiplicity. For her, space – and no matter of what scale – is conceived as, *first*, 'the sphere of heterogeneity. Position, location, is the minimum order of differentiation of elements in the multiplicity that is co-formed with space' (Massey, 2005, p. 99). *Second*, space therefore becomes an effect of interrelations and interactions and simultaneously the 'sphere of relations, negotiations, practices of engagement, power in all its forms', which is always mobile. In this sense, the question of space cannot be untied from 'the question of the social, and thus of the political' (Massey, 2005, p. 99). While these two points recall our twists of 'site' and 'contestation', Massey goes further: *third*, any researcher engaged in space-writing has to take into account many phenomena at the same time, a simultaneous co-presence of difference, appearing through all the senses; it is thus 'the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality (. . .) Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space' (Massey, 2005, p. 9). It follows that, *fourth*, space is always under construction, a continuous, unfinished process of de- and re-construction, 'a simultaneity of stories-so-far' (p. 9). Apart from countering the illusions of transparency and opacity as outlined by Lefebvre, Massey's 'space of loose ends and missing links' (p. 12) more clearly allows us to emphasize the 'contemporaneous heterogeneities of space' (p. 5) that resist the folding of space into linear, narrative time[4] and into all-too-clearly demarcated analytical categories.

So, *without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space*. We also find this sense of space as multiple and invariably under construction in Nash's (2018) study of the rhythms of the city of London. She follows both Simmel's and Lefebvre's injunction to wander and feel as one wanders, to sense how the organism of the city produces organization within and beyond it, and produces subjectivities, through an array of rhythmic consistency, tempo and intensity into which the study plunges. The researcher arrives, a relative stranger and so somewhat impecunious in everyday currencies, but alive to her own body and her own rhythms, and then gathers what small coinage she might by plunging right on in, in this case by walking, and walking again, learning the shortcuts, getting an ear for the argot of traders, apprehending how both organization and space are performed in everyday, embodied movement. This intimacy of space, organization, agency and people echoes a broader sensibility that is emerging in ethnographic and tourism studies, that the distinction between travellers and places is not so easily made: activity, thought and feeling are inseparable from the space of their performative expression (Sheller & Urry, 2006).

Such 'polyrhythmic' sensing of everyday spaces of organizing indicates that spatial thinking needs not only to be apprehended through the mental, physical and social simultaneously, as Lefebvre's spatial ontology had it, but also to sense in space something affective and embodied, an atmosphere almost (Vidler, 2001). In the words of anthropologist Kathleen Stewart, the customary 'quick jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique' – perhaps still dominant in the twists of 'site' and 'contestation' – is slowed down and kept at bay in favour of moving with uncertain spatialities that 'literally hit us or exert a pull on us' (Stewart, 2007, p. 4). Beyes and Steyaert's (2013) attempt to 'unsite' organizational analysis foregrounds this embodied affectivity as a key dimension of spatial multiplicity, which also entails moving beyond Lefebvre conceptually, towards the more recent turn in Human Geography to 'non-representational or 'more-than-representational theories' (Thrift, 2008; Beyes & Steyaert, 2012). Following an artistic intervention into the everyday street life of Berlin, the authors adopt an

aesthetics of de-familiarization and displacement in order to trace and assemble uncanny sites of organizing and to reflect upon the uncanniness of organizational space. Space here is physical, relational, intensely historical, culturally rich and immediate, thus prefigured by mental maps, yet also criss-crossed by unsettling affective forces; it literally haunts urban dwellers. In a similar spirit, Steyaert and Katz (2004), Lange (2011) and Hjorth (2005) invoke the spatial theories of Michel de Certeau to frame a spatial apprehension of the entrepreneurial creation of new organizational forms. Though risking the dualism of res cognitans, De Certeau contrasts the formal, coded and managed order of place with the open, raw and ungoverned category of space. Space is produced by actions that situate, skew and saturate it; and it is inherently dynamic, emerging from movements that are of the moment, improvised, and involve tactical uses of proper public place. Or consider the Swedish anti-racist organization discussed by Dashtipour and Rumens (2018) by way of Foucault's notion of heterotopia, another potential entry into spatial multiplicity (Beyes & Michels, 2011); the atmospheric study of financial trading undertaken by Borch, Bondo Hansen and Lange (2015); or the solidarity initiatives that Daskalaki and Kokkinidis (2017) explore by way of their experiments with distributed and comparably fluid socio-spatial relations. Such new forms of organizing are invariably predicated on, and bring forth, multiple spatial trajectories that cannot always be adequately conceptualized by paired binaries. Even basic, grounding distinctions of the field such as production and consumption begin to crease and fold, a technologically mediated instability that Reckwitz (2017, pp. 124–7) suggests is characteristic of an aesthetic economy configured in spatial flows of symbols and signs designed to stimulate surprising and enjoyable sensory and affective feelings. What matters is novelty. The novelty is of a particular quality. It is not a progressive, temporal condition of the new replacing and improving upon the old (as in the ideal of engineering innovation), it is not the steady progression of self-transformation (as in the enlightenment ideal of *Bildung*). Rather, it is the constant co-creation of new stimulus events, as intense and distinct as possible, in which production and consumption are indistinguishable (Reckwitz, 2017, p. 210).

What these studies show is that once one takes spatial thinking seriously, the spatial criteria expand to include the empirical occurrence of gaps and absences, and affects, and these invite new forms of organizing, indeed, they become a site of such. Thus the topographical imagination opens up to an ecological, ambient thinking, an awareness of organizational forms always somehow being in interactive communion with intentional agency and social and material structure, but never identifiably a fixed effect of either; a concern for defining organizational distinctiveness gives way to a more processual identification of flowing forces (Lorino, 2018).

This fuller engagement with space, in the sense of its simultaneous heterogeneity of specific 'placings' and multiple trajectories, posits a way out of an impasse in organization theory set in place, we believe, by understanding spatial production as something grounded. By way of example of this grounding essentialism in organization theory we have, on the one hand, advocates of communicative action, and on the other, socio-material and actor-network-theory approaches. While both approaches can treat space as something materially and symbolically situated, and as something that is being produced through often contested activity (they follow the first two twists) (for example Vásquez & Cooren, 2013; Vásquez, 2016) their emphasis on grammar, communication on one side, and materiality on the other, often belies the experiences of multiplicity identified by Massey. In being so they risk suffering from Lefebvre's illusions.

Communicative approaches in organization theory, for example, can fall prey to 'illusions of transparency' by epistemologically positing an *a priori* of discursive negotiation of organizational space. Space is grounded in a

communicative event consisting of human and non-human agents, conversations (material and constitutive spaces of framing talk where organization occurs) and texts (ideas, concepts, grammar, documents that together represent the occurrence of talk) (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). Here language is being regarded as a basic ontological condition (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009), and communication as the primary force of organizing (Schoeneborn, Kuhn, & Kärreman, 2019). By emphasizing the primacy of grammar, even spatial grammar (Vásquez, 2016), the mobilities and trajectories of communicative events are contained by the idea of a distinction, a boundary by which one organizational form distinguishes itself from another: spatial ideas are seen to settle into the organizational experience of boundary setting, of drawing distinctions (see Vásquez, 2016). So while communicative approaches consciously avow a relational ontology (Cooren et al., 2011), we might ask whether organization understood spatially is just a question of drawing boundaries. If we follow Massey the answer is 'no', indeed it is the counter trajectory that is of interest. An advocacy of multiplicity is, she argues, a call to think in terms of connection rather than separation, to consider '[a] consciousness not of one's identity as the result of a difference *from*, but as the product of one's specificity in terms of one's multiple relations *to*' (Massey, 1999, p. 6; italics in original).

The advantage of Massey's approach is both a more comradely and mutual sense of organizational form, and an attentiveness to the open breadth of relations on which any distinctive sense of form is always reliant, thereby inducing a sense of worldly humility to what otherwise might be seen as idealized and dogmatic groupings of 'us' and 'them' or 'this' and 'that'. A radical political party, for example, is an amalgam of alliances and groupings often at odds and held together as much by relations of dominance and subordination as by democratic forces, and it is here that identities are forged, with all the vulnerabilities it entails (Massey, 1995).

In its inquiry into the heterogeneous assemblages of material things, actor network theory is similarly exposed to an illusion, though here it is the 'realistic illusion'. The rough insistence on the 'flat', somehow democratic configuration of multiple actants tends to suppress the influence of emotions and affects, as well as risking indifference to imaginative power, to gaps and pauses, and to the ghostly presences of absent but felt forces (Pors, 2016; Thrift, 2000). By assuming space is first *there*, so something present from which to then go forth and explore the relationality of things, proponents of actor network theory tend to ignore how interactions among things are thoroughly steeped in space, not just materially, but in affect and presences-absences. As such, these scholars lack a sensorium for moments of contestation and otherness, for when things and spaces lose or gain shape mutually, and continually, with varying tempos and intensities (Sheller & Urry, 2006; Whittle & Spicer, 2008; Zundel, 2012) or for 'the fleeting contexts and predicaments which produce potential' (Thrift, 2000, p. 214). The spatial turn's third twist, or so we believe, allows or calls for precisely these questions and sensations: space is seen as an excessive composition of multiple forces, which include affects and ghostly matters, everyday contestation and difference as well as the mediating power of things or inhuman traffic that sweep through the human body.

The multiplicity, or (framed otherwise) the excess and difficulty of space, is a prerequisite for exploring difference, otherness and novelty. It is in this sense that the question of space cannot be untied from the question of the political (Massey, 2005, p. 99), and therefore from the question of power and critical thinking. This kind of sensitivity comes, for example, in Munro's (2018) analysis of how organizational routines for allocating money give senior managers a form of flexi-power enacted in spatial dispersal and distance. Rather than acting directly on bodies, money flows are found to act indirectly as an almost playful form of managerial discretion, controlling through atmospheres of ambiguity and caprice.

Where Munro lingers on questions of control, spatial studies need not remain with what constrains. The twist of multiplicity always exposes the topographical imagination to the possibilities for excess: with every closing down comes an opening up. In what amounts to an affirmatively critical approach, or perhaps an invitation to 'immanent critique' (Beyes & De Cock, 2017), scholarship tracing these closings *and* openings watches out for and affirms the excess of space. It seeks to insert itself into the continual motion and simultaneous heterogeneity of space making, the constant pull and push of spatial swirls of affect; for instance through methods of embodied participation, walking and rhythmanalysis, through sensory or affective ethnographies and their emphasis on all kinds of sensory impressions to be registered and worked with, which includes an attunement to historically sedimented and absent-present spatial trajectories (O'Doherty, 2013). Writing space here becomes adding scholarly voices to actual spatial reconfigurations and struggles, alive to what they might become, while remaining attentive to Jameson's note of caution to retain the 'adequate figuration' of a grammar of conceptual distinction.

Poetics

> It is not only time that is 'out of joint,' but space, space in time, spacing. (Derrida, 1994, p. 83)

The third twist's emphasis on spatial multiplicity, and of including yet going beyond the merely material and the merely discursive, has a daunting corollary: such space is mimetically *un*representable (Massey, 2005, p. 28). It carries an ungovernable excess that cannot be tamed by the customary representational moves of scholarship (ranging from writing a review article, safely surveying the field 'from above', to enacting the doxa of methodology and writing up what is presumed to be given, i.e. data).

The topographical injunction to survey, map and represent as precisely, intricately, attentively as possible here reaches its limits and is expanded towards 'speculative topograph[ies]' (Thrift, 2008, p. 2). Not only are researchers asked to become sensitive to space's 'coeval multiplicities, (. . .) its radical contemporaneity, (. . .) its constitutive complexity' (Massey, 2005, pp. 5, 8); the impossibility of mimetically representing space posits an 'invitation to enter a space of extraordinary openness' (Soja, 1996, p. 5) and to expand the imagination of how organization is sited beyond 'geographical location or architectural setting' (Kwon, 2002, p. 6). One way of embracing this invitation is to insist, with Derrida (1981/1972, p. 40), on leaving room for *spacing*:

> [S]pacing is a concept which also, but not exclusively, carries the meaning of a productive, positive, generative force (. . .) it carries along with it a *genetic* motif: it is not only the interval, the space constituted between two things (which is the usual sense of spacing), but also spac*ing*, the operation, or in any event, the movement of setting aside (. . .) It marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity . . .' (fn42, 106, original emphasis)[5]

Spacing, then, is not the marking of positions onto space, but the generative and overflowing movements producing spaces of organizing (Beyes & Steyaert, 2012). It calls for a poetics of organizational space as the fourth twist. This last twist challenges what it is to theorize: no longer can we identify singular things or unities connected by identifiable relations: categories, concepts and patterns become more like crystalline distillations than generalizations, and research becomes a site of provocation rather than explanation, a site embracing the speculative and sensual. So rather than attempting to explain how to theorize and research towards poetical topographies of organization, we follow philosopher of spatiality Peter Sloterdijk in his warning against the 'resentment that presents itself as a method' (Sloterdijk, 2011, pp. 267–8). His complaint being that method is all too often an act commanded by the brain and which comes to act as a kind of mental compensation for an unruly world. The poetic twist finds the brain making way for more archaic organs: for the skin, for smell, for the glands by which feeling courses

through our body. His spatio-philosophical branch of poetics experiments with a language of affects, intensities, flows, floating, magnetisms; in short, resonances, that seek to apprehend the spacings usually lost to the representational techniques of the social sciences. 'We ought not to justify, but instead to form, to link up, and to let sail. Intensifications replace acts of founding' (Sloterdijk, 2011, p. 244). *To form, to link up, to intensify, to let sail*: these seem to be workable maxims for a spatial poetics of organizing, a writing or enacting alongside or towards what resists representation or can only be partially represented.

In this spirit, we can only gesture at exemplary poets, artists and artful writers to illustrate what this fourth twist gathers and calls for. Being spatial, it is a particular form of poetic expression, slightly unruly, unconstrained, a thinking and acting of the moment with little sense of direction, eliding officiated positions without offering alternatives. It is the poetic inquiry found in Walter Benjamin's wandering of the streets, aimlessly, refusing to be guided over the surfaces upon which 'modern humans' were being configured. In deliberately avoiding a destination (it is a skilled and purposive aimlessness), and in attending intensely to the small everyday occurrences of life so typically overlooked, he hoped to elicit accident, to bump into the unexpected and find there, however temporary, a depth to things and events, a depth that belied the managerial attempts to order for the purpose of compliant betterment. Think of a street, say, and walking along it catching the street name, sometimes we ignore it, at other times 'street names are like intoxicating substances that make our perception more stratified and richer' (Benjamin, 1999, p. 852(n)), affectively taking us someplace else. A simple street sign can be an opening to all manner of fertile implications, a new map emerges with the old, a palimpsest of values and distant loves becomes visible awhile, and might be made use of, to continue onwards through the present.

We encounter kindred writing to Benjamin's in the writing of space (*topo-graphia*) found in literary anthropology, for example in Kathleen Stewart's (2007) peerless montage of sensitively studied everyday scenes and their atmospheric intensities. Here, '[t]he ordinary is a moving target. Not first something to make sense of, but a set of sensations that incite' (p. 93), and that can be linked up, intensified, circulated. Echoing Massey's notion of thrown-togetherness, Stewart's vignettes trace and reimagine 'the pull of the ordinary' and the ways it 'throws itself together out of forms, flows, powers, pleasures, encounters, distractions, drudgery, denials, practical solutions, shape-shifting forms of violence, daydreams, and opportunities lost and found' – 'or it falters, fails' (Stewart, 2007, p. 29). Gaston Bachelard (1994) argued that the kind of attentive, imaginative and patient relation to space exhibited by the likes of Benjamin and Stewart revealed the ways in which space formed the ontological ground of poetry. Poetry works through reverberation; experiences and events that have, by definition, passed away, come alive with the tremors and echoes of poetic imagery that fold the past into the present in ways that defy the laid-down passage of events in time.

Perhaps the most powerful allies for advocates of the poetic twist in the spatial turn were those writers and poets for whom the call to think spatially would be a no-brainer; it was integral to their practice (Gregory, 1994). They had been doing it for centuries. The symbolic dimension of the city unveiled by Victor Hugo, for example, its paradigmatic and methodological dimensions explored by the flaneur poet Baudelaire, its repeated near evisceration which drew the ironic commiseration of the flaneur reporter Martha Gellhorn, and its ordinary, direct phenomenological apprehension found in the micro-scripts of Robert Walser, and in the 'streethaunting' texts of Virginia Woolf. And beyond this writing within the city walls there was an entire bevy of Romantic wanderers using winter journeys notated in Lieder, or sea journeys caught fast in rhyme, to apprehend the experience of organized life and its remainders. Indeed, so much of artistic inquiry into, and expression of, human affairs is overtly and consciously attuned to spacing. As Kristin Ross

writes in her study on 'Rimbaud and the Paris Commune', titled 'The Emergence of Social Space', it is poetry that creates a 'nonpassive' spatiality, space as a performance of operations and interactions. This poetics poses an invitation 'to conceive of space not as a static reality but as active, generative, to experience space as created by interaction, as something that our bodies reactivate, and that through this reactivation, in turn modifies and transforms us' (Ross, 2008/1988, p. 35).

This poetic twist is not simply a call for affective research, or for leaving the calm domesticity of safe places to take to the streets (Petani, 2019), though indeed both of these can be implicated. It is, rather, a call for an ontological recalibration of the very relationship between subject and object. In poetic spatial thinking the hierarchy is dissolved, for the object (the street sign, the atmosphere of domestic calm, the tireless chirr of machinery, the bustle of urban sites) acquires its status precisely in refusing to be known 'as' something, in refusing subjectification. Its presence cannot be tethered to the post of classification, and it is this possibility that it might wander off that draws the researcher as a poetic thinker of space onwards, though now shed of any authority as a knowing subject. The poetic here carries with it a profound sense of irony. It acknowledges that any linguistic claim to authoritatively state something to be the case remains just that, a claim, itself made rhetorically, and somewhat arbitrarily and locally. The poetic researcher needs nothing more than attentiveness, and rhetorical force, and with this details the experience of being in the company of what cannot be controlled or predicted.

The language of poetic research is metaphoric (meaning transference). The metaphor is a binary-eating device. It makes connections between apparently physically distinct things and temporally distant events; between imagined and experienced characters and persons; between the visible and invisible, the ephemeral and enduring, the constant and the whimsical: these are no longer dualities, but unities, often queerly configured. The metaphors create unities by making connections, but ones that cannot be predicted, and whose settlements run askance from the smooth generalities of standard theorizing. There has already been suggestive research on metaphor (Anderson, 2005; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Dodd, 2002), and on a literary style of montage which it encourages (Van Maanen, 1995), but here the spatial has, at best, remained implied. These studies offer hints of what becomes more fully poetic when configured spatially. As both Benjamin and Stewart so vividly show, instead of applications of knowledge, theory becomes a more generative, if fragmented, creation of implications between a body of knowledge (concepts, categories, patterns, events) and objects of experience (sensory, affective, memory, habit) (Felman, 1977) realized in experiments of metaphoric and montaged association.

Under these forms of space-writing, organizational phenomena can be apprehended through a range of methodologically rich media, bringing text, sound and (moving) image into atmospheric productions that combine perception, calculation and affect into an analytic sensorium (or what Benjamin calls a constellation). An example of what we mean by a spatial study being poetic comes in the artist Jeremy Deller's (2002) re-enactment of *The Battle of Orgreave* between a phalanx of striking miners from Yorkshire, UK and battalioned and baton-wielding police. In Deller's re-enactment, 17 years after the original event, strikers and police officers were brought back to Orgreave to re-enact the conflict, with some breaking the binary by swapping 'sides'. Historical battle re-enactment societies were invited to swell numbers, as were stalls and musicians, organizational forms more typically associated with a village fête. The event (accompanied by a documentary by Mike Figgis) brought little in the way of redemptive healing, serving instead to open up old social wounds, while collapsing the conceptual distinctions typically used to explain these (representation and reality; experience and memory; us and them; hurt and forgiveness) (Bishop, 2006).

Deller's re-enactment presents a space of fragments where concepts can operate, but

metaphorically, by making arcs of association that spin in and around particular places, hazarding at connections without ever becoming a sustained system of thought, and leaving their maintenance to the grammar from whose lives they are spun. No sooner is an interior presented in the re-enactment (a raised fist on the battlefield, musical notes struck by brass instruments being blown with bright urgency, the smell of trampled grass) than memories invade like an army of the dead, swamping all, as though 17 years were but a few moments. The poetic production of an image also shocks and arrests the participants and audience, what is essentially 'a miniature' recreation of massive class conflict becomes no less overwhelming than the entire passage of the actual strike – small is folded into large, present into past. There is no rediscovery of the age-old community spirit of mining communities, no recovery of lost identity, no easy identification of executive officers of a neoliberal elite; there is just an awareness of being and a ghostly loss of being caught fast in re-enactment (Bachelard, 1994, p. 58). There is, indeed, a heeding of Sloterdijk's caution about method, and of Anthony Vidler's (2001) advice: when thinking spatially be careful of reifying space into something tangible and fixed, of harking back to 'the comforting terms of a temporal discourse, the authorities of narrative, of beginnings, middles, and ends, of pasts, presents, and futures' (p. 236). Instead we have a performative organization of what Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 222) call 'novel and "flickering" combinations of presence *and* absence, of peoples, enemies and friends'.

We might liken this performative organization to the poetic methods of a careful and mobile writer, what Simmel (1908a/1971, pp. 143–4) called, with a nod to the Romantic literary tradition, a wanderer, a figure who was present but did not belong, someone who is placed inside but remains unbound. This fertile cross-contamination of closeness and remoteness finds the wanderer alive to the incidental, and attentive to how typically unnoticed and unrecorded ordinary lives and events are striated with organizing forces. Spatial thinking reveals the dominating tendency of these forces, and, being strange, it also bears witness to how these forces can disturb one another, for example when they squabble among themselves in what Walser (1982, p. 309) called 'theatrical little dominations', or when accidents and happenstance create organizational forms as yet untroubled by their governing reach.

The twist that we identify here, then, comes largely in artistic practice. Not because art is pre-eminent in its imaginative insight, but because art is a practice that encourages a speculative topographical imagination that refuses to define itself in terms of progress, indeed history is often incidental (Picasso looks through the face of Gertrude Stein toward tribal masks; the ancient, fragmented body of Sapho is recomposed in the poetic translation of Ann Carson). Instead of dialectical history we find attempted ways of beginning anew (natality) being placed amid the present in ways that confide in orthodoxy, yet confound it. Lefebvre comes back into the frame here, notably his insistence on there always being an irreducible remainder – the poetics of space – that comes in the form of untamed desire, in bodily exertion, in eruptive memory, in delight in the hitherto unallotted and how it affords 'permanent disequilibrium, [. . .] the dissolution of normalities and constraints, the moment of play and of the unpredictable' (Lefebvre, 1996/1968, p. 129). Artistic practice can thrive in the company of this remainder and the ensuing 'aesthetic confusion' of displacing itself (as well as, for some, the 'aesthetic discomfort' of not being able to keep art in its proper place), allowing different modes of thinking, different practices and affects to emerge. It enacts what Rancière (2007, p. 257), also in relation to Deller's re-enactment, has called a 'topography of the configuration of possibilities' that would contrast 'so-called historical necessity' (p. 257). Whether novels, poetry, music, installations, participatory art or even painting, artistic endeavours have 'pioneered' a form of thinking and performing to address the simultaneous multiplicity of space through its invention of unconventional means, its ability to work along

mutual registers of sensation, and its ability to disturb regimes of the visible and conjure new ways of thinking and seeing by being prompted by what has gone before.

Thrift (2008, p. 12) unapologetically calls for 'pull[ing] the energy of the arts into the social sciences' to then better apprehend emerging spatial forms. This is, as mentioned, not a question of losing rigour – indeed the arts might often be more rigorous than social-scientific studies – but of making way for methods that grapple with the excess of simultaneous multiplicities, of possibly playful and unconventional means, and of regaining a sense of wonder about the spacings that surround and produce us. It can also be profoundly political. Rancière's (2004) emphasis on the affective force of poetic expression and how it works at, and can unsettle, established distributions of the sensible echoes a topographical imagination interested in how those unheard and unseen force themselves into organizational concern, no longer willing to understand themselves as somehow defective.

We find some attempts in organizational spatial studies to respond to this call by tracing how what can be perceived, experienced and expressed is spatially reconfigured through artistic interventions (Beyes, 2010; Beyes & Steyaert, 2013), for example the use of performance art in the creation of a 'hir' or all-gender toilet (Skoglund & Holt, 2020). Likewise, by way of thinking of the sensory and affective registers of spacing through the notion of atmosphere – yet another promising concept of organization theory's spatial turn – Michels and Steyaert (2017) follow a musical intervention, a 'guerrilla concert', into the streets and squares of the urban everyday. As readers we, too, are taken into the streets, first at one remove, by following the artists in their struggle with planning and designing the event, then into subway stations where the musicians' craft becomes part of the organizational force of the atmospheric. Space here reveals itself as aesthetically designed and crafted; yet as ever, '[t]he politics of space turn on that which exceeds it' (Wigley, 1995, p. 153): the spatial atmospherics of organizing swell and wither 'by accident and by design'. These can be 'moments of potentiality and promise' (Michels & Steyaert, 2017, p. 98) which take place in ordinary spaces, implying 'new possibilities of feeling and acting collectively in organizations' (p. 100). Similarly in O'Doherty's (2013) walking studies of the city of Manchester following methods evoking the spirit of the Oulipo writing movement that emerged from France in the 1960s. Following these kinds of artistic expression then hints at a topographical imagination in perhaps its most radical form. These are fleeting topographies of the possible and experimental and fraught inventions of new spatialities of organizing.

Towards Bolder Spatialities of Organization

To return to where we started on our wayfinding (which was already in the middle of things, conditioned by already present spatial thought and spatial poetics), to bring space 'in' is to think, and write, spatially. In this sense, we have found examples and traces of a distinct and varied topographical imagination in organization theory. Yet they remain traces. There are tendencies within organization theory to domesticate the challenge of thinking and performing organization spatially, not least when looking for clear and structured conceptualizations of how space has been theorized. In this sense, there is a danger of reducing the potency of recent spatial work. Of course our own endeavour in this review which configures the spatial turn into four twists is itself a Procrustean move of shaping something irreducible into a clear and structured form. But precisely because of this it is important to problematize what is being left untouched or disavowed when 'space' enters organization theory and one twist alters another.

We have articulated the four twists in an attempt to consider what might happen if we problematize the tendency in organization theory to privilege either ideas of space (illusion of transparency) or its material presence (the realist illusion) and instead look for other spatialities or

another kind of spatiality, ones that lie in the excesses of space that haunt 'space' itself. Let us briefly rephrase the twists of our mapping. The spatial turn begins in a distinct claim that any inquiry into organizational activity carries within it a spatial aspect, and that this aspect is neither a transcendental *a priori* of subjective perception nor a material container. These are narrow and ontologically excluding understandings of space, they produce an impoverished topographical imagination, and they deny spatial thinking the excesses that are inherent to space. Rather space exists as the designation of reach and touch by which one body or form pushes onto others in mundane, everyday occurrence; in what we might call complex topographies of organizing. To discuss the potential of understanding such topographies, we have broken up (or perhaps reduced) the spatial turn into four twists, twists in what we have called organization theory's topographical imagination. First comes an understanding of organization being invariably and institutionally sited. It is placed in face-to-face encounters, in familial and cultural structures, in demographic locations, and in symbolic and semantic categories of belonging. Second, it is a site of spatial contestation, so of power and resistance which act not between already existing bodies, but in ways constituting and instituting those bodies (in phenomenological terms power being an extension or compression of space). Third, such contestation is itself an outcome of a spatial multiplicity that encompasses affects, mediating technologies, voids and absences. Fourth, such an excess of space is beyond (or rather before) representation and thus summons what we call a spatial poetics. Acknowledging the irreducible spatiality of things in that they are always being sited, and always being contested, conceptualizing space as a processual movement or spacing, and opening up the possibility of a poetic scholarship – these are the lessons we take from 'the enormous, subterranean revolution in the art of spatial science' (Doel, 1999, p. 2).

Our wayfinding through the terrain of the wide, multidisciplinary spatial turn and its scattered pockets of organization theory cannot be reduced into a handy heuristic of studying organizational space. As we tried to point out (perhaps *ad nauseam*) this would be a fundamentally aspatial gesture, the learned habit of abstraction that in Lefebvre's terms can only lead to a space of cold calculation. So we end on four open points of critical affirmation and suggestion.

First, it seems to us that Soja's instinct is bob-on: the spatial turn can really be seen as the mother of all turns: as a profound reconfiguration of how to think of social organization, its multiplicity and its critical charge. As such it branches out into, or intervenes into, the territories of smaller turns, also in the study of organization. It opens up neo-material approaches to oft-neglected concerns of affectivity, gaps and absences as well as politics. It demonstrates to the affective and aesthetic turns that they, too, are predicated on spatial multiplicity; indeed, a notion such as atmosphere (of which we hope to hear more in organizational research) is generally conceived of and approached as spatialized affect. And it unsettles assumptions about organization as communicatively, and thus to all appearances aspatially, constructed. What of an organization theory that went so far as to claim that all things processual and relational in the study of organization are awaiting their becoming-spatial?

Second, we can only note in passing (in concluding) that studies such as those by Skoglund and Holt (2020), Nash (2018), O'Doherty (2013), Beyes and Steyaert (2012) and Sheller and Urry (2006) explicitly thematize and discuss the methodological implications of taking *spacing* seriously as a matter of concern that is invariably beyond (full) representation. Arguably, we would not be able to speak of organization theory's topographical imagination if it would leave unturned the methods and procedures of how organizational sites are approached, configured and written. Yet this is precisely what we think is threatening the turn to space in organizational research: that it is cut down to the size of tried and trusted representational techniques to justify organizational analysis. In this sense, many of the papers discussed

across the twists are important examples and early movers in the struggle to spatialize how we conduct and write up research. What then of theorizing through film and the spatial language of film, of multisensory, rhythmic and affective ethnographic studies enriched by attention to writing as itself as a performative communication, of research as itself a spatial and artistic intervention and of idioms more respondent to, and resonant with, the indeterminable thrown*together*ness of space?

Third, we should note that our wayfinding through the wildness of spatial theories has emphasized a topographical imagination, one that loosely takes shape around practices of surveying, gathering, mapping, experiencing and reimagining or concocting everyday sites of organizing. In conjunction with the now ubiquitous and pervasive computerization of organizational life, this emphasis on concrete sites, their contestation, multiplicity and potential poetics needs to be supplemented with the abstracted spatialities of digitized informational grids and linkages that span, control and shape organization, trajectories that have become an often-invisible but materially dependent part of the multiplicity of space. Such an expanse amounts to 'a global topology in which almost any point can connect to any other, mobilizing resources on a planetary scale' (Wark, 2015, n.p.). It seems to us that organization theory's topographical imagination has yet to consider and come to terms with such topological forms of organizing – sets of points in scale and size and their situational connectedness (Ratner, 2019), their (electronic) neighbourhoods, vectors and software-based operations, and their atmospheric effects (Jørgensen & Holt, 2019; Reckwitz, 2017, pp. 123–5). More critically, what of theory allowing us to better apprehend the spatial intimacy of organization and media technology? Consider the apparently contradictory configurations of collaborative capitalism in which technology platforms both foster and erode communities, in service of an ever more aggressive and pervasive extraction of what Zuboff (2019) calls behavioural surplus. The predictive technologies by which this extraction proceeds are spatially configured, revealing and enforcing behaviour patterns predicated on homophily, on principles of neighbourhood – a flocking in the same place (Chun, 2020).

Fourth, the transformative possibility of spatial thinking entails a politics of research (which consists of practise of placing – here, there, not here. . .), too. If anything, the spatial turn and its spatial imagination opens up the study of organization to 'new sights and sites' (O'Doherty, De Cock, Rehn, & Ashcraft, 2013). Recall Massey's point that spatial multiplicity is a condition of politics. We thus imagine a spatial imagination that is bolder, more expansive, less timid in its own wayfinding through what space, as conceptual operator and empirical sphere, can do. This necessarily entails exploring new spatial formations of organizing. These formations are certainly placed as alternative constellations of organizing (and thus as political forms by default), yet they can also occur in ordinary spaces of urban life and formal organizations. To find these formations and make them resound, circulate them, is the promise of the spatial turn. An affirmatively critical endeavour, therefore, which attempts to keep an openness to the event of spacing; which, in Rajchman's words (1998, pp. 17, 1), tries to stick to 'the practical ethic of not being unworthy of what is disturbing the spaces we inhabit'; which dares to assume 'that at no time can we ever be quite sure what our bodies can yet do, our lives become, the shapes they might assume, the spatial arrangements into which they might enter'.

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Notes

1. Somewhat differently to Lefebvre's approach, the history of spatial thinking is often discussed in terms of a broad 'cut', namely the dichotomy of absolute and relational space (Löw, 2001). With the former, often referred to as 'container space', space is either designated as having an own reality independent of human beings or

conceptualized as a Euclidian three-dimensional space assumed to be an inevitable prerequisite for each constitution of space. (This then includes Kant's conceptualization of space: although it denies the possibility of representing objects and things 'out there', it assumes the Euclidian principles as an *a priori* concept 'steering' the subjective constitution of the mind.) The notion of relational space, on the other hand, is traced back to Leibniz and his concept of space-in-relations, of space as being manifest in relations between events or aspects of events that would render the idea of a space that exists independently of its relation unnecessary.

2. Indeed the spatial turn has been reframed as a *topographical* turn, understood as the graphic or cartographic configuration of space and reflecting the emphasis on specific sites and spatial constellations as well as the corresponding problematic of how to write spatially (Weigel, 2009). We here stick to the broader and more established notion of the spatial turn and its conceptual landscape while foregrounding the ways this turn challenges and alters the topographical imagination of how organizational sites are approached, configured and written.
3. One is reminded of Lefebvre's (2003/1970) critique of the modernist myth of the architect: it is not him or her who organizes life, it is life itself that enables different forms of building.
4. Massey (2005, p. 55) is keenly aware of how these propositions touch on time: 'neither time nor space is reducible to the other; they are distinct. They are, however, co-implicated. On the side of space, there is the integral temporality of a dynamic simultaneity. On the side of time, there is the necessary production of change through practices of interrelation.'
5. It is possible to read Derrida's writings – his 'dissemination of lines of overlapping and yet heterogeneous arguments' (Wigley, 1995, p. 207) – as a kind of spatial thinking, a spacing. According to Doel (1999, p. 10), so-called 'post-structuralism is always already spatial (. . .) It is the event of space, of spacing, that deconstructs.'

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